



Montgomery Planning

12/19/2019

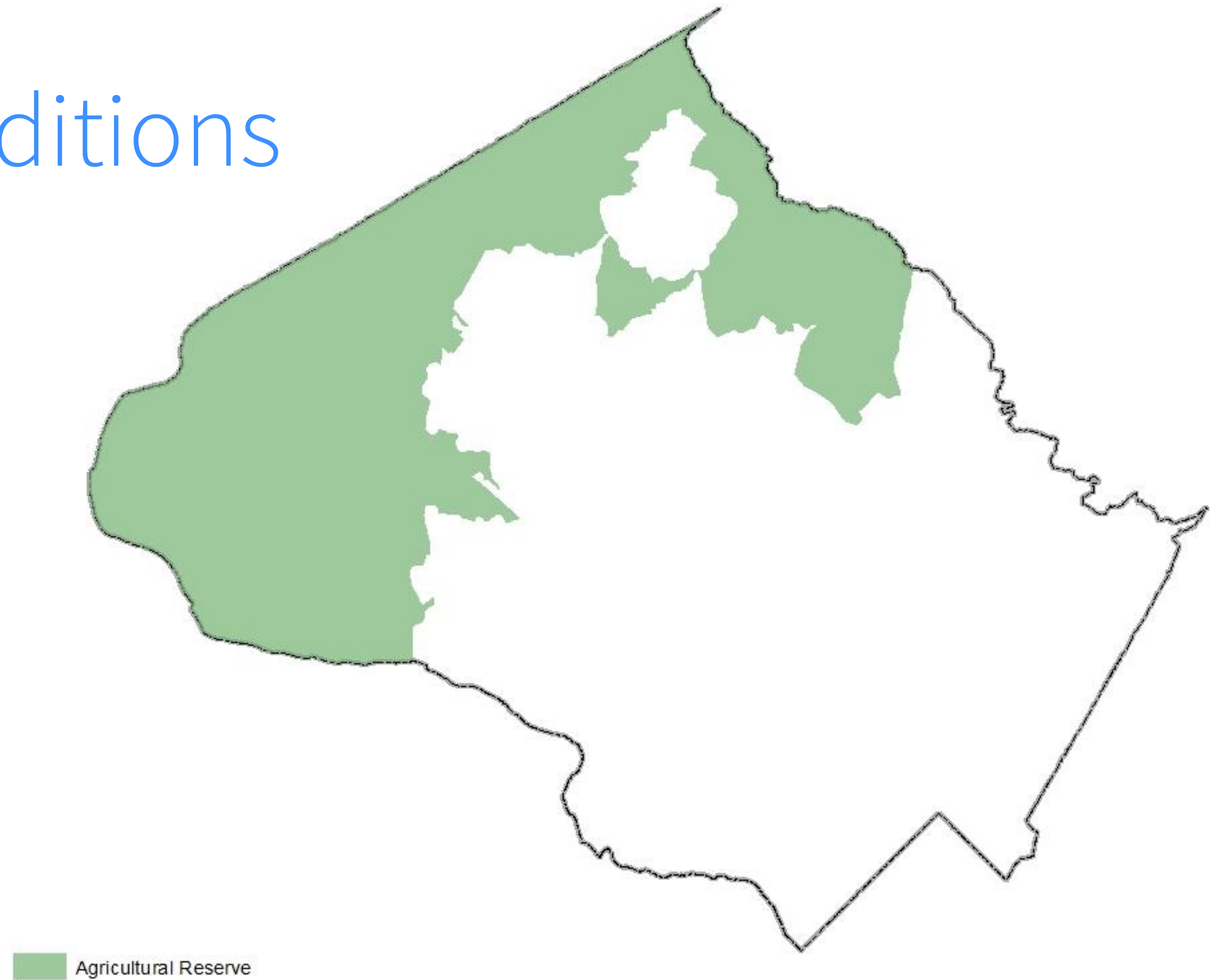
Agenda item 4

