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**Town of**  
**HARRISBURG**  
**Plan**

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ADOPTED BY TOWN BOARD RESOLUTION JANUARY 17, 2023

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## Introduction

### **PURPOSE** of the Plan

The purpose of the plan is to provide guidance for the physical development of the Town of Harrisburg for the future. It is based on and reflects the planning ideals laid out in the Planning Accord for Tug Hill and the Tug Hill Reserve Act. The plan is intended to provide a framework for land development and land subdivision controls. It will also help assure that the growth of the area will be in concert with plans for infrastructure and road development, and will not negatively impact natural resources and rural character. Finally, it is hoped that other governments (state, county, and other local governments) will find the plan useful in shaping their future development activities. It is the purpose of this plan to create a vision for the community's future that is a shared vision of the citizens of Town of Harrisburg.

### **PERIODIC REVIEW** and Update of the Plan

It is recommended that this plan be reviewed and updated every five to eight years by the Town Board and others, as designated by the Town Board. A periodic review will refresh the Board's perspective on the longer range issues affecting Harrisburg, and help to reinforce the link between day-to-day development decisions and longer range town policies. 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.

## Town of Harrisburg History

The Town of Harrisburg was formed February 22, 1803 and is the oldest town in what is now Lewis County. Sections of what are now Lowville, Champion, and Mexico touched the new Town of Harrisburg. Areas that are now Pinckney and Denmark were removed later leaving Harrisburg with its current size of 25,634 acres. Harrisburg is located in the west central part of Lewis County and is on the very top of the Tug Hill Plateau. Blessed with the highest annual snowfall east of the Rocky Mountains (around 300 inches annually), the unique geology and weather that defines Tug Hill is foundational to the metamorphosis of the Town. The Town of Harrisburg was named for Richard Harrison, who owned land in this area and in other northern New York townships. A convention to create a new county was held in The Town of Harrisburg at the Freedom Wright Inn on November 18, 1944. This was the convention creating Lewis and Jefferson Counties out of territory belonging to Oneida County.

Agriculture, including dairy farming, butter and cheese making has long been a part of our history. In the early days, oxen did much of the work on farms. Beef cows, sheep, and chickens were very important and there was even a fish farm. Crops harvested included winter wheat, oats, Indian corn, potatoes, hops, and apples. Dairy farming remains a staple of Harrisburg's economy.

Early industry in the Town of Harrisburg included sawmills, gristmills, ice harvesting, a glass factory, a cheese factory and a brick factory. Small business included butcher shops, taverns, blacksmiths and a greenhouse. Natural resources included maple sap, timber, potash, peppermint oil, spruce gum and natural gas. Many residents still tell tales of experiences with pockets of natural gas that lie within the Town to this day. Today, tourism is the fastest growing industry in the area with hunting and snowmobiling now being challenged by ATV's for dominance of the local recreational industry.

Currently, the largest economic project ever proposed is under development. The project is the Flat Rock Wind Park and, along with the Towns of Martinsburg and Lowville, Harrisburg will host almost one-half of the largest wind farm ever constructed in the northeastern United States. The wind farm will have 188,400 foot tall wind towers generating as much as 300 megawatts of electricity. Nearly \$300,000,000 will be spent in its development.

The earliest settlers were Puritans, but they never had a formal church. The earliest church was the Free Communion Baptist Church formed in the Town of Harrisburg on July 16, 1822 by a council appointed from people living in Lowville, Martinsburg and Turin. Saint Patrick's Catholic Church organized and erected circa 1850 was located on the Thesier Road, near the junction with Woodbattle Road. This was one of the first Catholic edifices in all of Lewis County. The church was destroyed by fire on May 22, 1889 under unusual circumstances, but a church cemetery, maintained by the Town, remains on the site. Many churches were built in the Town of Harrisburg. There are currently no churches within the town. The former Third Baptist church located on Route 12 now serves as the home for our current town clerk.

