

TOWN OF AVA

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Prepared by the Ava Planning Board

**Adopted by the Ava Town Board
July 14, 2026**

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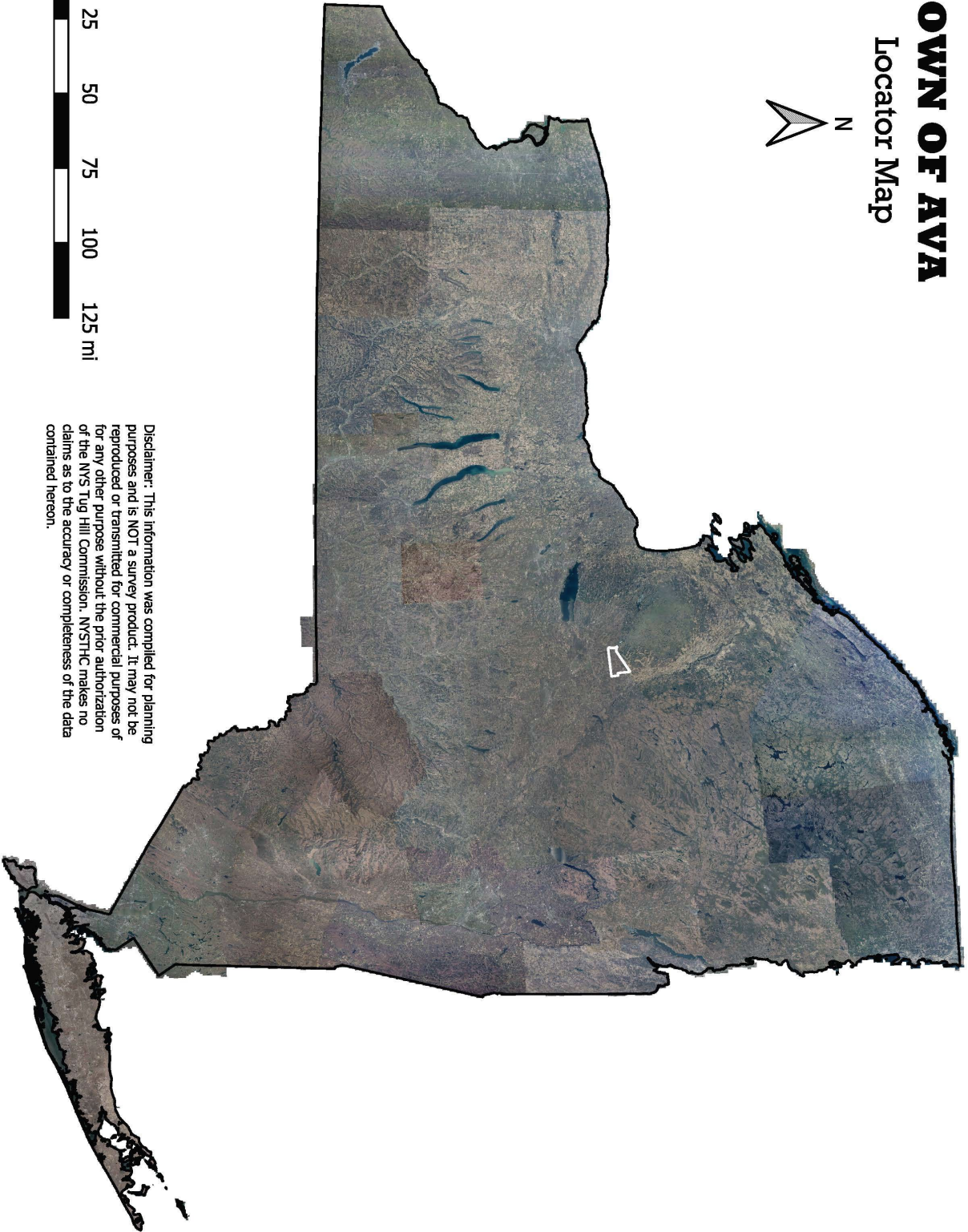
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TOWN OF AVA

Locator Map



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INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Planning Committee

The Ava Town Board appointed the Planning Board to update the comprehensive plan adopted in 2012. The board was charged with gathering base data and reporting their recommendations to the Town Board. The Planning Board worked on the comprehensive plan, with assistance from the Tug Hill Commission, conducting monthly meetings on various topics and input from county and state agencies. A town-wide survey and public visioning exercise (SWOT) was conducted to obtain public input to develop strategies that address issues and reflect the needs and desires of the community.

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to guide the future growth and development of the town in a way that reflects the priorities and vision of the community. The plan establishes a strategic framework to support sound land use decisions, align with existing zoning regulations, and coordinate infrastructure planning including water, sewer, and transportation networks. It aims to inform capital investment decisions, promote sustainable and resilient development, and encourage collaboration among local, county, and state agencies. Above all, the plan is designed to reflect the vision of residents and ensure that future development enhances the quality of life for all who live, work, and visit the area.

Periodic Review and Update of the Plan

It is the recommendation of the Planning Board that this plan be periodically reviewed and updated by the Town Board, and others, every five years. A five-year review will refresh the Town Board's perspective on the long-range issues affecting Ava and help to reinforce the link between day-to-day development decisions and long-range policies of the town. In addition, a periodic update will keep the plan current with the ever-changing conditions of the town without the need for large-scale planning efforts.

The Organization of This Document

This document is organized into the following parts:

Part I. Community Profile

This section presents a compilation of relevant facts about the physical make-up of the town, along with other facts and trends that bear a direct relationship on future development. This is the basic set of underlying facts by which the plan was prepared.

Part II. Plan Elements and Strategies

This section presents the community goals which reflect the general desires for the direction in which the citizens of the town wish to go, based upon public meetings and discussions with local experts.

Part III. Land Use Policies

This section includes policies which form the framework for the town's land use regulations. All development projects in the town should conform to these standards.

PART I – COMMUNITY PROFILE

General

The town of Ava encompasses approximately 23,689 acres and is located in northern Oneida County. It is bordered by the town of Annsville to the west, the towns of Lewis and Leyden to the north, the town of Boonville to the east, and the towns of Lee and Western to the south. This geographic setting situates Ava within a predominantly rural region of the county, surrounded by communities with similar agricultural, forested, and low-density development characteristics.

HISTORY

The town of Ava is located along the northern boundary of Oneida County in the scenic Tug Hill region of New York State. The town was formed from the town of Boonville on May 12, 1846, and was named after Ava, the former capital of the Asian country Burma (now Myanmar)¹. Early settlers began arriving around 1797, attracted by the area's natural resources and fertile land.

Ava's landscape is characterized by rolling hills, forests, and abundant waterways. The headwaters of the Mohawk River and several tributaries of the Black River flow through the town, while the East Branch Fish Creek forms much of the town's western boundary. These waterways have long supported outdoor recreation, including the town's well-known trout fishing, with local streams regularly stocked by the state. New York State Route 26 serves as the community's primary transportation corridor.

Throughout its history, Ava's economy has been closely tied to its natural environment. In the 19th century, lumbering was a major industry, followed by the growth of agriculture, particularly dairy farming, which became a pillar of the local economy. By 1870, the town's population reached 1,160, though like many rural communities, it declined over the next century to 541 residents by 1970.

Several small settlements developed within the town, including Ava Corners, a principal community, and Flinttown located in the eastern portion. Ava also holds a unique place in national history as the home of Hiram Cronk, the last surviving veteran of the War of 1812, who lived to be 104 years old, passing away in 1905.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

Between 2010 and 2020, Ava experienced minimal population growth increasing from 676 to 680 residents (+0.59%). Oneida County exhibited slight population decrease (-1.17%), while New York State grew at a significantly higher rate of +4.2%. Ava's slow population growth

¹ White, Donald F., and Cynthia Long. 1998. *Exploring 200 Years of Oneida County History*. Utica: Oneida County Historical Society.

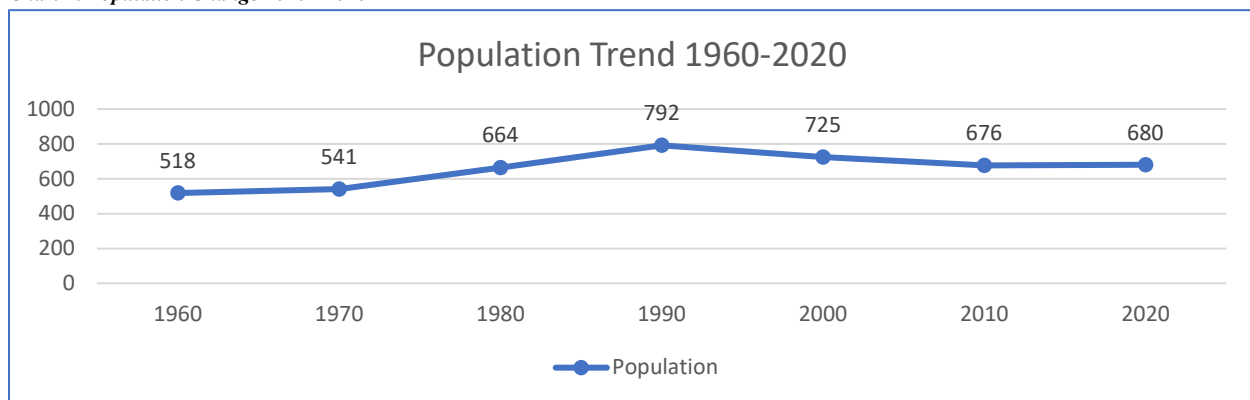
suggests that the town’s population resembles stability rather than expansion. **Table 1** shows the population change between 2010 and 2020 and **Chart 1** displays the population trend from 1960 to 2020.

Table 1: Population Change 2010 - 2020

	2010	2020	Percent Change (2010-2020)
Town of Ava	676	680	+0.59%
Oneida County	234,878	232,125	-1.17%
New York State	19,378,102	20,201,249	+4.2%

Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census

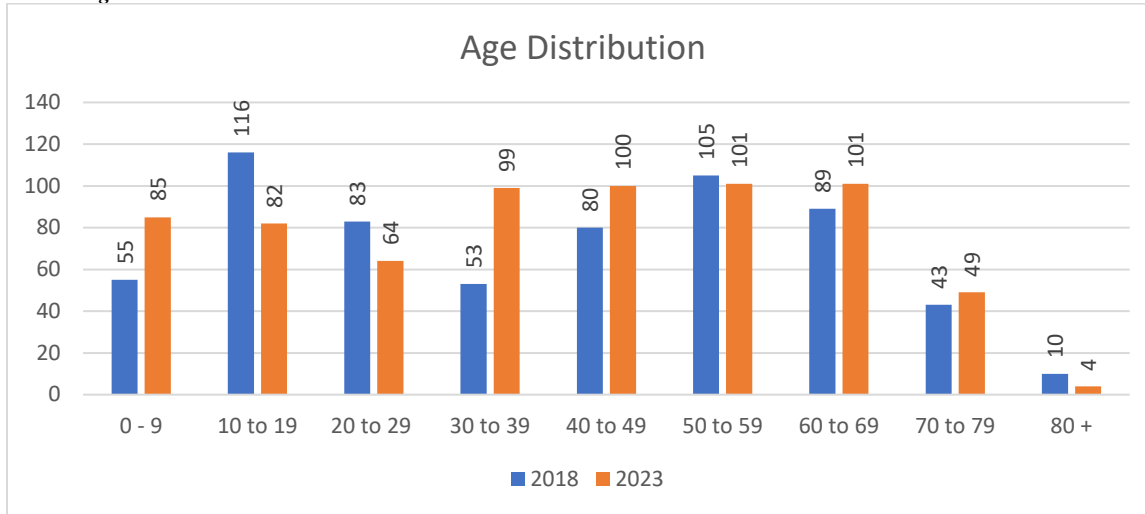
Chart 1: Population Change 2010 - 2020



Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census

The age distribution data for the town shows demographic shifts between 2018 and 2023. In 2018, the population was most concentrated in the 10-19 (116 people), 50-59 (105 people), and 60-69 (89 people) age groups, indicating a strong school-age population and a large share of older working-age adults. By 2023, the population shifted, with the largest groups becoming 30-39 (99 people), 40-49 (100 people), 50-59 (101 people), and 60-69 (101 people), demonstrating growth in the middle-age and older working-age groups. Younger age groups changed as well with increases in children ages 0-9 (55 to 85) but decreases in 10-19 (116-82) and 20-29 (83-64), while the 70-79 age group experienced an increase and the 80+ population decreased. Overall, the comparison indicates that Ava’s population is maturing with growth concentrated in the core working-age and near-retirement groups, while the community is also experiencing fewer younger adults and fewer elderly residents.