Agritourism Study

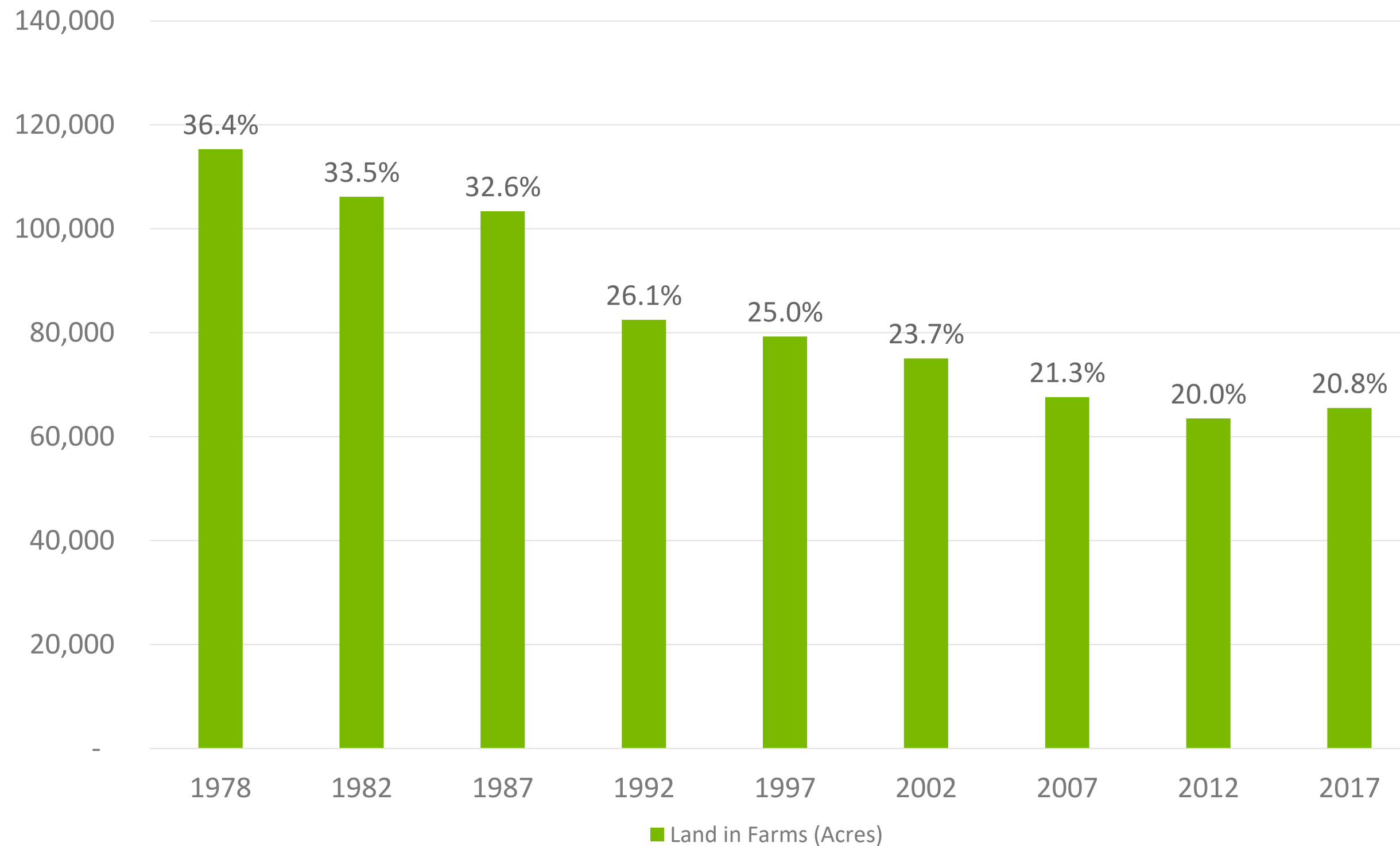
Planning Board Briefing