The schools in Harrisburg were established starting in 1814. At one time there were 12 school districts in the Town of Harrisburg. The 12 rural districts were declining and on October 25, 1935, school districts No. 1, 3, 7 and 11 were centralized with the Copenhagen Central School. Districts No. 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 were incorporated into the Lowville Academy and Central School System when centralization was completed on June 25, 1952. District No. 4 at Windecker continued with grades one through six with an average of 25 students until 1958. All Harrisburg's schools are now closed with the Copenhagen and Lowville Academy districts still serving the Town's students.

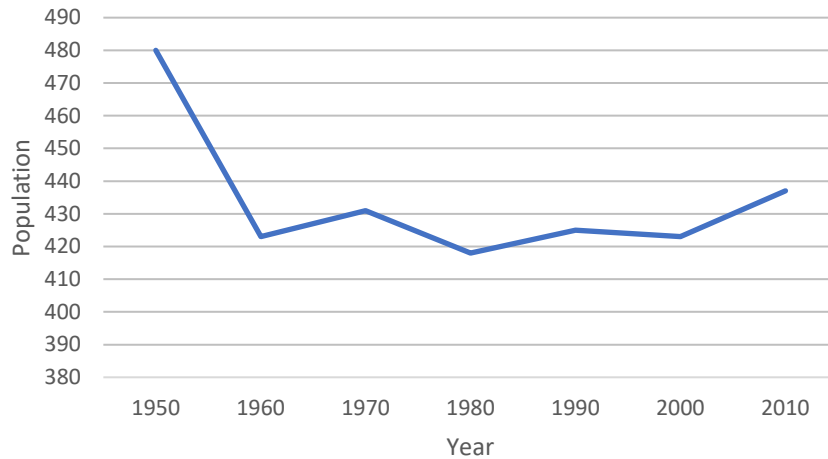
The current residents enjoy many activities such as hunting, fishing, ATV, snowmobiling, biking, bird watching and family get-togethers. The Town of Harrisburg's latest census shows our population remaining steady at about 423 people. The only storefront business currently located within the Town is the "Maples" restaurant (formerly "Deer Hill"). We have many townspeople who run businesses from their homes, including: woodworking, construction, logging, butchering, computer sales and service, and a welding and fabrication shop. A new cabin rental and RV park is planned for development on the north side NYS Route 177 near the intersection of the VanDressen Road. The Town plans to develop new land use and planning tools starting with a comprehensive plan for development. These tools will ensure that landowners and residents will have a voice in the Town's future development.

New municipal facilities were built in 2001 replacing the aging highway department garage and single room Town Hall. The new facility houses: the municipal offices for the town clerk, highway superintendent, justice court and the town supervisor. Additionally there is a public meeting room, kitchenette and a records retention room. The rear of the facility houses the highway department's garage and maintenance facility. The meeting room and kitchenette are available for use by Town residents and landowners.

The future is as important as our past! With the undertaking of a Comprehensive Plan we will develop a vision and a plan that will set a course to the future. The Town government has forged new relationships with the County, State and Federal Government agencies to identify and develop economic opportunities. From the past to the future, the Town of Harrisburg that recently celebrated its bicentennial will be participating in the bicentennial celebration of Lewis County in 2005. We celebrate our yesterdays; endeavor with enthusiasm today to ensure a brighter tomorrow.

# Town of Harrisburg Demographics Profile

## POPULATION TREND



### **POPULATION** characteristics

Harrisburg's population has been rising and falling since an initial drop in 1950, with no consistent trend. Between 2000 and 2010, the population increased by 14 people (+3.3%), a larger proportional increase than the county or state saw. The number of households increased by a larger proportion than usual for the area, but the size of households decreased dramatically.