Chart 2: Age Distribution 2018 - 2023



Source: US Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey

Housing

Between 2013 and 2023, Ava's overall housing stock remained relatively stable though shifts occurred in the number of occupied units. While the total number of housing units fluctuated and declined slightly between 2018 and 2023, the number of occupied homes increased during this same period. Vacant housing experienced a decrease which suggests the utilization of existing housing units, improved housing stability, and addressing the potential demand without needed to expand the total housing inventory.

Table 2: Housing Stock 2013 - 2023

	2013	2018	2023	% Change 2018-2023
Total Housing Stock	270	296	291	-1.7
Occupied	244	240	269	+12.1
Vacant	26	56	22	-60.7

Source: US Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey

From 2013 to 2023 the number of households increased while the average household size slightly decreased. This trend mirrors demographic shifts occurring at the county and state levels where smaller households and more single-occupied housing units are becoming more common. These changes may indicate changing lifestyle patterns, aging households, and an increase in demand for a variety of housing types to accommodate different household structures.

Table 3: Household Change 2013 - 2023

	# of Households 2013	Average Household Size	# of Households 2018	Average Household Size	# of Households 2023	Average Household Size
Town of Ava	244	2.7	240	2.6	269	2.6
Oneida County	91,075	2.4	90,014	2.4	94,361	2.3
New York State	7,234,743	2.6	7,316,537	2.6	7,668,956	2.5

Source: US Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey

Median housing values in Ava increased between 2013 and 2023 from \$89,500 to \$120,500. The increase in housing values may reflect a strengthening housing market locally but is increasing at a slower rate when compared to Oneida County and New York State where housing values grew significantly faster. This suggests that Ava's housing market remains comparatively affordable and continues to offer lower-cost housing options within the region.

Table 4: Median Housing Value 2013 - 2023

	2013 Dollars (\$)	2018 Dollars (\$)	2023 Dollars (\$)
Town of Ava	\$89,500	\$110,900	\$120,500
Oneida County	\$110,500	\$123,100	\$171,100
New York State	\$288,200	\$302,200	\$403,000

Source: US Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey

Housing affordability has remained a strength for the town's housing market. Ava's price-to-income ratio stayed relatively low and stable, returning to 1.7 in 2023 after a slight increase in 2018. This ratio is significantly lower than both the county and statewide affordability measures which indicate that Ava residents, on average, spend a smaller proportion of their income on housing costs. This trend reinforces the town's role as an affordable residential community within Oneida County.

The housing affordability score is typically measured using a price-to-income ratio which compares the median home value to the median household income. A lower score indicates that housing costs are more manageable relative to local earnings. Generally, a score around 3.0 or below is considered affordable, meaning most households can reasonably purchase a home without financial strain. When the score approaches or exceeds 4.0, housing is typically considered unaffordable, as home prices are more than four times annual household income, making it significantly harder for residents to buy homes or sustain housing costs without financial burden.

Table 5: Housing Affordability (Price-to-Income Ratio) 2013 - 2023

	2013 Dollars (\$)	2018 Dollars (\$)	2023 Dollars (\$)
Town of Ava	1.7	2.1	1.7
Oneida County	2.3	2.3	2.5
New York State	5.0	4.6	4.8

Source: US Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey

Income

Median household income in the town has increased steadily over the past decade which reflects an improvement in local household economic conditions. Between 2013 and 2023, median income rose from \$53,409 to \$68,988 which closely aligns with the growth experienced in Oneida County while remaining below the statewide median. This upward trend suggests stronger earning capabilities among residents and contributes to maintaining overall housing affordability in the community, even as living costs and housing values have increased.

Table 6: Median Household Income 2013 - 2023

	2013 Dollars (\$)	2018 Dollars (\$)	2023 Dollars (\$)
Town of Ava	\$53,409	\$53,529	\$68,988
Oneida County	\$48,729	\$53,844	\$68,819
New York State	\$58,003	\$65,323	\$84,578

Source: US Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey

The percentage of residents living below the poverty level in the town has increased significantly from 6.2% in 2018 to 21.1% in 2023. This rate is higher than both Oneida County, where 14.6% of residents live in poverty, and New York State, where the rate is 13.7%. The increase may indicate a growing economic hardship for a portion of residents and highlights the need for a continued focus on employment opportunities, household income stability, and support services to help reduce financial vulnerability among residents.

Table 7: Poverty Level 2018 - 2023

	Pop. for whom poverty status is determined		# of people below poverty line		% of people below poverty line	
	2018	2023	2018	2023	2018	2023
Town of Ava	634	682	39	144	6.2	21.1
Oneida County	218,580	219,280	35,271	32,026	16.1	14.6
New York State	19,108,993	19,391,750	2,797,985	2,656,674	14.6	13.7

Source: US Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey

Employment

There are a variety of professions in the town. Retail trade remains one of the largest sectors increasing from 65 to 83 employees, while professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services saw growth from 18 to 41 employees. Manufacturing employment increased from 20 to 34 employees, and wholesale trade doubled from 12 to 24 employees. Meanwhile, educational, health, and social services declined from 84 to 55 employees, and agriculture experienced a significant decrease from 29 to 3 employees, indicating a move away from traditional rural employment opportunities. Public administration employment decreased from 23 to 12 employees, while several other service industries experienced minor changes. Overall, the data reflects an economy that may be diversifying with growing strength in professional, trade, and service sectors and a reduced reliance on agriculture and public sector employment.

Table 8: Employment by Industry (2018 – 2023)

Industry	2018		2023	
	#	%	#	%
Retail trade	65	21.7	83	23.8
Educational, health, social services	84	28.1	55	15.8
Professional, scientific, management, admin., waste management	18	6.0	41	11.7
Construction	12	4.0	20	5.7
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	11	3.7	18	5.2
Manufacturing	20	6.7	34	9.7
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food services	14	4.7	19	5.4
Wholesale trade	12	4.0	24	6.9
Public administration	23	7.7	12	3.4
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	9	3.0	23	6.6
Other services (except public administration)	2	0.7	13	3.7
Information	0	0.0	4	1.1
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	29	9.7	3	0.9
Total	299	100	349	100

Source: US Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey

Education

The educational attainment table for Ava shows that most residents, age 25 and older, have at least a high school education with 87.7% holding a high school diploma or higher. However, a large portion of residents have only a high school education (44.5%), while 19.8% have some college but no degree and 15.9% hold an associate's degree. In contrast, only 4.2% of residents have a bachelor's degree and 3.3% have a graduate or professional degree which is significantly lower than Oneida County and New York State. It is important to note that the "High School Graduate or Higher" category (87.7%) includes all other levels of education beyond high school, meaning that 44.5% represents those who stopped their education at a high school diploma only, while the remaining percentage is distributed among the higher education categories listed. The data reflects a workforce that is primarily educated at the high school level and technical training level, with relatively few residents pursuing four-year or advanced degrees.

Table 9: Education Attainment 2023 (25 Years and Older)

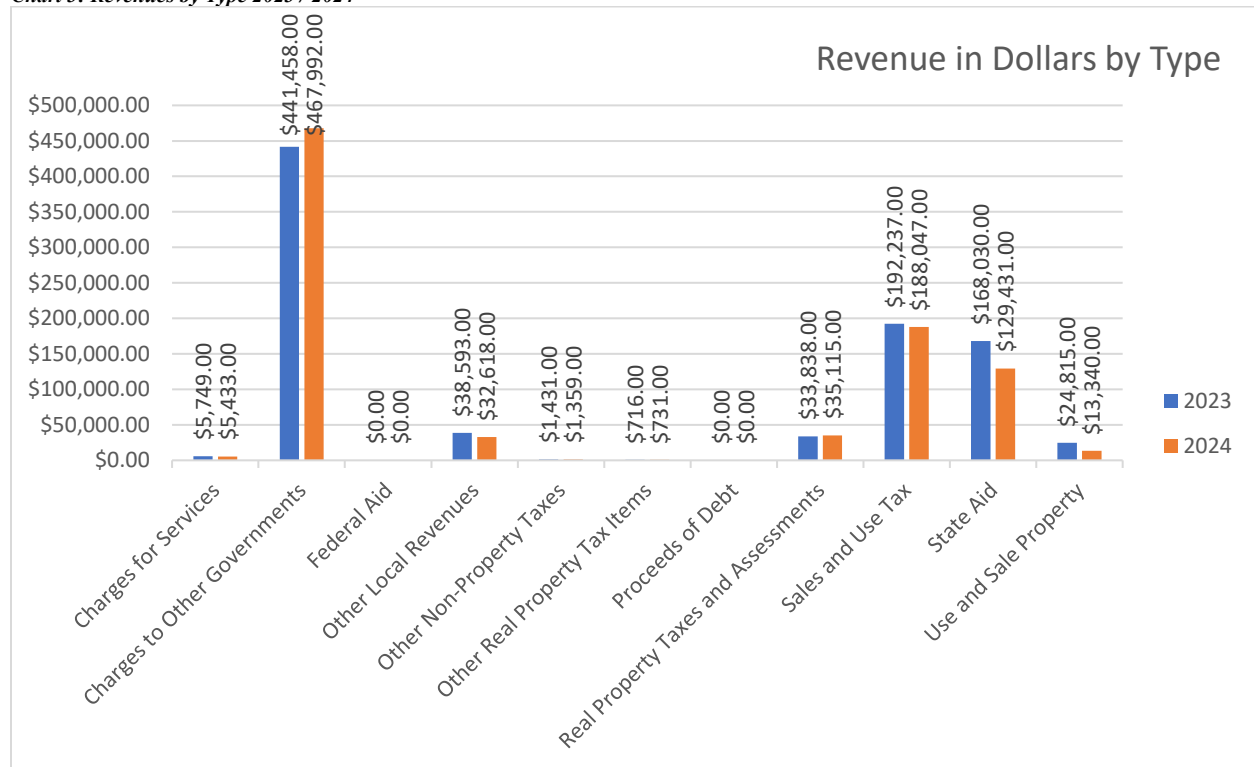
	% High School Grad. Or Higher	% High School Grad Only	Some College No Degree	% Associates Degree	% Bachelors Degree	% Graduate Degree
Town of Ava	87.7	44.5	19.8	15.9	4.2	3.3
Oneida County	88.9	30.1	18.5	12.6	15.9	11.8
New York State	87.9	24.6	14.9	8.9	22.0	17.5

Source: US Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey

Finance

The revenue by type chart compares the town's revenues for 2023 and 2024, showing moderate year-to-year change while maintaining the same primary revenue structure. Charges to other governments remained the largest revenue source and increased from \$441,458 in 2023 to \$467,992 in 2024, continuing to account for nearly half of total revenues. Sales and use tax revenues slightly decreased from \$192,237 to \$188,047, while state aid declined from \$168,030 in 2023 to \$129,431 in 2024. Real property taxes and assessments showed a small increase from \$33,838 to \$35,115, and other local revenues decreased from \$38,593 to \$32,618. Smaller revenue categories such as charges for services, other non-property taxes, and use and sale of property experienced minor decreases while there wasn't any recorded revenue for federal aid and proceeds of debt. Ava continues to rely mostly on intergovernmental revenue sources, with moderate shifts occurring across other revenue categories between 2023 and 2024. Revenue for the town totaled \$875,068 in 2024.