Existing Conditions

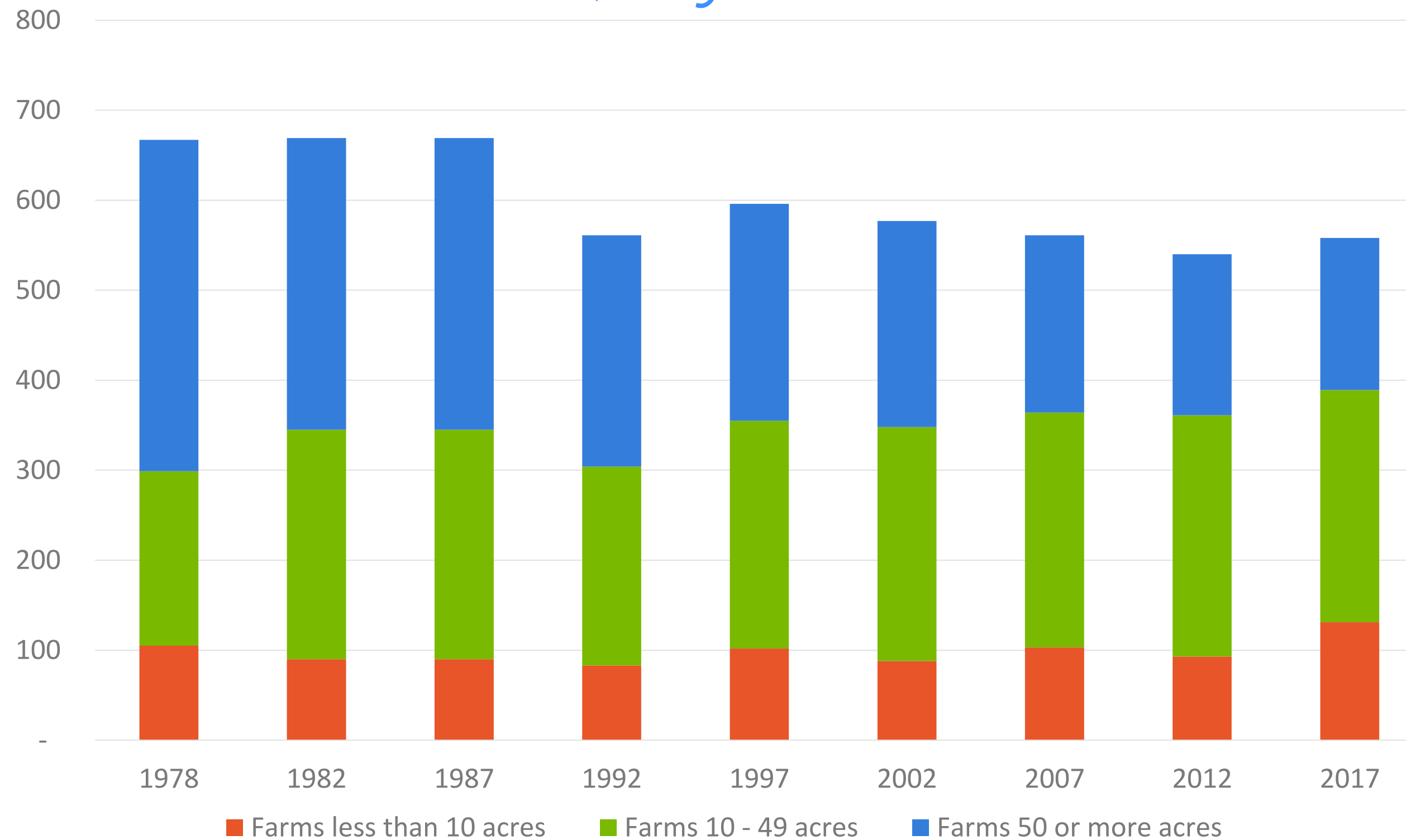


Land in Farms (Acres)