In the same time period, the median age of residents increased by a large amount. The number of housing units grew by 38, a substantial 19% increase uncharacteristic of the area.

|                               | 2000 | 2010 | Change     | Change in Lewis Cty. | Change in NYS |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------------|----------------------|---------------|
| <b>Population</b>             | 423  | 437  | +3.3%      | +0.5%                | +2.1%         |
| <b>Number of Households</b>   | 139  | 160  | +15.1%     | +4.7%                | +3.7%         |
| <b>Average Household Size</b> | 3.04 | 2.71 | -10.9%     | -4.1%                | -1.5%         |
| <b>Median Age</b>             | 34.6 | 43.3 | +8.7 years | +3.4 years           | +0.4 years    |
| <b>Housing Units</b>          | 201  | 239  | +18.9%     | -0.1%                | +5.6%         |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Full Census)

**EMPLOYMENT/INCOME**

characteristics

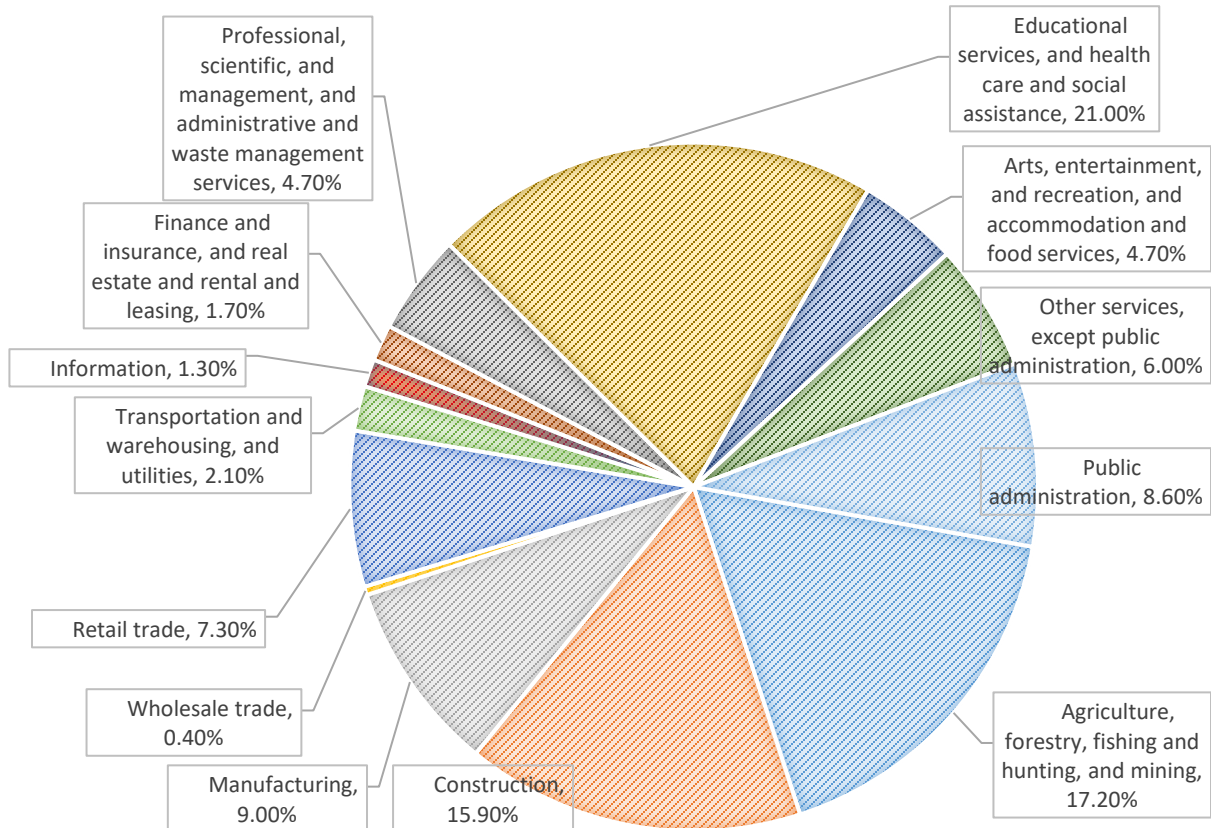
Harrisburg’s median income was roughly half its median housing value in 2015, which is considered generally healthy. 11.8% of the population was below the poverty line.