Chart 3: Revenues by Type 2023 / 2024

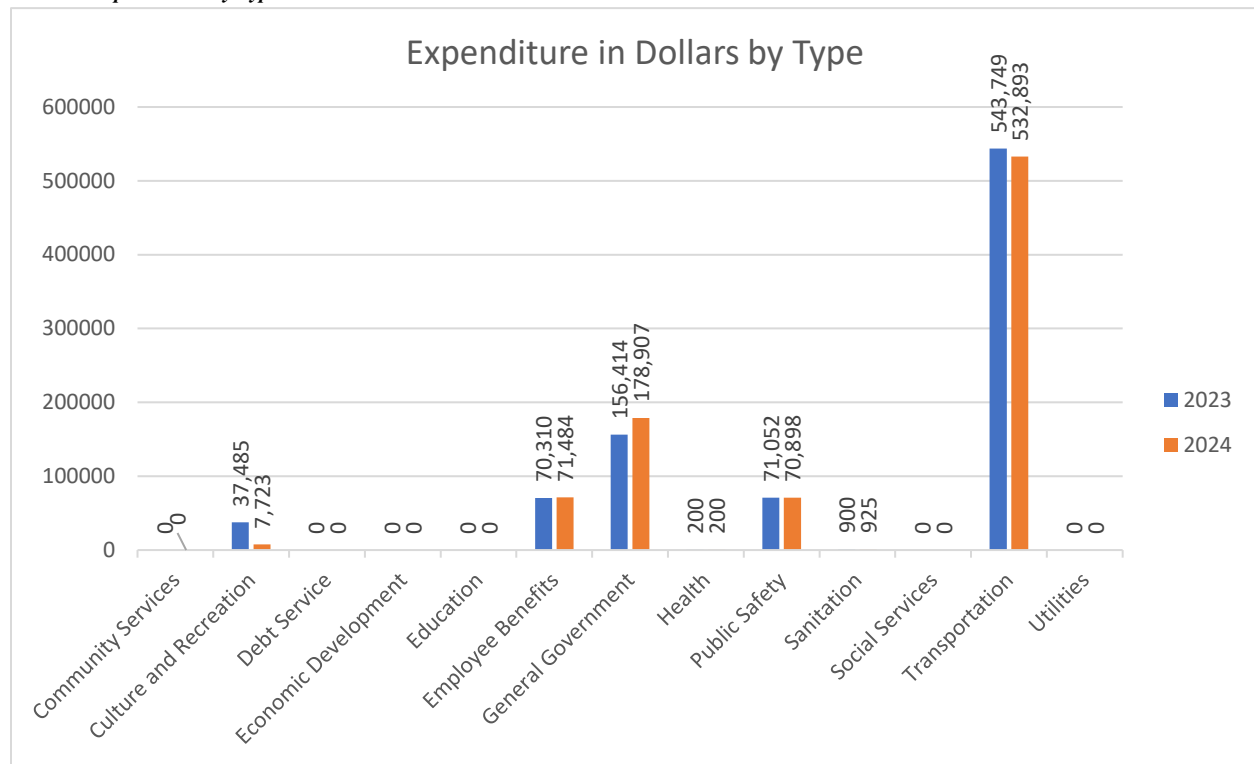


Source: NYS Comptroller's Office

The expenditure by type chart compares the town's spending in 2023 and 2024, showing that most expenditures remained consistent. Transportation continued to be the largest expense totaling \$543,749 in 2023 and \$532,893 in 2024 which reflects the town's continued investment in road maintenance and related infrastructure. General government spending increased from \$156,414 to \$178,907 and employee benefits increased slightly from \$70,310 to \$71,484. Public safety spending decreased from \$71,052 in 2023 to \$70,898 in 2024. Culture and recreation experienced a significant decrease from \$37,485 to \$7,723, while sanitation increased from \$900 to \$925. The town park was built in 2023 with funding received from grants which explains the

significant difference in expenditures for culture and recreation between 2023 and 2024. Health remained at \$200 for both years. Expenditures in transportation, government operations, employee benefits, and public safety represent the town's largest spending areas. Expenditures for the town totaled \$863,030 in 2024.

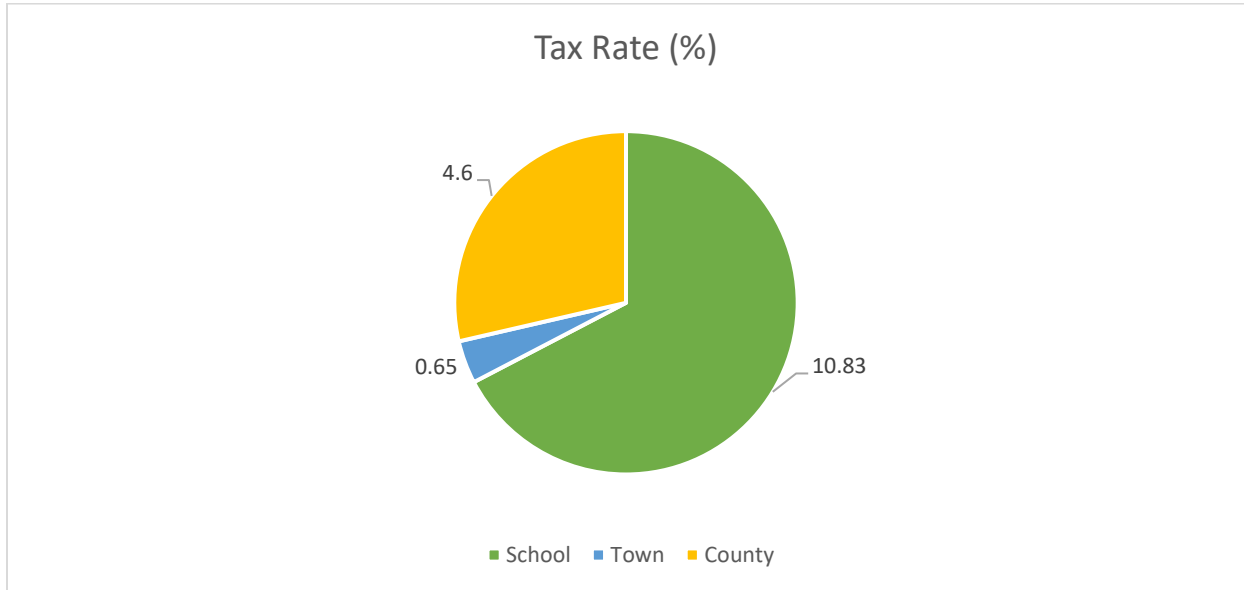
Chart 4: Expenditures by Type 2023 / 2024



Source: NYS Comptroller's Office

The 2025 property tax chart shows how property taxes in the town are divided among three primary taxing entities. The school tax is the largest portion with an average of \$10.83 per \$1,000 of assessed value making it the greatest contributor to property tax bills. The county tax rate is \$4.60 per \$1,000 representing the next largest share. The town tax rate is the smallest at \$0.65 per \$1,000, indicating a relatively limited local municipal tax burden. A resident in the town would pay approximately \$16.08 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2025 property taxes combining the school, county, and town tax rates.

Chart 5: 2025 Tax Rates

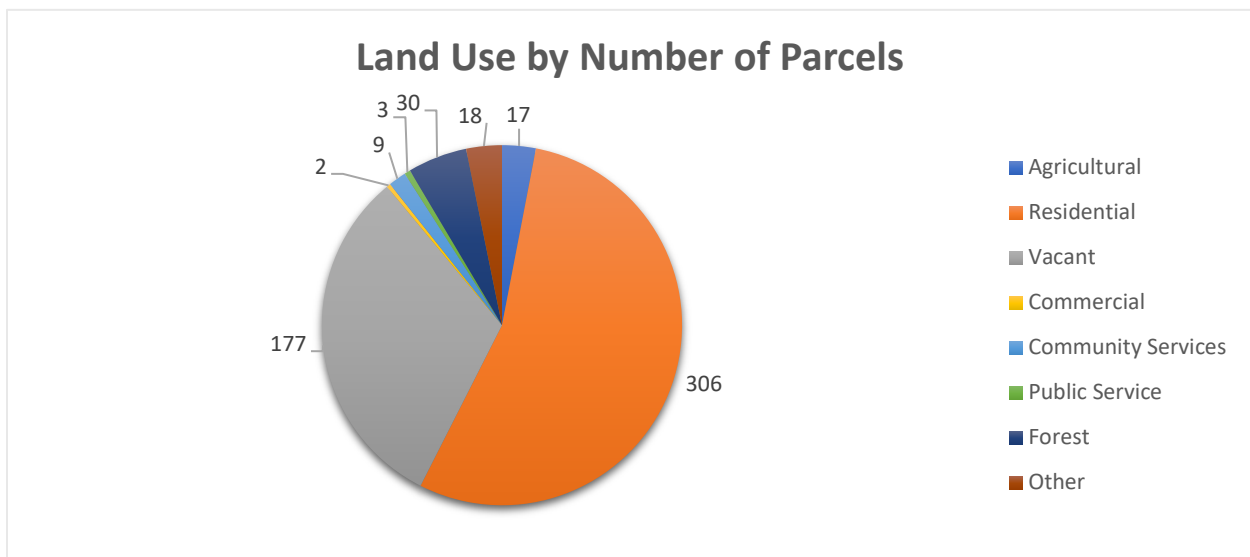


Source: NYS Comptroller's Office

Land Use

Looking at land use by property tax parcels in the town for 2024, the largest land use by parcel is residential with 306 parcels. The next largest land use is vacant land with 177 parcels. Agricultural use accounts for 17 parcels. Public service use totals 3 parcels, community services total 9 parcels, and forest has 30 parcels. Commercial use totals 2 parcels while there are zero parcels for both recreation and industrial uses.

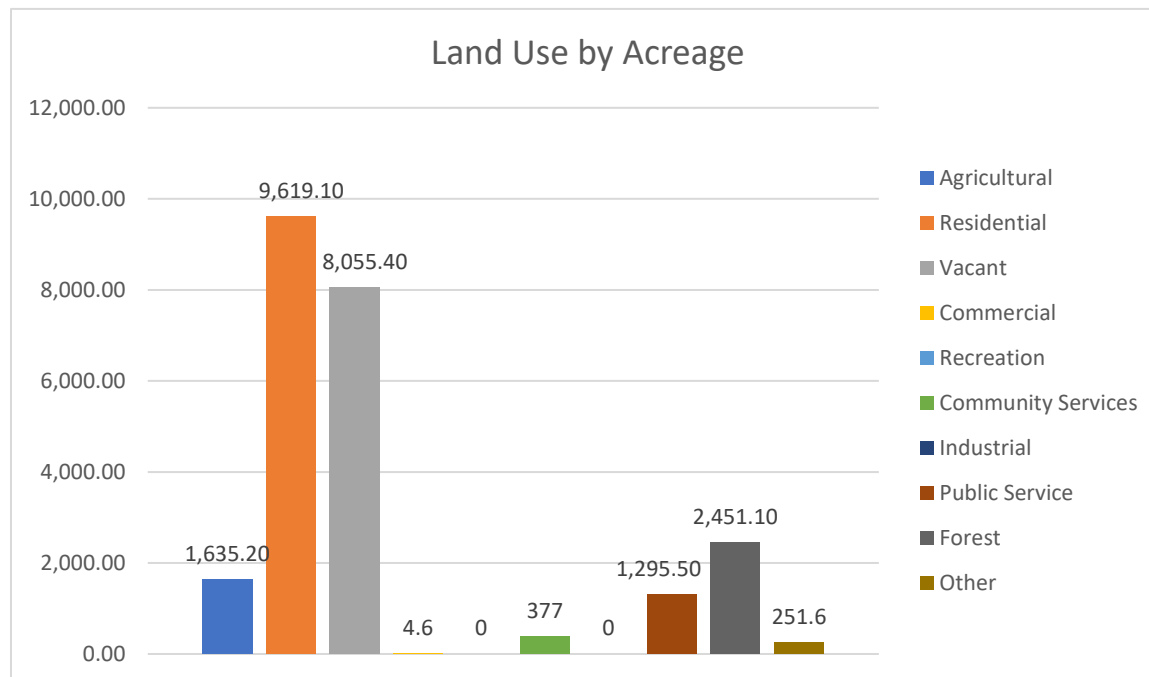
Chart 6: Land Use by Number of Parcels (2024)



Source: 2024 Oneida County Tax Parcels Geographic Information Systems

According to GIS calculations, the total amount of acres within the town of Ava is approximately 24,291 acres. The primary land use is residential with about 9,669 acres. The next highest is vacant land which accounts for about 8,123 acres of land. Forest parcels consist of approximately 2,919 acres of land within the town. Agriculture makes up about 1,896 acres of land while public service accounts for about 1,294 acres. Community services contain approximately 384 acres of land and commercial accounts for approximately 384 acres of land.

Chart 7: 2024 Land Use by Acreage



Source: 2024 Oneida County Tax Parcels Geographic Information Systems

Definitions

Agricultural: property used for the production of crops or livestock.

Residential: property used for human habitation. Living accommodations such as hotels, motels, and apartments are in the Commercial category.

Vacant: property that is not in use, is in temporary use, or lacks permanent improvement.

Commercial: property used for the sale of goods and/or services.

Recreation: property used by groups for recreation, amusement, or entertainment.

Community Services: property used for the well-being of the community.

Industrial: property used for the production and fabrication of durable and nondurable man-made goods.

Public Services: property used to provide services to the general public.

Forest: reforested lands, preserves, and private hunting and fishing clubs.

PART II. PLAN ELEMENTS – GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

This section of the comprehensive plan presents issues and strategies that pertain to several topical areas which include open space and agriculture, historic resources, economic development, housing, infrastructure, transportation, community facilities, and recreation. These strategies are the result of the planning process and are based on a community survey, public visioning meetings, and meetings with experts in each topic. It is intended that responsibility for pursuing these strategies will be that of various town groups including the Town Board, Planning Board, committees, and community volunteers.