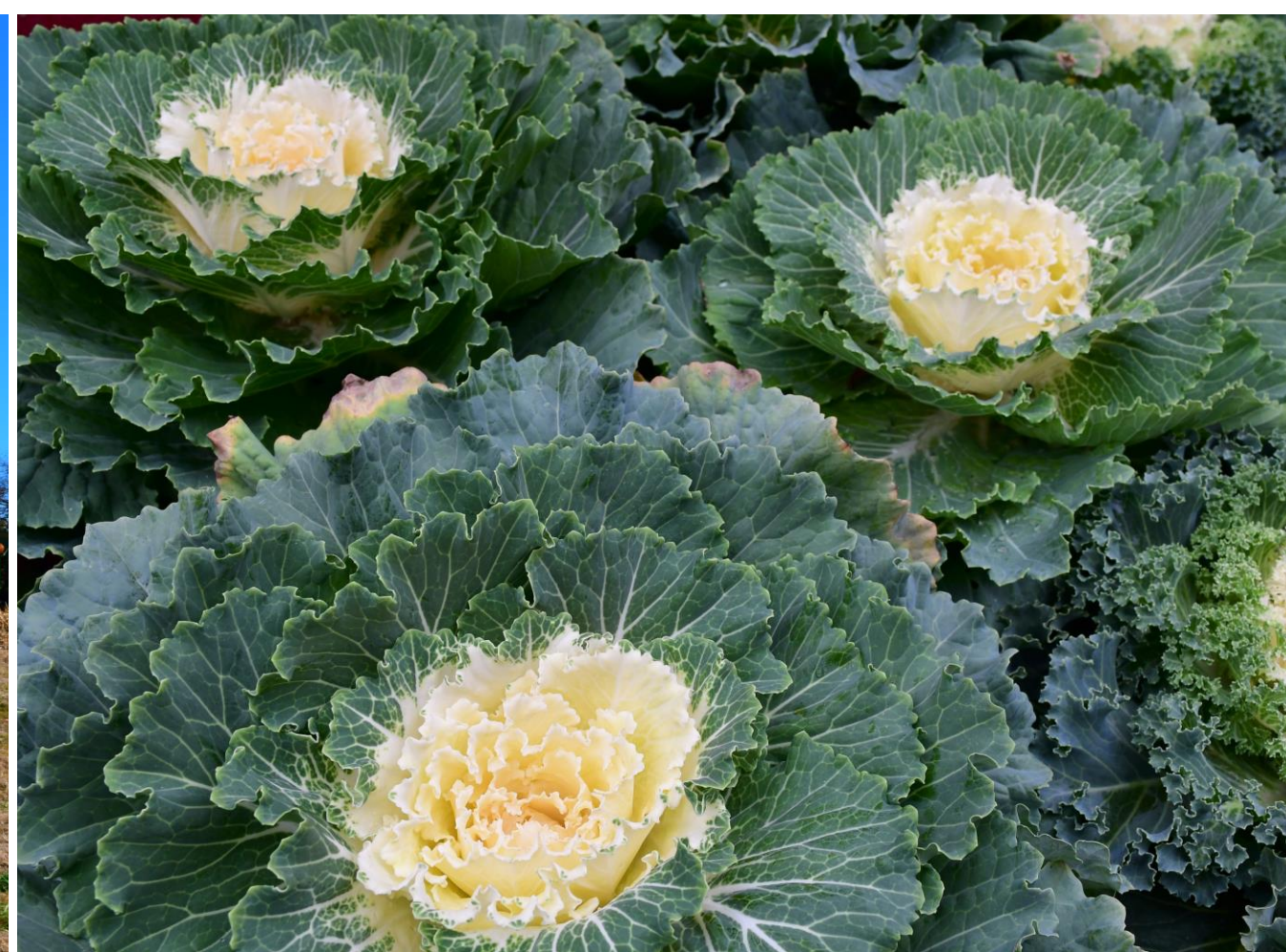


Source: Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)