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <b>2015 Median Household Income</b>            | <b>\$71,667</b>  |
| <b>2015 % of Population Below Poverty Line</b> | <b>11.8%</b>     |
| <b>2015 Median Housing Value</b>               | <b>\$140,600</b> |
| <b>2015 Mean Travel Time to Work</b>           | <b>27.5 min.</b> |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey)

The average travel time to work in 2015 was estimated to be about 28 minutes. About 43.2% of residents worked outside Lewis County. Residents of Harrisburg were employed in a variety of fields, primarily educational/health care services (21.0%) and agriculture related (17.2%).

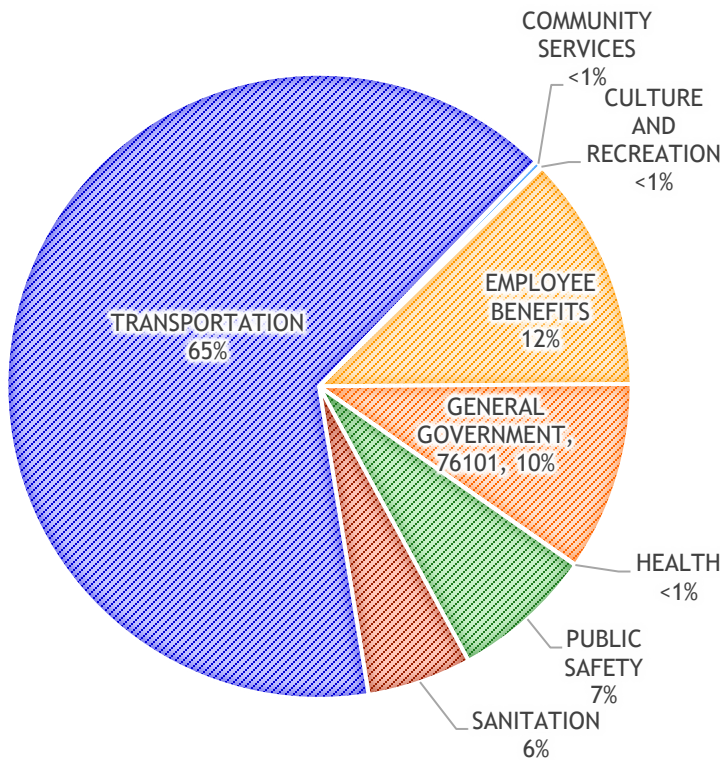
**EMPLOYMENT**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey)

Note: Data from the American Community Survey is subject to considerable margin of error, and is not exact.

# HARRISBURG



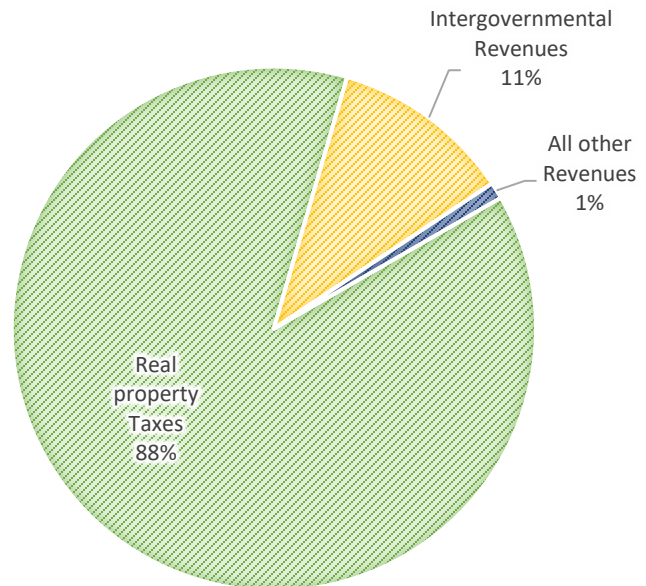
| Expenditures (\$)      | Harrisburg    |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Community Services     | 2533          |
| Culture and Recreation | 865           |
| Debt Service           | 0             |
| Economic Developments  | 0             |
| Employee Benefits      | 94950         |
| General Government     | 76101         |
| Health                 | 171           |
| Public Safety          | 57163         |
| Sanitation             | 41980         |
| Transportation         | 503080        |
| Utilities              | 0             |
| <b>Total by Town</b>   | <b>776843</b> |