OPEN SPACE, AGRICULTURE, AND RURAL CHARACTER

Agriculture is a cornerstone to the town of Ava's identity, landscape, and economy. Preserving productive farmland and supporting the farming community are essential to maintaining the town's rural character, protecting natural resources, and ensuring that agriculture remains a sustainable and productive use within the town. The town of Ava is approximately 24,839 acres in size. Approximately 1,635 acres are assessed as agricultural land, while approximately 5,207 acres are part of the New York State Agricultural District Program. To strengthen its position in protecting farmland, supporting local farmers, and attracting additional agriculture opportunities, the town can designate itself as an agriculture-friendly community. Aligning local policies with the Oneida County Agriculture Strategic Plan 2025 and using the Agriculture-Friendly Oneida County Municipal Planning Guide, will provide clear strategies for integrating agriculture into land use decisions, increasing grant competitiveness, and promoting the long-term sustainability of the town's agricultural economy. The town can further strengthen its agricultural base by creating a Farmland Protection Plan or adopting a Right-to-Farm Local Law, reinforcing its commitment to farming.

A majority of residents surveyed expressed a desire to preserve the rural atmosphere that defines the town, with 73% identifying it as the primary reason they chose to live in the town. Support for maintaining the town's character is further demonstrated by the fact that 58% of respondents deemed its preservation "very important," while another 34% considered it "at least important." When asked about areas that need further protection, 75% of respondents identified farmlands and 32% identified open spaces. Respondents also identified areas that they would like to see grow in the town. Overwhelmingly, 64% of respondents would like to see growth in agriculture. Additional responses focused on increasing recreational trails and outdoor activities, such as hunting and fishing. Survey responses focused on maintaining the town's rural character, protecting environmentally sensitive areas and scenic vistas, and safeguarding farmland and agribusiness. There are several land use tools available to the town that can preserve farmland and open space.

Agricultural districts provide legal safeguards and protections to farmers against overly restrictive land use laws and nuisance complaints from neighboring, non-agricultural properties. Agricultural districts encourage the long-term viability of agriculture and protect prime farmland for active production. Ava has approximately 5,207 acres of land that are part of the New York State Agricultural Program. The Agricultural District will be reviewed in 2026, which offers an opportunity to enroll additional properties and support the town's agricultural priorities. The

agricultural assessment program supports active farms by reducing property taxes based on the land's agricultural value rather than its full market value. Farmers may also receive tax exemptions on the construction of new buildings that support agriculture operations, for up to ten years. This program can assist farmers with investing in new infrastructure without the monetary pressures of immediate tax burdens. Farmers can participate in the program by collaborating with the Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District. Oneida County Soil and Water will survey and classify soils and provide assessments that accurately reflect the potential for agricultural productivity.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs) is another tool that can be used to protect farmland. Through funding such as the Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, landowners can be compensated for giving up the right to develop their land for non-agricultural purposes. The Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust (THTLT) often acts as the easement holder, guiding landowners and ensuring that the protected lands remain in agricultural use in perpetuity. Conservation easements are voluntary, legal agreements that restrict certain types of development while allowing compatible uses such as recreational trails, wildlife habitat conservation, or sustainable forestry. Easements may be purchased or donated and can balance land protection with responsible use particularly in areas facing development pressures from non-agricultural uses such as solar energy projects.

A project that may increase the need to expand the town's agricultural base is the development of the Chobani factory in Griffiss Industrial Park in Rome, New York. The planned development location is approximately 15 miles from the town's municipal boundary. Designating the town as an agriculture-friendly community can generate opportunities to meet growing market demands driven by the anticipated Chobani project. Chobani's expanded operations are expected to require increased milk production, creating a need for active dairy farms in the surrounding areas. By adopting ag-friendly policies, Ava can encourage agricultural growth, attract dairy operations investment, and ensure local farmers are positioned to benefit from this expanded market.

GOAL: PRESERVE FARMLAND AND PROTECT RURAL CHARACTER

Objectives

1. Designate Ava as an Agriculture-Friendly Community and align policies with the Oneida County Agriculture Strategic Plan 2025 and the Agriculture-Friendly Oneida County Municipal Planning Guide.
2. Develop a Farmland Protection Plan to guide preservation policies.
3. Consider adoption of a Right-to-Farm Local Law to reinforce farmer protections.
4. Support continued enrollment in Oneida County Agricultural District #2 during the 2026 review, encouraging additional property owners to participate.

5. Promote the Agricultural Assessment Program to reduce property taxes for active farms.
6. Adopt local solar energy development laws to limit or mitigate the placement of large-scale solar facilities on prime farmland while protecting the rights of landowners.
7. Partner with land trusts such as the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust to implement Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs and conservation easements that permanently protect prime farmland.

GOAL: SUPPORT AND GROW AVA'S AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

Objectives

1. Position Ava to meet market demands from the planned Chobani Factory expansion in nearby Rome by supporting dairy operations and related agricultural businesses.
2. Encourage agritourism opportunities such as farm tours, pick-your-own operations, and seasonal festivities.
3. Encourage marketing initiatives to promote Ava's farms, products, and agricultural heritage.
4. Facilitate farmer access to grant programs for infrastructure, marketing, and business development.
5. Support workforce development programs and farm transition planning to assist the next generation of farmers.

GOAL: PROTECT OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Objectives

1. Identify and prioritize areas for open space preservation in the local land use law or through the adoption of a zoning law.
2. Integrate open space protection into the development review process.
3. Expand outdoor recreational opportunities such as trails, hunting, and fishing areas.
4. Partner with conservation groups to create multi-use trails that also serve as buffers for farmland and wildlife habitats.
5. Encourage best management practices for soil health, water quality, and habitat preservation.

6. Support projects that enhance climate resilience and long-term sustainability of agricultural lands.

TRANSPORTATION

Road infrastructure is important for the town as it supports economic development, public safety, and community well-being providing the efficient transportation of goods, services, and residents to essential facilities. Input from town residents and local government officials has identified several transportation challenges and opportunities.

Safety concerns have been identified along key state routes in the town. On NYS-Route 26, near an Amish school, the posted speed limit of 55 mph poses a risk to children who frequently walk along the shoulders of the road to and from school. The town has formally requested a speed reduction to 40 mph, as well as a school zone designation, in this area to enhance pedestrian safety. Also, along NYS-Route 26, near the town hall, visibility issues caused by a hill make it difficult for drivers to see oncoming traffic when entering or exiting adjacent parking lots and driveways. These areas require attention to improve line-of-sight and reduce the likelihood of collisions. NYS-Route 46 has been known for its lack of maintenance with deteriorating and damaged guard rails that are in need of repair.

Several road infrastructure issues have been noted within the town. On Webster Hill Road, the upper bridge is beginning to wash out, while the lower bridge is too narrow to accommodate large farm equipment and trucks. These limitations hinder the efficient transport of agricultural goods. Additionally, the county-owned Mohawk Bridge experiences severe freezing and heaving during the winter months, creating unsafe conditions.

Speeding is a recurring issue that was noted on Webster Hill Road. From the top of Webster Hill Road (from Sage Road to NYS Route 294), excessive vehicle speeds have contributed to crashes involving farm animals. Residents also reported frequent incidents where drivers pass unsafely or ignore the presence of slow-moving vehicles and farm equipment on rural roads.

The town of Ava Highway Department plays a central role in keeping roads safe and passable. The department is highly regarded for its road upkeep, especially during the winter months, with positive feedback noted in the town-wide survey. Survey responses indicate strong public satisfaction with snow removal and road maintenance services. Ava benefits from shared services with Oneida County for snow removal, mowing, and ditching. The town also has a shared services agreement with the neighboring town of Western for snow removal. The town may consider establishing a shared services agreement with NYSDOT Region 2 for plowing and emergency support as needed for road maintenance.

To support road maintenance efforts and the improvement of transportation infrastructure, several funding program opportunities exist that the town can pursue. Programs offered through the NYSDOT include the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS), the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and Multi-Modal Funding. These programs offer financial resources that can be used to address critical maintenance needs and

invest in long-term transportation infrastructure improvements, helping ensure safe and more efficient travel for residents and businesses alike.

A challenge that the town of Ava faces is the absence of public transportation. Although the city of Rome operates a bus service, it does not extend to the town, leaving residents – especially seniors – without reliable transit options. This is particularly burdensome when accessing healthcare services, which are located approximately 25 minutes away. The lack of nearby amenities also means that residents must rely solely on private vehicles to meet even basic needs. A convenience store has been identified by residents as a desired addition to reducing travel demand for everyday necessities.

State Roads

State Routes 26, 46, and 294 are major routes that run through the town of Ava. As of 2023, annual average daily traffic count (AADT) on Route 26 between East/West Ava Road and the town of Ava/Lewis line was 2,425 vehicles. On this same stretch of Route 26, the annual average daily truck traffic was 252 trucks.

State Route 46 did not have any traffic data available for 2023, or previous years, in the town of Ava. State Route 294, from Gleasman Road to the town of Ava/Lewis line, had an AADT count of 1,094 vehicles in 2023. The average daily traffic count for trucks for this section of Route 294 was 162 trucks.

County Roads

Oneida County highways in the town of Ava include County Routes 67, 67A, and 76.

CR-67A is the most traveled with an AADT count of 503 vehicles in the town of Ava, based on observations in 2023, between Creek Road and CR-67.

On CR-76 as of 2023, the greatest AADT was 484 just south of the State Route 294 intersection.

CR-76, Webster Hill Road, did not have any AADT counts collected for 2023 or previous years.

Town Roads

According to the 2022 NYSDOT local highway inventory, the town contains 20.98 miles of town-maintained roads, of which 17.97 miles are paved and 3.01 miles of unpaved. Dorn Spur road had the greatest amount of traffic at 149 vehicles from the NYSDOT AADT data available for town roads. Not every town road has estimated AADT data.

Functional Classification

A useful tool for analyzing public highways is to examine exactly how they are used. The functional classification system is an excellent means of accomplishing this task. This system

identifies five categories of highways. These are principal arterials, minor arterials, major collectors, minor collectors, and local roads and streets.

Arterials link one end of a state or region with another. Mobility is the most important factor, while access is the least important. A major collector links local communities, while a minor collector provides connections within a community. Access is more important for collectors than it is for arterials. State Routes 26, 46, and 294 are major collectors through the town of Ava. County Route 67A is a major collector between Creek Road and County Route 67. County Route 76 is a minor collector. The total mileage in these categories is 12.68 miles in major collectors and 6.52 miles in minor collectors. The New York State Traffic Data Viewer (<https://nysdottrafficdata.drakewell.com/publicmultinodemap.asp>) is a useful tool for visualizing estimated AADT patterns. The Oneida County Highway Department and the Ava Highway Department are also useful local transportation resources.

GOAL: ENHANCE ROAD SAFETY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Objectives

1. Work with NYSDOT to request a traffic study to reduce the speed limit from 55 mph to 40 mph and establish a designated school zone on NYS Route-26 near the Amish school.
2. Request a traffic study through NYSDOT to address poor visibility caused by a hill that obstructs sightliness for vehicles entering and exiting parking lots and driveways on NYS Route-26 near the town hall.
3. Advocate for the repair and replacement of deteriorating and damaged guardrails to ensure roadway safety on NYS Route-46.
4. Seek funding and engineering support to repair the upper bridge, which is showing signs of washout, and replace the lower bridge to accommodate large agricultural vehicles on Webster Hill Road.
5. Coordinate with Oneida County to address winter freezing and heaving issues that create unsafe travel conditions on Mohawk Bridge.
6. Install signage and marking along Webster Hill Road (from Sage Road to NYS Route 294) to reduce speeding and alert drivers to slow-moving farm vehicles and frequent animal crossings.

GOAL: STRENGTHEN MAINTENANCE AND SHARED SERVICES

Objectives

1. Maintain existing shared services agreements with Oneida County for mowing, ditching, and snow removal, and with the town of Western for snowplow support.

2. Explore a shared services agreement with NYSDOT Region 2 for additional plowing and emergency road maintenance, especially on heavily traveled or state-adjacent routes.
3. Continue to support the town of Ava Highway Department's successful operations and encourage community feedback to guide ongoing maintenance issues.

GOAL: IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION ACCESS AND SECURE FUNDING

Objectives

1. Encourage the development of a small convenience store within Ava to provide residents with access to necessities and reduce vehicle dependency.
2. Pursue transportation funding through NYSDOT programs such as CHIPS, TAP, and Multi-Modal Funding.
3. Advocate for an extension of the Rome bus system or explore on-demand transit options to serve Ava residents, particularly seniors who need access to healthcare facilities located 25 minutes away in Rome.

HOUSING

Housing quality and supply in the town of Ava plays a central role in maintaining the community's quality of life while meeting future needs driven by regional economic growth. The town recognizes the importance of balancing the preservation of its agricultural and open-space character with accommodating a range of housing opportunities that support residents across all ages and income levels. In March 2025, Oneida County released a comprehensive housing study that identified a potential shortage of approximately 6,270 housing units by 2030, not including projected housing needs associated with the Chobani expansion in Rome. Regional pressures may influence housing demand and development within Ava in the coming years.

