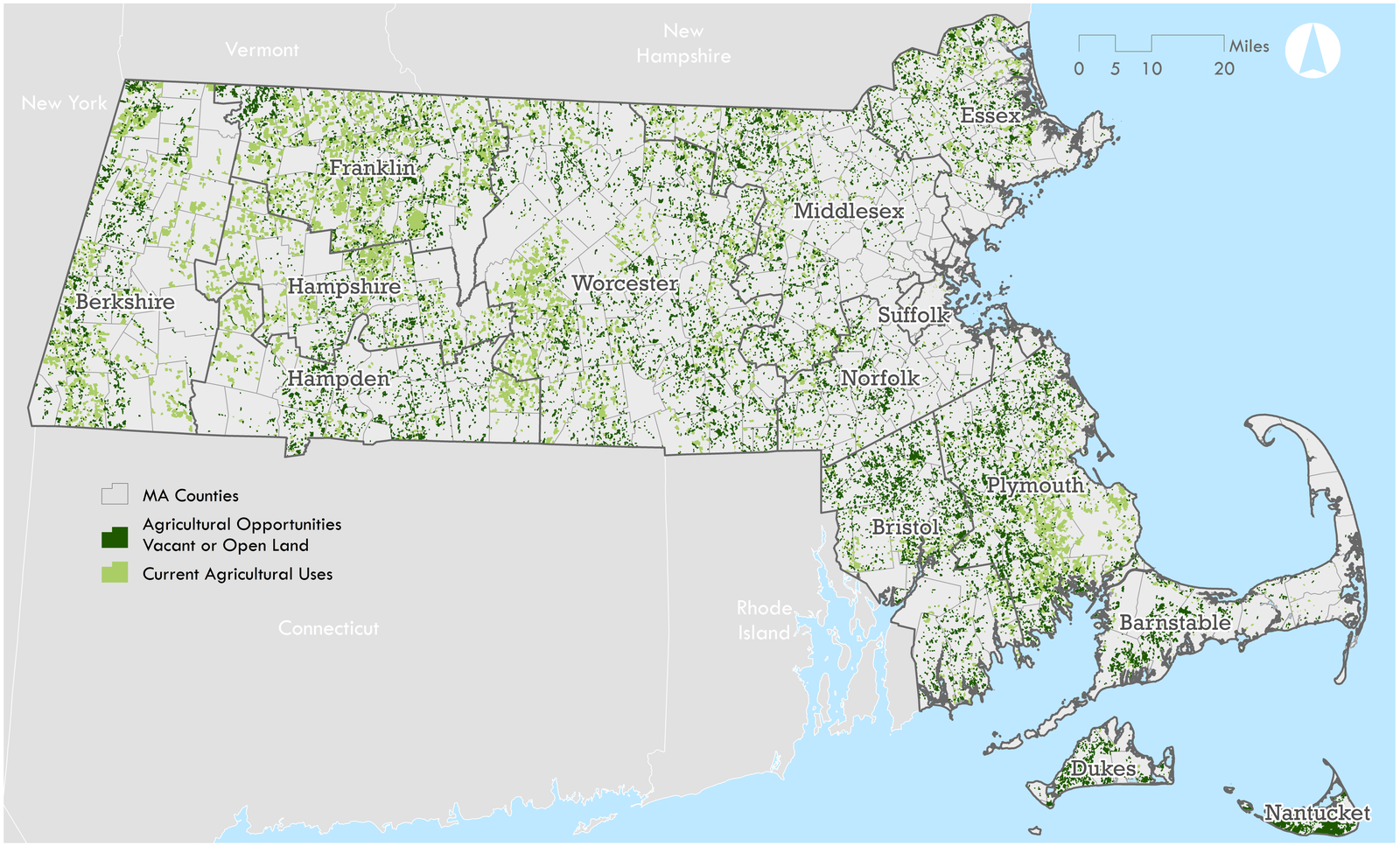
PRODUCTION: AGRICULTURAL LAND

MASSACHUSETTS EXISTING AND POTENTIAL FARMLAND



Sources: MAPC Assessor Parcel Database, MassGIS, NRCS SSURGO Database, MassDEP

Today agricultural land (light green on the map) occupies approximately **301,000 acres**,[1] or about **8%** of the state.