## TOWN BUDGET characteristics

In 2015, Harrisburg's total revenue (\$1,178,112) exceeded total expenditures by \$401,269. Most revenues came from property taxes, accounting for \$1,034,990. Intergovernmental revenues (\$131,171) also contributed.

The greatest expenditures were Transportation (\$503,080), Employee Benefits (\$94,950) and General Government (\$76,101), together accounting for 87% of total expenditures.

## REVENUES



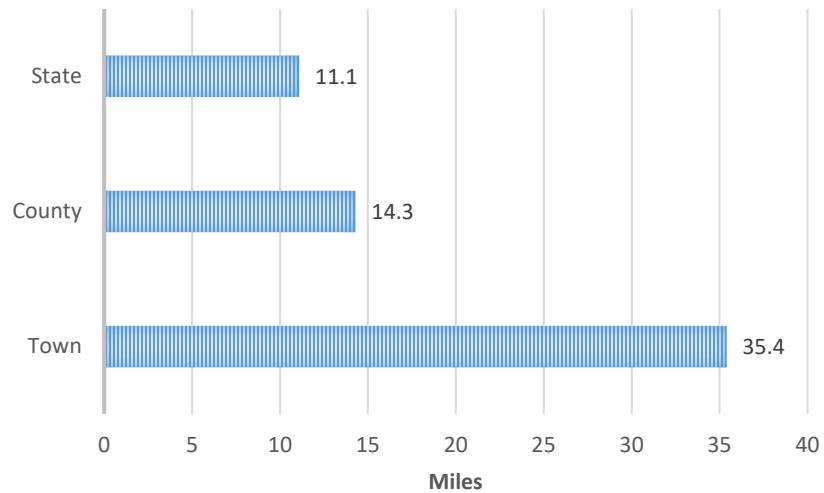
## ROAD MILEAGE

### LAND USE

#### characteristics

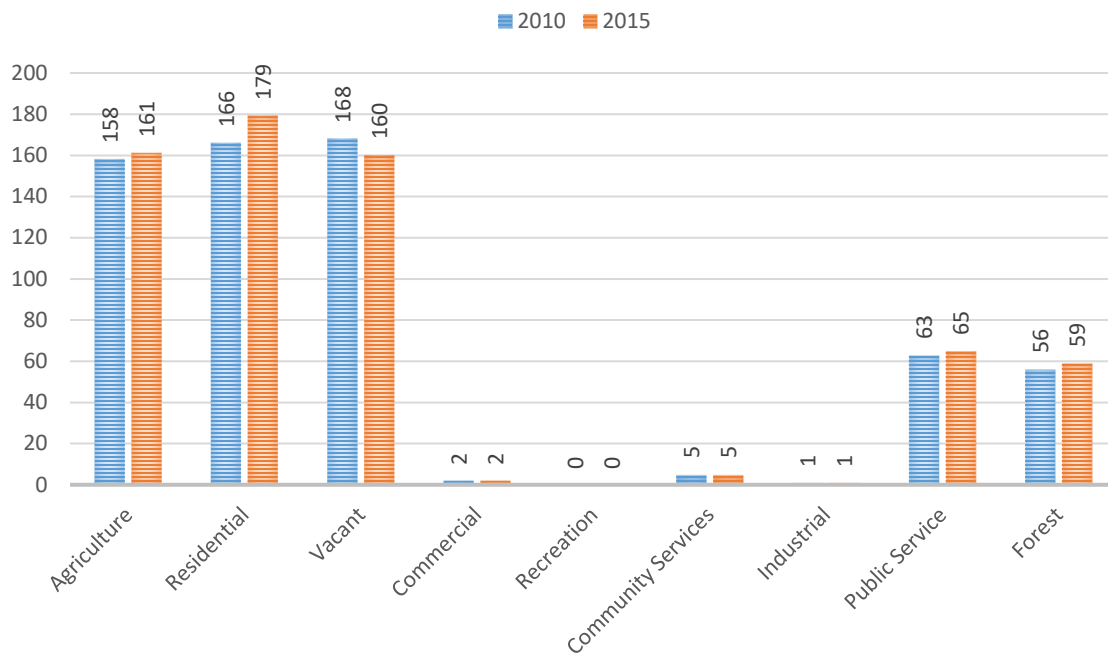
As of 2017, 58% of Harrisburg's roads are owned by the Town, 24% by Lewis County, and 18% by New York State. Harrisburg has a total of 60.8 miles of roadway.