When residents were asked why they chose to live or own property in the town of Ava, the town's rural character emerged as the dominant factor, identified by 73.2% of respondents. Family homesteads (31.7%) and the proximity to relatives (32.5%) were cited as reasons for residents settling in Ava. Only 16.3% of respondents indicated that affordable housing influenced their decision to live in Ava. When asked how the community has changed over the past decade, 30.5% of respondents noted an increase in abandoned structures, while 31.3% mentioned the accumulation of junk on properties. Abandoned or deteriorated properties could be candidates for rehabilitation programs, adaptive reuse, or infill development efforts.

Ava residents currently maintain a strong preference for single-family housing, consistent with the rural land use pattern and policies in the land use law. Single-family homes require only a zoning permit, while other housing types, such as multi-family dwellings, require a special use permit. Minimum lot sizes of 1.5 acres help preserve the town's open space and rural character. While this approach supports the community's identity, it also presents challenges related to

affordability, aging population trends, and limited infrastructure capacity. All properties currently rely on wells and septic systems, as there is no public water or sewer infrastructure available. Additionally, the town's growing Amish population has had a positive impact by reoccupying abandoned farms, constructing new housing, and contributing to the preservation of agricultural land use consistent with Ava's rural character.

The town of Ava can benefit from its participation in state and county housing initiatives, particularly the New York State Pro-Housing Communities Program. Ava received its Pro-Housing Community Designation in October 2025 based on growth in housing. As a designated Pro-Housing Community, Ava is positioned to access several benefits including priority consideration for state and county grant funding, a competitive advantage in infrastructure and economic development programs, and increased attractiveness to private investment by demonstrating a commitment to housing development. This designation also supports Ava's efforts as a rural community to address housing shortages and infrastructure needs while strengthening population growth and the local tax base. Related funding opportunities include the Pro-Housing Communities Fund, Starter Homes Program, Homeowner Protection Program, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and funding for new residential construction and infrastructure improvements. Incorporating accessory dwelling units (ADUs) into the town's land use law could support population retention, provide affordable housing options for seniors, and modestly increase population density without significantly altering the town's landscape.

Several housing-related challenges will need to be addressed as the town plans for their future. An aging population may result in long-term population decline if younger residents are not retained, suggesting a potential need for senior housing or accessible dwelling options. Rising housing assessments and property taxes could create affordability challenges, particularly for residents on fixed incomes. Although the town lacks public water and sewer infrastructure, new development can still be accommodated through properly designed well and septic systems that support low- to moderate-density residential properties.

The town of Ava envisions a balanced housing strategy that preserves its rural, agricultural, and scenic identity while supporting single-family homes as the predominant housing type. The town aims to encourage small-scale diversification of housing options, such as accessory dwelling units, short-term rentals, and senior housing, in ways that complement existing areas. By leveraging state and county housing programs, Ava can enhance infrastructure, beautify properties, and create opportunities for responsible growth. The town's long-term housing vision emphasizes sustainable, locally guided development that maintains the character of Ava while meeting the evolving needs of its residents.

GOAL: PRESERVE AVA'S RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL CHARACTER WHILE ACCOMMODATING FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS

Objectives

1. Maintain single-family housing as the predominant type while guiding new development to complement the town's rural landscape.
2. Require appropriately sized lots and well/septic systems to support low- to moderate-density development.
3. Support the continued presence of the Amish community for its role in maintaining agricultural and rural land use.

GOAL: EXPAND HOUSING OPTIONS TO SUPPORT ALL AGES AND INCOME LEVELS

Objectives

1. Explore opportunities for seniors and accessible housing to address aging population needs.
2. Promote housing types that provide affordability for young families, working residents, and those on fixed incomes.
3. Encourage rehabilitation and reuse of existing homes and properties to expand the housing supply without altering community character.

GOAL: STRENGTHEN LOCAL CAPACITY AND PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Objectives

1. Explore participation in the New York State Pro-Housing Communities Program and related state and county housing initiatives.
2. Pursue grants and funding (e.g., CDBG, Pro-Housing Communities Fund, Starter Homes Program) to support infrastructure and housing improvements.
3. Coordinate with Oneida County and regional partners to address housing demand from regional employment growth.
4. Promote well-planned development that balances growth with the town's infrastructure limitations and environmental resources.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Preserving and rehabilitating historic buildings is essential for rural communities, as these structures offer a tangible link to our shared past, often drawing tourists and contributing to local economies. Historic buildings, typically constructed with superior materials and craftsmanship, are not only durable but also foster job creation in rehabilitation projects, which can be more resource-efficient than new construction. Properties that meet criteria set by the National and State Registers of Historic Places may be eligible for listing, which can open access to various benefits, such as grants and tax incentives for preservation efforts. A list of these properties can be found in Appendix C.

The town of Ava values the preservation of its historic sites and cultural landmarks as an important component of maintaining its rural character and community identity. Although several historic properties and locations within the town may not qualify for listing on the State or National Registers of Historic Places, they hold deep local significance and contribute to Ava's heritage. The town recognizes the importance of protecting these sites from future development to ensure that the community's history remains visible and accessible to future generations.

Among the locally significant sites the town seeks to preserve are Camp Kingsley (Scout Camp), located at 1910 Camp Kinglsey Road, a longstanding youth camp that has served as an outdoor and educational resource; Thornton Cemetery, located on Thornton Farm at the intersection of Webster Hill Road and Pohl Road; Flinttown Cemetery, located at the end of Flint Town Road; Cullings Family Cemetery located off Creek Road, Gleasman Cemetery (historical marker) located off Gleasman Road, Quaker Cemetery located on West Ava Road, Wood Family Cemetery located on East Ava Road, and the Hiram Cronk home, residence of the last surviving veteran of the War of 1812, who passed away in 1905 in Ava. In addition, the town contains remnants of the Black River Canal, including canal locks that are listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, as well as several unlisted but eligible canal features that remain important to the town's historical landscape. Collectively, these sites represent the diverse cultural and historical development of the town, spanning its agricultural roots, military heritage, and community traditions.

Through thoughtful planning and continued collaboration with property owners, local organizations, and county and state preservation agencies, the town seeks to maintain its unique historical character while integrating preservation into land use and community development goals. By protecting these cultural resources, Ava can ensure that its rich history remains an enduring part of the town's identity.

GOAL: PROTECT AND PRESERVE AVA'S HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Objectives

1. Identify, document, and map historic properties, cemeteries, and landmarks of local significance.

2. Encourage preservation and adaptive reuse of historic structures through local planning and land use laws.
3. Work with property owners and local organizations to maintain sites and prevent incompatible development.
4. Promote public awareness of Ava's history through signage, tours, and educational programs.

GOAL: INTEGRATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION INTO COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Objectives

1. Support listing of eligible properties on the State and National Registers of Historic Places to access grants and tax incentives.
2. Incorporate preservation goals into land use, tourism, and economic development initiatives.
3. Highlight key historic sites, such as Camp Kingsley, the Hiram Cronk Home, and the Black River Canal, in community planning and promotion.
4. Partner with county and state agencies to secure funding and technical support for preservation projects.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development plays an important role in shaping the future of Ava. Supporting new businesses, strengthening farms, and creating opportunities for residents helps the town remain strong and resilient. Regional projects, like the new Chobani facility being built near the Griffis Industrial Park Triangle in Rome, will have far reaching effects across the area. The project has received \$34.4 million in grant funds for infrastructure and is expected to create about 1,000 permanent jobs in addition to construction work. Much of this workforce will be drawn from surrounding towns, which creates both challenges and opportunities for Ava. Oneida County has identified the need for more than 6,000 new housing units by the year 2030, and with the additional demand from Chobani's workforce, that number is expected to grow. As these changes occur, Ava will have opportunities to support growth in ways that fit with the town's rural character.

Survey respondents identified that "property taxes" is the highest concern facing the town (72.4%). The majority of respondents are retired (46.9%) or employed full-time (37.5%). Respondents identified various kinds of development that they would like to see growth in such as farms/agricultural uses (69.6%), light industry (22.4%), tourism/recreational businesses

(12%), and home occupations (9.6%). Finally, respondents felt that there has been less farming (43%) and new businesses (2.3%) occurring within the town over the last ten years.

There are challenges that need to be addressed to support economic development in the town. The town's population has declined by approximately 112 residents over the last few decades. Limited broadband and cell service make it difficult for businesses and farms to operate. In fact, some modern agricultural equipment requires internet connections, which means farms may not be able to expand without improvements. Power infrastructure is also limited which acts as a barrier from business development. In recent years, small businesses have closed due to retirement with no one available to continue operations. Residents also rely heavily on private motor vehicles to access everyday goods and services, often traveling to Rome or Boonville for affordable groceries and other necessities. Local stores, such as Hilltop Market, tend to have higher costs, creating an additional hardship.

There are opportunities for Ava to grow that reflect its unique character and strengths. Tourism offers one possibility, with recreational trails for ATVs and snowmobiles, hiking trails, and agritourism experiences that allow visitors to enjoy local farms and farm products. While there are concerns about noise, trash, and trespassing, careful planning could help manage these issues while still supporting growth. Small-scale retail or grocery stores could make daily life easier for residents, by providing farm-to-table experiences, such as Amish farm stands, open farm tours, or on-site agricultural processing facilities, providing ways to support local agriculture. Mohawk Valley Edge is working to create opportunities for housing, small businesses, and farm-related industries that can benefit towns like Ava. The potential for development along State Route 26 also presents a chance to attract small businesses while preserving the rural landscape that residents value. Ava can use these opportunities to strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and ensure the community's economic viability.

GOAL: SUPPORT LOCAL AGRICULTURE, SMALL BUSINESS, AND TOURISM

Objectives

1. Expand broadband and power infrastructure to strengthen farms and enable new business opportunities.
2. Encourage agritourism, farm-to-table retail, and small-scale grocery or retail to meet local needs.
3. Promote business retention and succession planning, especially along Route 26.
4. Explore trail-based recreation and outdoor tourism opportunities while managing impacts.

GOAL: PREPARE FOR REGIONAL GROWTH WITH STRONG INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING

Objectives

1. Work with Oneida County and regional partners to meet housing demand from projects like the new Chobani facility.
2. Market Ava as a rural community for commuters while preserving its character.
3. Advocate for improved broadband, cell service, and power reliability.
4. Pursue grants for infrastructure upgrades that enable sustainable growth.

RECREATION

The town of Ava is dedicated to maintaining and enhancing recreational amenities that contribute to the community's quality of life. The town's primary recreational facility is a 6.6 acres public park that includes a small playground, pavilion, and picnic tables, maintained by the town's highway department and supported through town funds. The town plans on exploring park upgrades that include public restrooms, a community kitchen area, and park lighting to make the pavilion suitable for community rentals and events such as graduations and anniversaries. The town would also like to provide a small parking area with a paved walkway to increase accessibility. The Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority has offered to install a walking track around the park's perimeter which would benefit residents with the current lack of active walking trails. The establishment of a park committee will assist with overseeing and coordinating park upgrades with the installation of restrooms and lighting identified as priorities for completion within the next two to three years.

Beyond the town park, Ava offers a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities that reflect its rural and natural setting. Camp Kingsley is a 380-acre Boy Scout camp that provides recreation and skill building opportunities for youths and family members associated with the scouting organization. Camp Kingsley is not open for public use but does allow large groups to rent the entire campground for large events and activities. The town's waterways, including Point Rock Creek, East Branch Fish Creek, and Lansing Kill (which is stocked with trout), provide excellent fishing opportunities. Ava also features approximately 13 miles of snowmobile trails that are maintained by regional snowmobile clubs. The town does not have designated ATV/UTV trails although residents have expressed support for the creation of such trails. Currently, the town has limited access to hiking, biking, or cross-country skiing trails, with the nearest trail network located between Jackson Hill Road and Potato Road in Boonville. Expanding trail connections and diversifying recreation options remain long-term goals for the town as it seeks to promote active lifestyles and strengthen community engagement.

GOAL: IMPROVE AND EXPAND TOWN PARK FACILITIES TO BETTER SERVE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

Objectives

1. Explore the addition of restrooms, lighting, and accessible walkways to improve park usability and safety.
2. Consider creating a small parking area to improve accessibility for residents and visitors.
3. Evaluate opportunities to acquire adjacent land for park expansion and the development of new amenities such as athletic courts and picnic areas.
4. Collaborate with the Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority to establish a walking track around the park perimeter.
5. Encourage greater community use by developing a pavilion rental or reservation program for community events.

GOAL: DIVERSIFY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY.

Objectives

1. Assess resident interest and feasibility for new recreational options such as trails, athletic courts, and designated ATV/UTV routes.
2. Identify potential corridors and partnerships for developing local walking, biking, and skiing trails that connect with nearby trail systems.
3. Support existing snowmobile trail maintenance and coordination with local snowmobile clubs.
4. Promote partnerships with community organizations to host events, youth programs, and outdoor activities that make use of existing facilities.