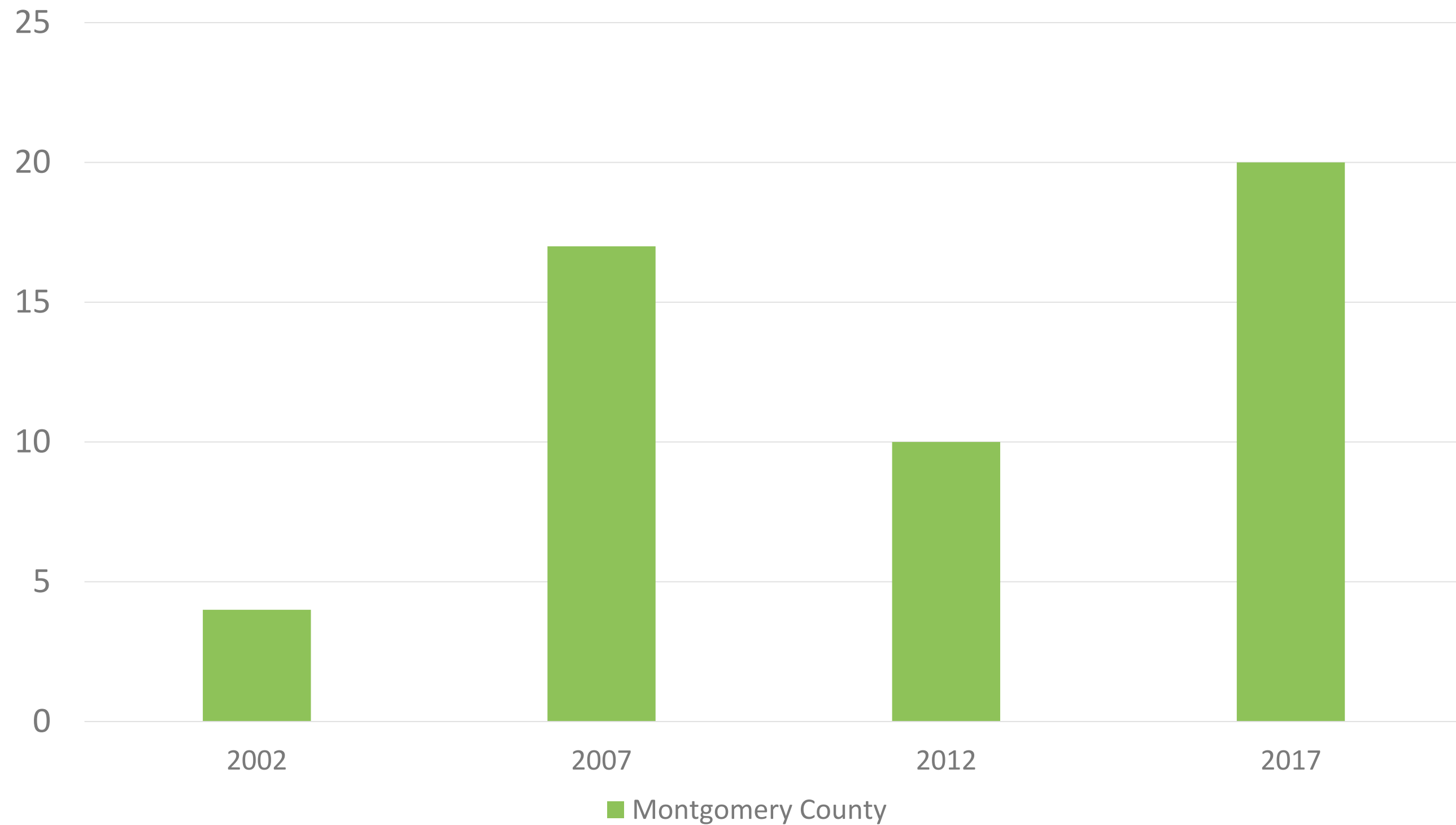
Number of Farms, by Size



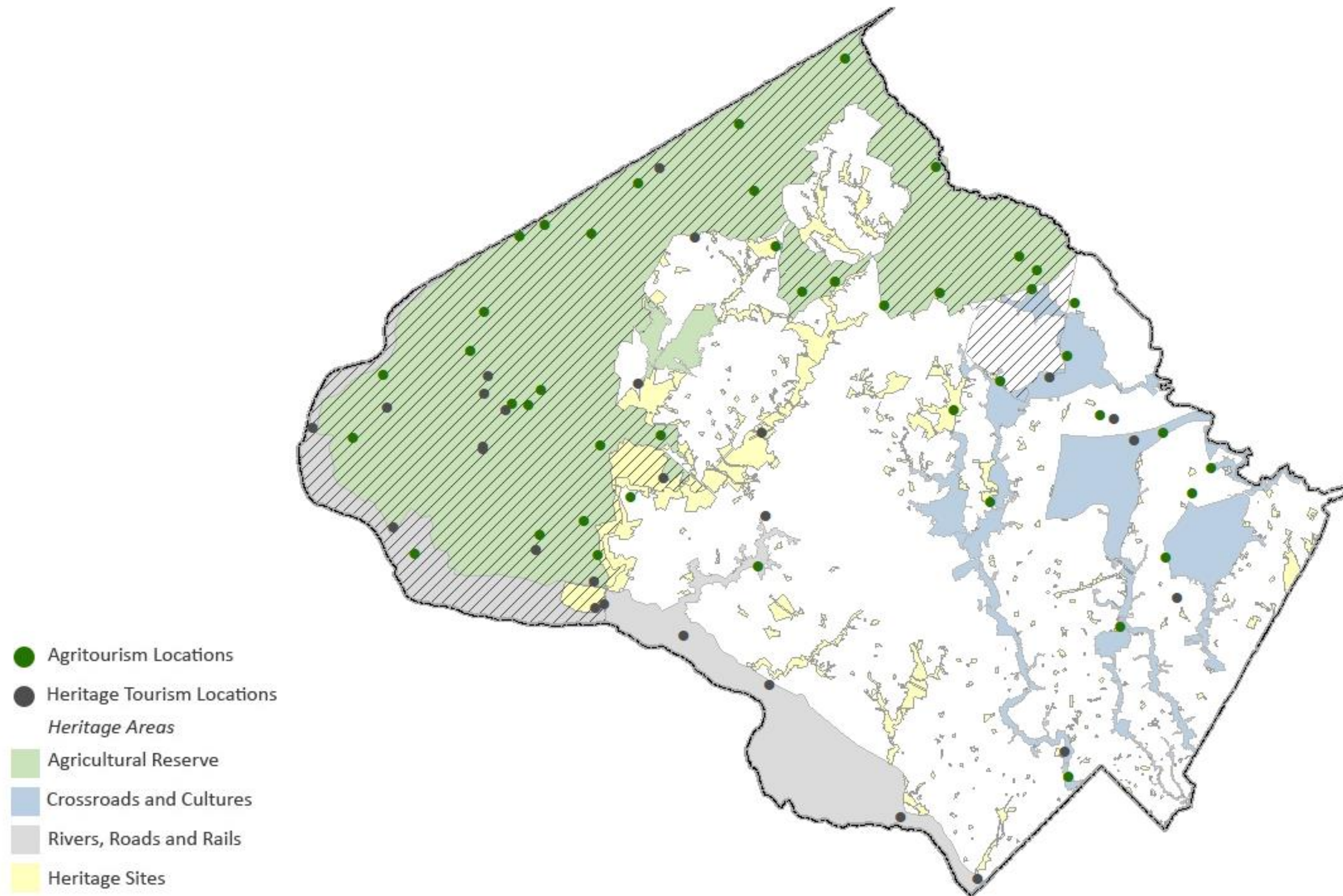
Source: Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)



Agritourism and Recreational Services



Source: Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)




Study Purpose



Study Process - Resources

- 1980 Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan
- 2002 Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan
- Agritourism Resources and Activities
- Agritourism Study Advisory Committee
- Comparative Review and Code Analysis





VISION: The Agritourism Study seeks to support the evolving nature of farming and farmland in Montgomery County through the promotion of agricultural education and tourism activities as well as historic and cultural resources. At the same time, the study reinforces the need to continue to preserve farming, farmland and rural open space in the county's Agricultural Reserve.

Study Themes

- The Ag Reserve and its natural resources should be protected and preserved, but also evolve to enhance economic viability of farming and agricultural land, including agricultural economic development through tourism.
 - As agritourism evolves, the Ag Reserve's unique ability to produce agricultural products must be preserved.
- The Ag Reserve has evolved since its establishment.
 - Farming activities continue to evolve to improve economic viability and reflect diverse interests.
 - Increased education and awareness are necessary to convey how and why we have the Ag Reserve.
 - Ongoing agritourism activities and events are increasing and evolving, with an increased interest in and demand for access to the Ag Reserve countywide.