Harrisburg's properties are primarily residential (28.3%), agricultural (25.5%), and vacant (25.3%). During the five years from 2010 and 2015, there was an increase of 13 residential (+7.8%), 3 agriculture, 3 forest and 2 public service properties. At the same time Harrisburg lost 8 vacant properties (-4.8%). Bear in mind that this data only captures the number of tax parcels in Harrisburg, not the size. For more complete information, refer to the Assessed Land Use map that follows in this document.



Source: NYS Dept. of Transportation, 2017

## TAX PARCELS BY PROPERTY CLASS



Source: NYS Office of Real Property Tax Svcs.

## Town of Harrisburg Community Resources Profile

Harrisburg is in Lewis County, bordered by the town of Denmark to the north, Lowville to the east, Martinsburg and Montague to the south, and Pinckney to the west. State Route 12, which connects Watertown to the Lowville and Rome areas, is the busiest thoroughfare in Harrisburg, with an average daily traffic of 2120 vehicles in 2015. State Route 177 that connects Adams Center to Lowville also passes through Harrisburg. The town contains portions of Lewis County Agricultural District #6.

### **COMMUNITY BUILDINGS**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Harrisburg<br>Town Hall and<br>Highway Garage | Approximately 14,400 sq. ft.<br>7886 Cobb Rd., Harrisburg, NY |
|---|---|



Harrisburg's primary municipal building is the Town Hall and Highway Garage in the center of the town. It is located where Sweet Road meets Cobb Road, facing Cobb Creek State Forest to the west.

### **PUBLIC LANDS**

|   |                                    |               |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------|
|  | Cobb Creek State Forest            | • 2,185 acres |
|  | Grant Powell Memorial State Forest | • 8,077 acres |

Harrisburg contains the entirety of Cobb Creek State Forest (Thesier Road), a wooded area centered around Cobb and Mud Creeks. Along with Deer River and Silver Creek to the west, the forest provides fishing and hunting opportunities. A small piece of Grant Powell Memorial State Forest (Rector Road) is in the southern part of Harrisburg.

Note that not the entire acreage of each park (unless otherwise stated) is within the town of Harrisburg.

## Goals for the Future

**1.0 Retain the quality of our area's surface and groundwater. These waters are essential to providing individual and municipal water supplies. They are essential to many industries of our area. They are important to the retention of fishing opportunities and wildlife habitat.**

- 1.1 Discourage adverse development near major wetlands and concentrations of wetlands.
- 1.2 Discourage adverse development near major stream corridors.
- 1.3 Discourage adverse development near significant springs, wellhead areas of water supply systems, and aquifers.
- 1.4 Continue to identify and map major wetlands, concentrations of wetlands, major stream corridors, significant springs, water supply well head areas, and aquifers.
- 1.5 Raise awareness of the importance of Tug Hill waters.

