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.

**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.

**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 farming 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, NRCS SSURGO Database, MassDEP