There are an additional **145,000 acres** of potentially farmable land on vacant or open lots in the state[1] (dark green on the map) -- roughly **2.5 times** the size of the City of Boston.

Between 1982 and 2007 Massachusetts **lost 18 percent** of its agricultural land to development.[2] Currently, only **23% of agricultural land in the state is protected under the an Agriculture Preservation Restriction Program**.[1]

It is critical to protect the state's existing farmland from development pressure, as well as find ways to expand production on potentially farmable land.

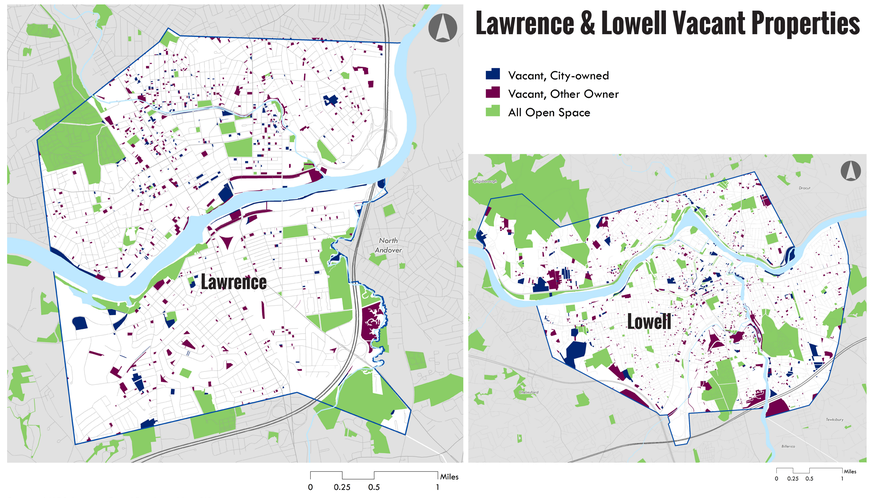
Climate change may also threaten production on existing farmland. Flooding, droughts, or other impacts of a changing climate could force farmers to change crops or abandon croplands. This could mean increased demand for farmable land.

THINKING LOCAL: URBAN AGRICULTURE

Community gardens and urban farms provide opportunities for residents and farmers in urban communities to **grow food** and **work the land**.

Recently, **Groundwork Lawrence** and **Mill City Growers in Lowell** were awarded grants from the Patrick Administration's new state-funded **urban faming initiative** to fund urban farm pilot projects.[5]

Combined, Lawrence and Lowell have over **900 acres of vacant land**, **37% of which is city-owned**.[6] There may be opportunities to use some of this land for urban farming.



Sources: MAPC Assessor Parcel Database, MassGIS

METHODS

1. To identify opportunities for farmland expansion, we first identified open and vacant land -- this includes publicly-owned land, as well as vacant residential, commercial, or industrial properties.
2. We combined these parcels with the latest soils data to identify which of these vacant or open areas are also on good farming soils.
3. We limited these vacant or open parcels to those with more than two acres of land not covered in a paved surface or building.
4. Finally, we removed land covered by wetlands.
5. The remaining land is land that could potentially be farmed.

Sources:
1. MAPC analysis, see methods
2. National Resources Inventory, Farmland Information Center, www.farmlandinfo.org
3. USDA Census of Agriculture, 2012
4. Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, 2013
5. Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, 2014, http://www.mass.gov/eea/pr-2014/urban-agriculture-grants.html
6. MAPC analysis of Lawerence and Lowell Assessor's records, 2014

MASSACHUSETTS FOOD SYSTEM PLAN