Study Themes

- Challenges to supporting agritourism today, as well as in the future, include:
 - An inconsistent, undocumented process for agritourism businesses.
 - Providing a clear definition of what is allowed under the agritourism definition.
 - Adequate facilities and infrastructure to accommodate events.
 - Balancing the need for flexibility while applying clear regulations.
 - Inconsistent enforcement.



Study Goals

- Protect and preserve farming, farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.
- Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.
- Support agritourism activities with a direct relationship to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.
- Increase awareness of the Agricultural Reserve's assets through education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Agricultural Reserve.

Menu of Potential Solutions

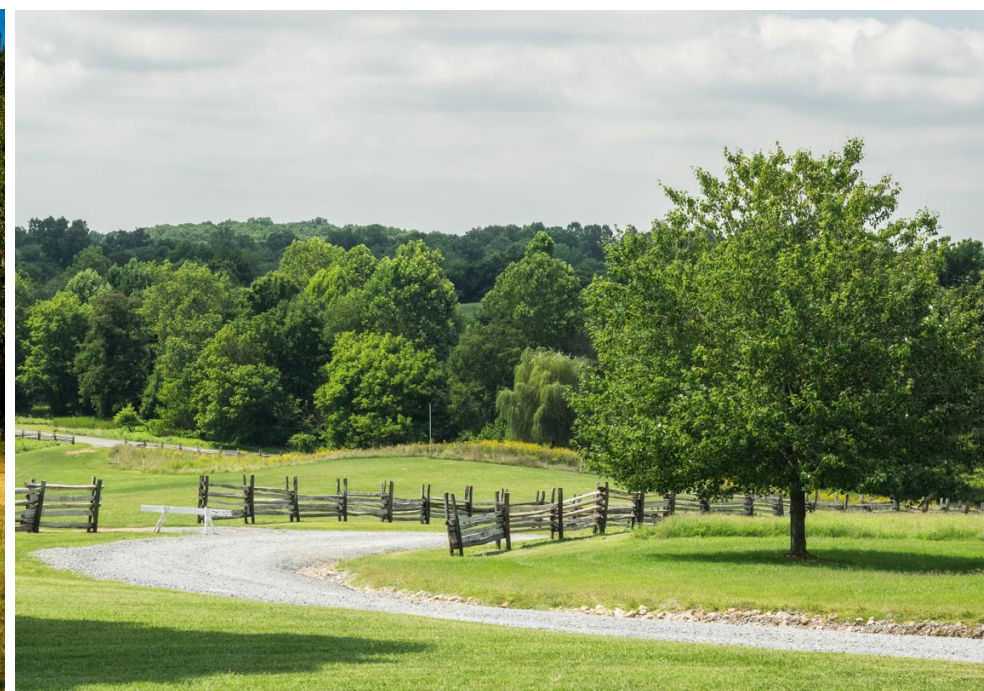
- 34 potential solutions that identify prospective processes and partners in implementation to advance study goals.
- Potential solutions include:
 - Criteria to confirm that agriculture is the primary use of new agritourism initiatives.
 - Develop an agritourism application and approval process to provide consistency, predictability and transparency.
 - Promote and market the Agricultural Reserve, agritourism and heritage tourism.
 - Define agritourism in the definition section of the Zoning Ordinance.
 - Establish an interagency working group to identify opportunities for refinement, enhancement and modifications to relevant chapters of the County Code to support agritourism.

Menu of Potential Solutions

- Potential solutions excluded from study, by Advisory Committee:
 - Monitoring and enforcement program to ensure agritourism activities are permitted and accessory to agriculture.
 - Zoning Text Amendment to establish agritourism standards for permitted, limited and conditional uses.
 - Zoning Text Amendment to establish an overlay zone for the Agricultural Reserve Zone to identify permitted uses and standards for permitted, limited and conditional uses.
 - Identify opportunities for “pre-event” ticketing of agritourism events to maintain appropriate event sizes.

Implementation

- Implementation of the potential solutions requires:
 - Leadership and investment from the public sector to pursue potential solutions in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
 - Coordination and partnerships among public and private agencies, institutions, advocacy organizations, advisory committees and residents.



Conclusion

- Staff requests Planning Board approval of the Agritourism Study and transmittal to the County Council for a briefing.