GOAL: STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP.

Objectives

1. Reestablish the park committee to guide recreation planning, gather community input, and oversee implementation of improvement projects.
2. Develop a proactive maintenance plan in coordination with the town highway department to ensure long-term care of recreational facilities.

3. Pursue grant funding and collaborative partnerships to support park improvements, programming, and trail development.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The town of Ava provides community services through a small but functional set of public facilities that support local governance, safety, and community needs. The town hall serves as the center of municipal operations and is listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places. While the building continues to provide adequate service to residents, it requires structural repairs and modernization to ensure accessibility and long-term preservation. Improvements are needed to the building's exterior, support beams, insulation, and basement, as well as upgrades to meet ADA standards, particularly for access to the second floor during court sessions. The town hall's archive room is nearing capacity, prompting consideration of expanded or alternative storage solutions that maintain record security and preservation.

The town's highway department plays a crucial role in maintaining local infrastructure and ensuring public safety. The department is seeking to upgrade its overhead door and construct an addition to providing more space for vehicle storage and maintenance. The highway department's salt shed also needs some repairs but does not pose environmental risks.

Emergency and shared services are provided primarily through the West Leyden Fire Department and other regional partners. Response times, particularly on the western side of the town, remain a concern, and could benefit from exploring potential shared services with the town of Lee. The highway department serves as the town's designated emergency shelter as part of local preparedness planning.

The United Methodist Church provides religious services to the community. The church has been used to facilitate large meetings but is not used for non-religious events on a regular basis. The town does not have any existing partnerships with the church but there is potential for future collaboration or community engagement. The only active cemetery in the town is the Ava Cemetery located on West Ava Road and maintained by the Ava Cemetery Association.

As the town does not have its own school system, it relies on the Adirondack Central School System. Children in kindergarten through fifth grade go to Boonville Elementary, sixth through eighth grade go to Adirondack Middle School, and children in ninth through twelfth grade go to Adirondack High School.

GOAL: PRESERVE AND MODERNIZE THE TOWN HALL WHILE MAINTAINING ITS HISTORIC CHARACTER

Objectives

1. Pursue funding and grants, such as CFA, to support necessary structural and accessibility improvements.

2. Explore solutions to improve ADA compliance, particularly for the second-floor courtroom.
3. Consider materials and design approaches that balance historic preservation with durability and energy efficiency.
4. Evaluate options to expand or digitize the town's record archives to address limited storage capacity.

GOAL: STRENGTHEN MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Objectives

1. Support facility upgrades for the highway garage, including the overhead door and additional storage space.
2. Maintain and repair the salt shed to ensure environmental compliance and operational safety.
3. Enhance coordination with fire, ambulance, and law enforcement agencies to improve response times.
4. Explore shared service agreements with neighboring towns to improve efficiency and coverage in emergency situations.

GOAL: ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION AND EXPANDED USE OF COMMUNITY SPACES

Objectives

1. Identify opportunities to use existing facilities, such as the church or town park, for community meetings, events, and programming.
2. Promote partnerships with local organizations to expand civic and cultural offerings.
3. Encourage resident engagement in planning facility improvements and identifying future community needs.

PART III. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

This section of the comprehensive plan identifies land use policies to guide development in the town over the next 10-20 years. These policies focus on maintaining Ava's rural character, supporting agriculture and forestry, protecting natural resources, and encouraging growth in appropriate locations. Implementation may occur through planning tools such as site plan review, subdivision regulations, other local laws, and coordination with county and state agencies.

Basic Development Principles

1. Direct new development toward areas with existing settlement patterns and infrastructure.

Since the town has limited public infrastructure, growth should occur where road access, services, and development patterns already exist, particularly near hamlet areas and along existing transportation corridors (NYS-26). This approach helps maintain rural landscapes and reduces future municipal costs.

2. Support housing that meets local needs while preserving rural character.

New single-family homes should respond to local needs including aging residents, young families, and the local workforce, while maintaining rural density, protecting natural features, and preserving agricultural lands and open spaces.

3. Encourage development patterns that relate to the landscape and existing road network.

New development should follow the natural terrain, road layout, and historic settlement patterns to prevent the creation of fragmented developments.

4. Promote roadway layouts that maintain connectivity and safe travel.

Where feasible, development should create planned road connections. Cul de sacs and loop streets should be discouraged.

5. Protect agricultural lands and working landscapes.

Agriculture and forestry are essential to Ava's identity and economy. Unnecessary fragmentation of farmland should be highly discouraged, encourage continued agricultural use, and support farm-friendly land regulations.

6. Protect open space, scenic resources, and natural environments.

Development should respect Ava's streams, wetlands, forests, scenic vistas, and wildlife habitats. Environmentally responsible siting and design, recognizing that these resources define the town's rural quality and long-term resilience should be promoted.

7. Encourage development that is financially sustainable for the town.

Land use decisions should consider long-term municipal service costs. Development / growth should occur in a manner that does not burden taxpayers with unreasonable infrastructure expansion, road maintenance, or public service demands.

8. Maintain rural character while allowing reasonable landowner flexibility.

Regulations should balance individual property rights with the protection of community character. The goal is not for the town to urbanize but to manage growth so that future generations can experience the same rural quality of life valued today.

PRESERVING SENSITIVE LANDS

There are numerous areas in the town that have limited suitability or are unsuitable for development. There are other areas where development should be avoided due to the valuable natural character of the area in which the character would be lost or damaged if disturbed. Areas which are either unsuitable or fragile include floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, and stream corridors.

Floodplains

Character: Floodplains are areas which are completely inundated at certain times with water. They are usually divided between a floodway and a fringe area. The floodway is the area where floodwater must be free to flow completely unrestricted. The adjacent fringe areas are flooded but are not as critical to floodwater flow.

Where Located: Certain floodplains have been mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (see the Development Constraints Map in Appendix D). These include flood hazard areas which have a probability of flooding at least once in 100 years. These areas include but are not limited to East Branch Fish Creek, Point Rock Creek, Lyman Brook, and Harger Creek.

Consequences of Development: These areas are considered severe hazards to development. Floodway areas must remain completely undeveloped, as any structures in these areas may act as obstructions which impede floodwater, thus increasing damage and loss further upstream of the obstruction. The fringe areas may be subject to limited development where base flood elevations will not be increased. Any development which increases base flood elevations will increase flooding upstream.

Wetlands

Character: Wetlands are areas where groundwater is exposed on the surface of the ground. These areas often act as recharge areas, areas for filtering and cleaning water, and as significant wildlife habitats.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) currently regulates wetlands that are 12.4 acres or larger, or those identified as having unusual local importance. Beginning January 1, 2028, regulated wetlands will include those that are 7.4 acres or larger, as well as wetlands of any size that are classified as having unusual importance. Based on the DEC's informational wetlands map, wetlands are scattered throughout the town. According to DEC's informational wetlands map, Ava consists of approximately 498 acres of wetlands.

Consequences of Development: Wetlands are generally considered a severe hazard to development. Development can lead to loss of valuable and irreplaceable wildlife habitat. Wetlands are particularly important as they may directly recharge groundwater supplies and are vulnerable to pollution. Thus, in areas where potable (drinkable) water is obtained from groundwater, some wetlands need a high level of protection. Development can also lead to a loss of valuable open space. Development of these areas is expensive, as landfill is usually needed and flood protection is often necessary.

Steep Slopes

Character: These are areas which have slopes greater than 10 percent, which means that there is a vertical rise of ten feet for each 100 feet of horizontal distance.

Where Located: Steep slopes can be found throughout Ava with the highest concentration located near the southeast portion of the town (see the Development Constraints Map in Appendix D).

Consequences of Development: Slopes of less than 10 percent are generally considered to have slight constraints on development. Slopes between 10 and 15 percent are generally considered to have moderate constraints on development. Slopes greater than 15 percent are considered to have severe constraints on development. The development of slopes is not recommended for several reasons. There are some environmental concerns, such as erosion and stream sedimentation. It is also more expensive for communities to service development on steep slopes with roads, water lines, and sewage facilities.

Stream Corridors

Character: Stream corridors act as important fish and wildlife habitats. They may be important for their significance as drainage conduits. Some have relatively steep slopes.

Where Located: Named streams include East Branch Fish Creek, Point Rock Creek, Egger Brook, Lyman Brook, Harger Creek, East Branch Mohawk River, Wood Creek, Blue Brook, Turtle Lot Brook, Mill Creek, Clark Brook, Chase Creek, and Dunn Brook.

Consequences of Development: Stream corridors must be developed carefully so as not to destroy their amenity. Improper development can lead to erosion of the stream banks, resulting in siltation of the stream and the loss of stabilizing soil. Water quality can be impaired, and the recreational use of the stream degraded. The aesthetic qualities of the stream may likewise be destroyed by improper development, thus degrading the quality of life in the town.

LAND USE

The town of Ava is characterized by a distinctly rural settlement pattern dominated by extensive woodlands, forested landscapes, and open space. The town consists of low-density and dispersed residential development which consists primarily of single-family dwellings and manufactured homes situated along the road network. Limited commercial uses are present, generally located along NYS Route 26, serving residents and pass-through traffic. The town does not contain any

sizeable hamlets, however, the functional center of community activity is the intersection of NYS Route 26 with East Ava Road and West Ava Road, where the town hall, town highway department facilities, and town park are located. This pattern reflects Ava's rural character, low-density development, and strong association with its natural landscape.

Future development in the town should be planned in a manner that maintains the current settlement pattern. New commercial development should be focused along the NYS Route 26 corridor with limited additional developments occurring along the small portion of NYS Route 294. The town currently contains no industrial parcels or and does not anticipate the development of future industrial land uses. Development should be discouraged in areas that provide significant agricultural and environmental value. These areas include active agricultural lands, Veteran's Forest, wetlands, and state-owned lands. Protection of these areas supports the town's working landscape, preserves natural resources, and maintains open space and recreational activities.

Land Use and Development Guidance

- Limit development in riparian areas, wetlands, and flood-prone areas.
- Encourage conservation easements and the protection of scenic and ecological assets.
- Land subdivisions should preserve large lots of agricultural and wooded lands whenever possible.
- Residential lots should be large enough to ensure that sewage, which is disposed onsite can safely percolate, and that wells will not overdraw groundwater supplies.
- Trees, vegetation and other landscape features such as stone fences should be retained as much as possible on development sites. Uses should be appropriately landscaped so as to fit into the rural setting.
- Sites should be designed to protect important animal and plant habitats.
- Maintain rural aesthetics through context-sensitive design and open space preservation.
- Nonfarm intrusions into agricultural areas should be minimized, thus minimizing conflicts with existing agricultural operations.
- Encourage agribusiness, agri-tourism, and support for small and Amish-owned farms.
- Promote small-scale commercial uses compatible with rural settings.
- Infrastructure, such as cell towers, solar, and wind facilities should be sited so as not to detract from the rural character or negatively impact agricultural resources.

- Signs should be limited and placed so as to minimize impacts on naturally aesthetic views.

APPENDIX A

2025 AVA TOWN SURVEY

The town of Ava is currently conducting an update to the Town's Comprehensive Plan. The town, and the Tug Hill Commission, developed a survey to be distributed to town residents and landowners. Paper surveys were mailed to 408 addresses which consisted of residents and landowners. The surveys were returned to the town planning board who then entered the survey into SurveyMonkey. A total of 132 surveys were received, which is a response rate of 32%. This response rate is good response rate since it is over 30%.

1. **Have you ever visited the Ava town website at <http://townofava.org>?**
Yes.....53.9% No.....46.2%
2. **What is your residency status? (Please check only one).**
Town Resident...69.3% Non-resident / Landowner.....30.7%
3. **How many years have you lived/owned land in Ava? (Please check only one).**
1-5 Years.....6.3% 6-10 Years....12.5% 11-20 Years....22.7% Over 20 Years...58.6%
4. **What is your age group? (Please check only one).**
18-24.....0.0% 25-39.....11.5% 40-54.....20% 55-64...25.4% Over 65....43.1%
5. **Which of the following best describes your employment status? (Please check only one).**
Employed Full-Time.....37.5% Employed Part-Time...2.3% Unemployed...0.0%
Self-Employed.....10.2% Retired.....46.9%
Disabled.....3.1% Student.....0.0%
6. **What are the reasons for choosing to live and/or own property in Ava? (Please choose all that apply).**
Distance to work.....8.1% Tax rates.....21.1%
Rural atmosphere.....73.2% Cost of land.....20.3%
Affordable housing.....16.3% Quality of schools.....16.3%
Family homestead.....31.7% Distance to friends/relatives.....32.5%
Crime Rate.....22.8% Recreational Opportunities.....26.0%
Small Population.....47.2%
7. **How important is it to preserve the character of Ava? (Please check only one).**
Very Important.....58.3% Somewhat Important.....5.5%
Important.....33.9% Not important.....2.4%
8. **How do you feel the community has changed in the past ten years? (Please choose all that apply).**
No change.....11.7% Less logging.....13.3% More logging.....7.8%
More junk.....31.3% Less farming.....43.0% More farming.....10.2%
Abandoned structures.....30.5% More trailers.....8.6% More people.....25.8%
Less people.....3.9% New businesses..2.3% Improved roads.....18.8%
New camps.....17.2% More crime.....3.9% Recreational development..11%
9. **Which of the following issues are you concerned about? (Please choose all that apply).**
Property taxes.....72.4% Stream/water quality.....35.0%
Jobs.....6.5% Road maintenance.....30.9%
ATV's.....19.5% Snowmobiles.....17.1%
Fire and police service.....21.1% Pollution.....26.8%
Cellular towers.....22.0% Subdivisions.....26.0%
Hunting and Fishing.....17.1% Tourist businesses.....9.8%
Dog and animal control....12.2% Wind farm development....26.0%
10. **What types of development would you welcome to our community? (Please choose all that apply).**
Single family dwellings.....59.2% Manufactured home parks.....0.0%
Manufactured homes on single lots...31.2% Tourism/recreational businesses.....12.0%
Farms/agricultural uses.....69.6% Light industry.....22.4%
Wind turbine development.....12.0% Cell tower development.....23.2%

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<i>Snowmobile trails</i>	31.2%	<i>Multi-family homes</i>	3.2%
<i>ATV trails</i>	36.0%	<i>Subdivision housing</i>	3.2%
<i>Campgrounds/RV parks</i>	8.0%	<i>Home occupations</i>	9.6%
<i>Broadband access</i>	30.4%	<i>Short-Term Rentals (STRs)</i>	3.2%
<i>Other</i>	8.0%		

11. Which type of housing development should be encouraged in Ava? (Please choose all that apply).

<i>Single Family</i>	93.4%	<i>Senior housing</i>	20.7%	<i>Seasonal dwellings</i>	23.1%
<i>Multi-family</i>	10.7%	<i>Apartments</i>	0.8%	<i>Condominiums</i>	1.7%
<i>Housing developments</i> ...	4.1%				

12. Which areas of the town do you feel need further protection? (Please choose all that apply).

<i>Streams</i>	56.5%	<i>Farmlands</i>	74.8%	<i>Scenic views</i>	28.7%
<i>Open space</i>	32.2%	<i>Cemeteries</i>	35.7%	<i>Other</i>	3.5%
<i>Forests</i>	50.4%	<i>Wetlands</i>	29.6%		
<i>Historical buildings/sites</i>	37.4%				

13. Which of the following areas would you like to see growth in? (Please choose all that apply).

<i>Tourist attractions</i>	8.5%	<i>Hiking/skiing/bike trails</i>	28.8%
<i>Commercial development</i> ...	6.8%	<i>State-owned land</i>	11.0%
<i>ATV trails</i>	33.9%	<i>Town parks</i>	22.0%
<i>Snowmobile trails</i>	26.3%	<i>Hunting and fishing</i>	26.3%
<i>Roads</i>	28.8%	<i>Home occupations</i>	15.3%
<i>Small industry</i>	28.0%	<i>Agriculture</i>	64.1%

14. If grants were available, which of the following projects would you like to see the town pursue? (Please choose all that apply).

<i>Wind power</i>	25.3%	<i>Solar power</i>	20.7%	<i>New town hall</i>	20.7%
<i>Community center</i>	34.5%	<i>Emergency shelter</i>	29.9%	<i>Town park/playground</i> ...	43.7%
<i>Other</i>	18.4%				

15. Would you be interested in serving in a local government position (town board, planning board)?

<i>Yes</i>	12.1%	<i>No</i>	87.9%
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16. Would you support ATV trails inside the town?

<i>Yes</i>	55.8%	<i>No</i>	44.2%
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17. Do you support restrictions on development in the town?

<i>Yes</i>	60.5%	<i>No</i>	15.1%	<i>No opinion</i>	24.4%
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18. How satisfied are you with the following town services?

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No Opinion
<i>Town hall facility</i>	68.4%	6.0%	25.6%
<i>Building code enforcement</i>	50.0%	17.0%	33.1%
<i>Clean-up recycle days</i>	81.7%	5.8%	12.5%
<i>Fire protection</i>	70.1%	5.1%	24.8%
<i>Community events</i>	21.7%	13.0%	65.2%
<i>Road maintenance</i>	79.3%	9.1%	11.6%
<i>Snow removal</i>	84.6%	4.9%	10.6%
<i>Emergency services</i>	63.6%	3.4%	33.1%
<i>Town board communications</i>	34.2%	19.3%	46.5%

19. Would you be interested in helping the town planning board with review of these surveys and the drafting of a new comprehensive plan?

<i>Yes</i>	13.6%	<i>No</i>	86.4%
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APPENDIX B

Town of Ava SWOT Exercise – Notes

Session Facilitated by: Christopher Barboza, Jillian Lee, and Gabriel Yerdon from NYS Tug Hill Commission
Wednesday, November 06, 2024 –Town of Ava Municipal Building – 7:00 p.m.

In attendance:

Jeannie Dano (Town Clerk) deer101@frontiernet.net
Alex Stempien (Town Justice) astempien87@gmail.com
Lynn Traxel (Resident)
Jim Williams (Resident)
Karen Johnston
Irving Johnston (irving.johnston@snet.net)
Keith Redhead (Town Supervisor) avasupervisor@townofava.org
Rick Dano (Town Planning Board)
Brittney Thornton
Dave Thornton (Town Planning Board) davesdieselwelding@yahoo.com
Hannah Banks
Stewart Banks (Town ZBA Chair)

STRENGTHS (Current)

- Open Space
- Agricultural Lands
- Rural Character (Agcentric)
- Mohawk River and Wetlands (scenic and recreation)
- Boy Scout Camp: year round activity and various events
- Hunting
- Wildlife Variety
- ATV Trail Development
- Affordable Taxes, Land, and Electricity
- Waterfall on Clark Brook
- Headwaters for Important Rivers
- Amish Driven Cultural Diversity
 - Have blended well with community
 - Good addition to the community
 - Viewed as an asset
- Playground and Town Park
- Great Highway Department
- Low Crime Rate
- Great School System
- Employment at the Landfill (dump)
- Close-Knit Community
- Multi-Generational Families and Community
- Good Town Hall; Well Preserved
- Local Church (community picnic)

WEAKNESSES (Current)

- Wetlands
- Lack of/Limited Internet Access
- Spotty Cell Service
- Lack of Other Cable Services
- No Kitchen for Community Events (opportunity to install at town park)
- Illegal and Unnecessary Landfill
- No Local Convenience Store (groceries)
- Snowmobiling: Lack of Respect from Some Riders
- Lack of Snowmobile, Traffic, and Overall, Law Enforcement Presence

APPENDIX B

- Terrible Widespread Speeding Problem (public danger)
- Lack of Dog and Animal Control Enforcement
- No Street Lights (unlit area on blind hill)
- Posted Signs or School Zone for Amish School
 - Children walking to school
 - Other fatal Amish accidents
 - One mile school zone desired
- Pre-Kindergarten Doesn't Meet Community Needs (consistent long waiting list)
- Other Early Child Care
- Long Distances to Access Health Care
- Lack of Opportunity to Keep/Attract Residents
- Great Fire and Ambulance but Long Response Time
- Speeding Traffic from Boy Scout Camp (large volume)

OPPORTUNITIES (Future)

- Black Women's Blueprint Proposal
- Community Building at the Town Park with Kitchen
- More Community Events (like community yard sales and food trucks)
- Better Community Outreach Strategy
- Town of Ava Facebook Page
- Town Website Upgrades and Event Bulletin
- ATV Trail Development and Lewis County Trail Connection
 - Economic benefits
- Short-Term Rentals for Tourism (ATV and snowmobiles)
 - Could attract additional restaurant(s)

THREATS (Future)

- Black Women's Blueprint
 - Increased traffic and noise from events
 - Community tension
- Solar Development
 - More money offered to farmers per acre than active farming
- Plane Flying Over Town Regularly
 - Mineral development?
 - Other causes?
 - Plane registered in Ottawa
- Societal Problems (since COVID)
- Battery Storage for Solar Development
- State Push to Develop Housing Including Multi-Family
 - State funding could incentivize it
- Trespassers from Out of Area
 - Attracted by state land: no enforcement
 - State land could be better marked
- Dumping on Public Land
- General Development
 - Driven by cheap land and taxes
 - Can change the rural character of the town

Newspaper headlines in five years read:

"Nothing at All"

"Ava is a Quiet and Boring Place to Live!"

"Ava is Terrible, Don't Visit"

"Ava, Great Community to Live In"

"Hug an Amish (if They Let You)"

APPENDIX C

Listed Sites (State/National Register)

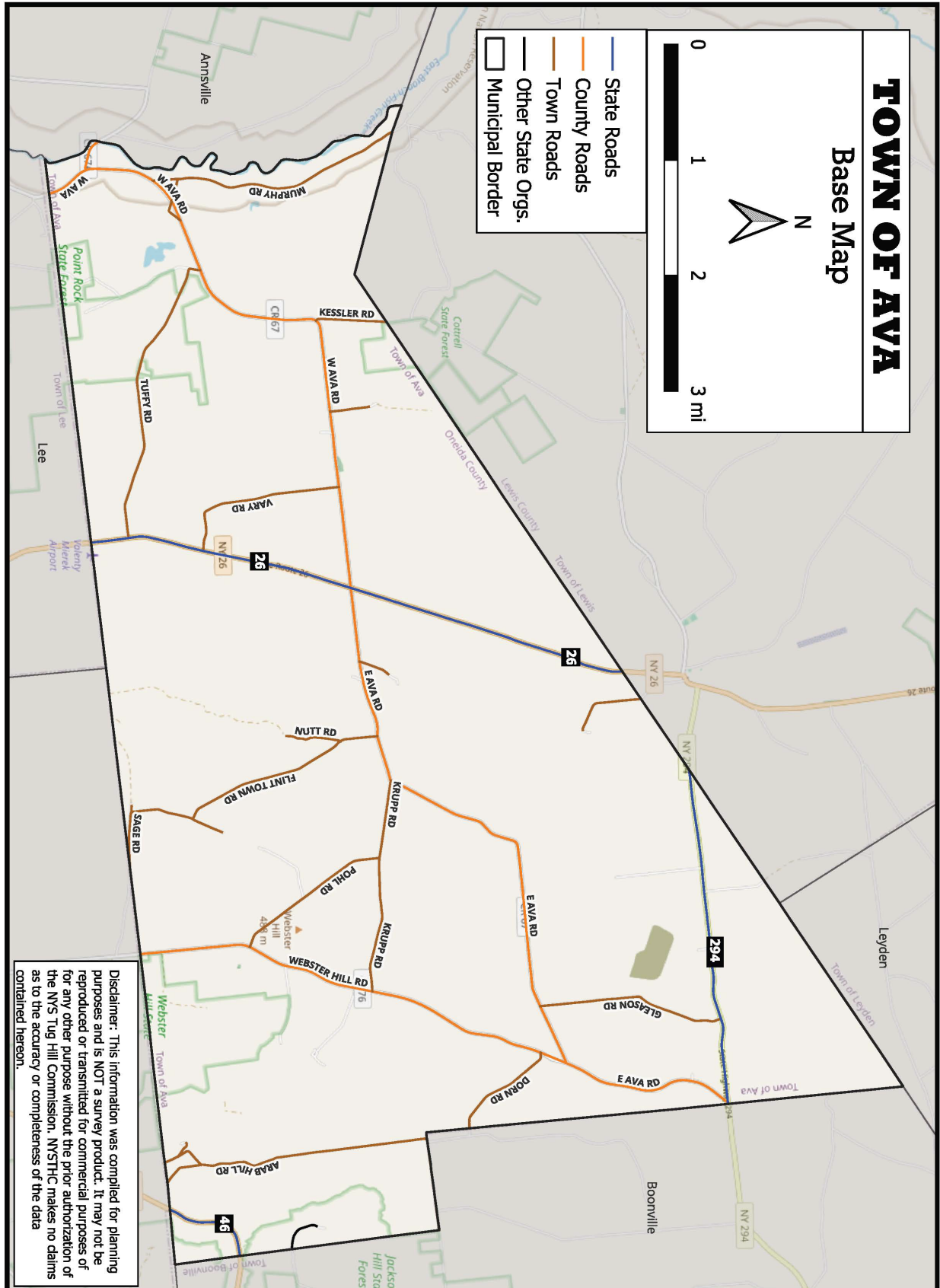
USN	Type	Date Listed	Name	Photo
06503.000007	Building	06/30/1992	Ava Town Hall: NY 26, Ava, NY	
06504.000028	Building	05/11/1973	Black River Canal Lock No. 37: NY 46, Ava, NY	
06504.000029	Building	05/11/1973	Black River Canal Lock No. 38: NY 46, Ava NY	No Image Available

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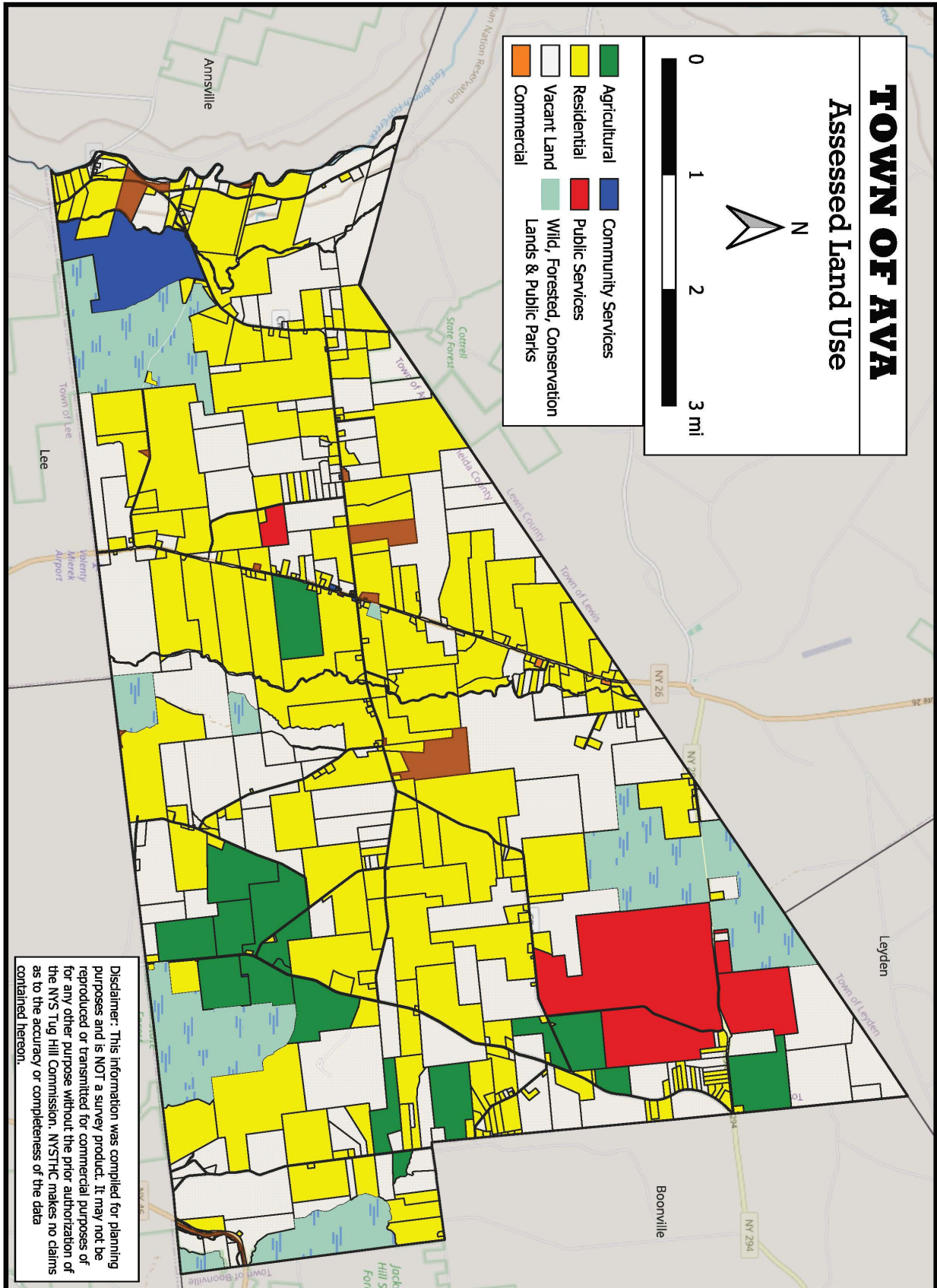
Eligible Sites

Project #	Type	Name	Photo
06503.000008	Building	Stone Fed/GR Transitional Residence: NY 26, Ava, NY	No Image Available
06503.000054	Building	Veterans Forest Memorial 1953 WWII Memorial: NY 294, Ava, NY	No Image Available
06503.000055	Building	C270037 Inlet/Outlet: Route 46, NY	
06503.000059	Archaeology	Lock #36 Site	No Image Available
06503.000062	Building	Black River Canal Lock No. 33: NY 46, Ava, NY	No Image Available
06503.000063	Building	Black River Canal Lock No. 35: NY 46, Ava, NY	No Image Available

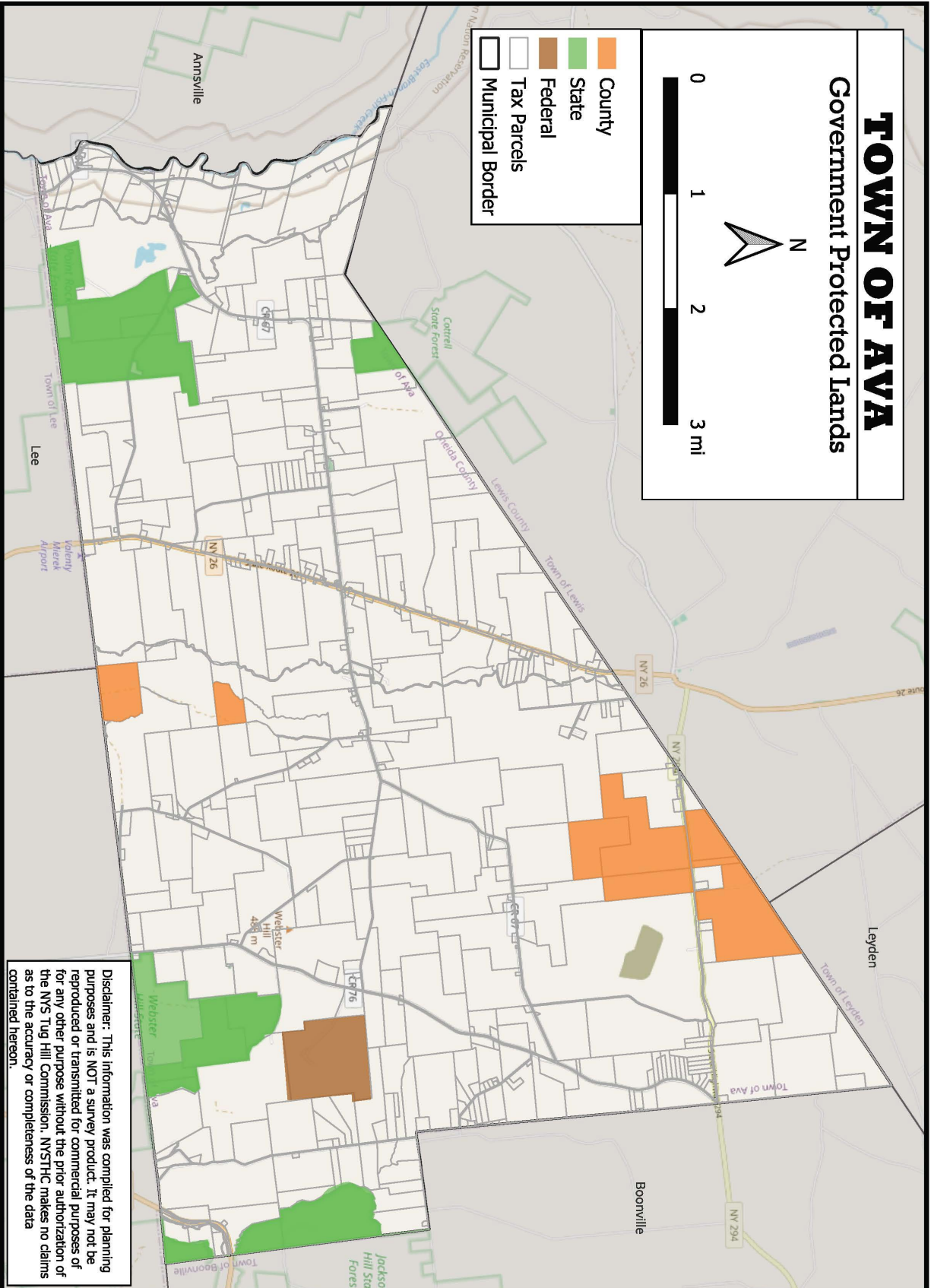
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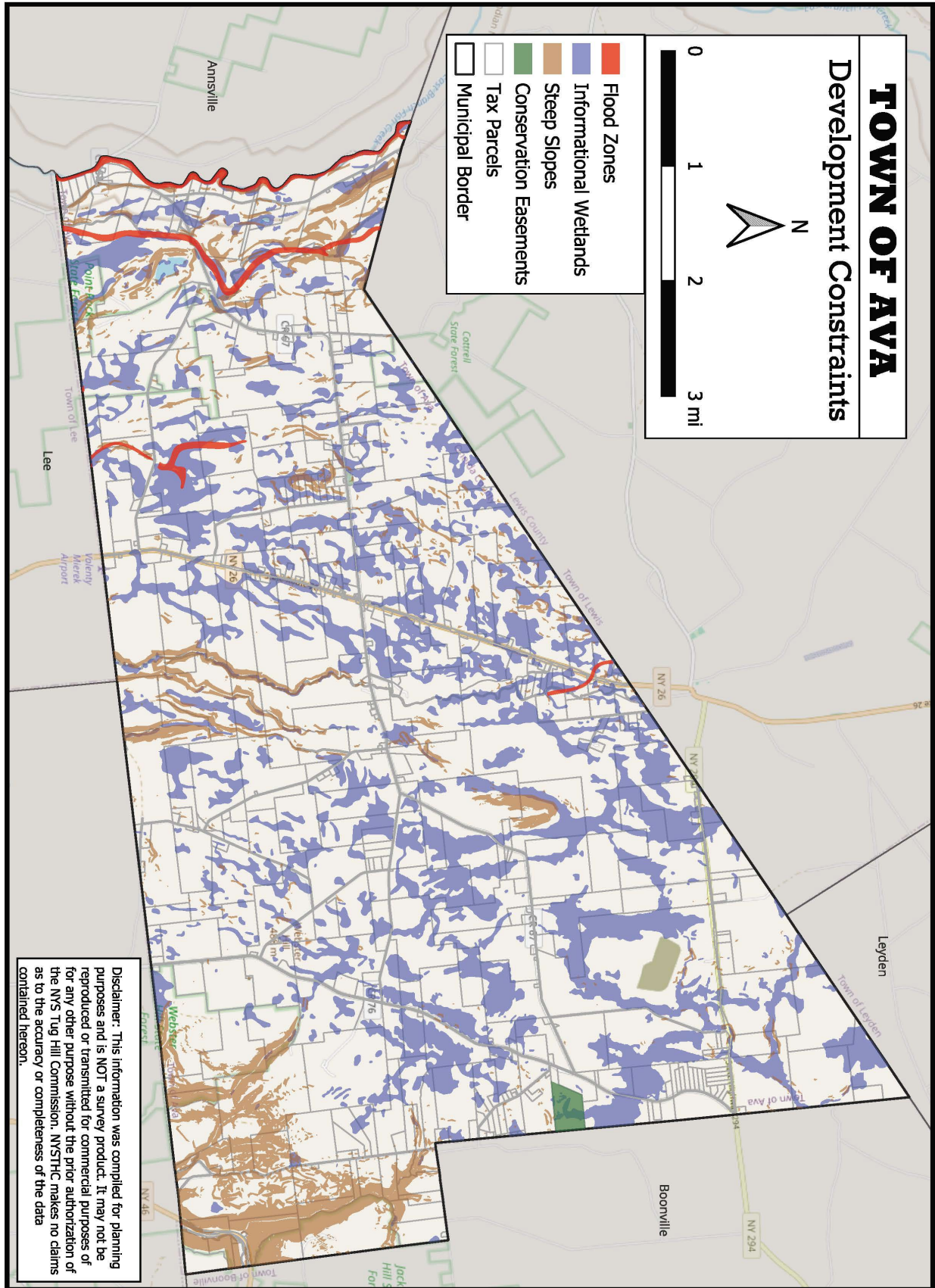
APPENDIX D



APPENDIX D



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APPENDIX D