**2.0 Retain major forested areas most important to forest industry, hunting, fishing, and other types of recreation. Major blocks of forest land on Tug Hill are not only important for retaining the area's economy and recreation opportunities, they are also important in providing wildlife habitat and the very character of the area. In addition, Tug Hill's vast reaches of forest are key to maintaining the purity of its waters and to controlling rates of runoff.**

- 2.0 Continue to identify major forested areas.
- 2.1 Discourage subdivision and development that would take major forested lands out of productive use for forest industry, hunting, fishing and other types of recreation.
- 2.2 Discourage unreasonable restrictions on forestry activities that adversely affect businesses.
- 2.3 Encourage forestry-related businesses as a means of maintaining a healthy economy, and as a means of retaining large parcels of forestland.
- 2.4 Encourage educational programs that show the importance of forested lands to the area's environment, economy and recreational opportunities.
- 2.5 Promote sound forestry practices for all commercial and private harvesting through the establishment of minimum forest management standards.

**3.0 Retain the area's most important wildlife habitat and unique areas to conserve hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities, and to help retain the character and biological richness of our area. Important wildlife habitat areas and unique areas such as our gulfs are a significant part of the character of our heritage, and can provide important recreational opportunities. They also are of great importance to our economy because of the economic contributions hunting and fishing make to the area, and the economic benefit that comes from the viewing of wildlife and scenery by snowmobilers, skiers, hikers, motorists, and others.**

3.1 Discourage adverse development in important wildlife and plant habitat areas, and in and near gulfs.

3.2 Support town-by-town identification of important wildlife habitat and unique areas. Encourage further research to identify such areas.

3.3 Encourage educational programs regarding the importance and benefit of habitat and unique areas for use in schools and with civic and adult groups.

**4.0 Retain area's existing farms and best farm soils for farm production. Local action alone cannot retain our farms. This depends on the individual actions of our farmers, the natural economy and state and national farm policy. Locally, we can take actions that help keep good farm land from inappropriate development and help farm diversification.**

4.1 Support identification of important farm lands, and updates of existing farm land inventories.

4.2 Update land use controls that would limit farm lands being taken out of production.

4.3 Support voluntary actions taken by individual farmers to keep their farms in production, through tools such as ag districts, and ag land assessments.

4.4 Support programs to help strengthen dairy farming and to help farmers that wish to diversify their operations.

4.5 Encourage educational programs that demonstrate to school students and adults the importance of farming to our area.

4.6 Discourage development which would tend to disrupt agricultural practices.

4.7 Encourage only those land uses which lend support to the agricultural industry.

**5.0 Retain private and public hunting and fishing opportunities, and other outdoor recreational activities, in our area.**

- 5.1 Support voluntary actions, of private landowners to improve hunting, fishing and other recreational access to public lands designated for these uses, such as the sale of access easements, or involvement in fish and wildlife cooperator programs.
- 5.2 Discourage actions that would lead to the subdivision of lands important to hunting, fishing and other recreation where that subdivision would remove lands from such use.
- 5.3 Identify areas important to recreation. These might include designated public motorized and nonmotorized recreation trails, public roads opened for recreational trail use, and parking areas.
- 5.4 Encourage educational programs that demonstrate the importance of hunting, fishing and recreation to our way of life and our area's economy. Also encourage educational programs and appropriate law enforcement to protect private property rights and to provide safe hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities.
- 5.5 Direct the development of active recreation facilities and programs to areas near population concentrations where services can be provided more economically.
- 5.6 Encourage the proper design and management of passive recreation activities in the more remote areas in order to conserve the water and forest resources and to minimize change to the area's character.

**6.0 Retain historic sites and structures that are important to the character of our area.**

- 6.1 Identify historic sites and structures.
- 6.2 Discourage development that would diminish the quality of historic sites and structures through town planning and land use controls.

## **7.0 Control the costs of public road maintenance.**

- 7.1 Discourage new public roads into or across remote areas not now served by public roads, especially in the core forest of our area, in areas that would lead to the breakup of lands important to forest management, wildlife, farming, hunting, fishing and other recreation.
- 7.2 Identify portions of roads that might be appropriate for some form of abandonment, minimum maintenance designation, or seasonal use designation.
- 7.3 Support state legislation that would limit town responsibilities for maintenance on designated remote roads.
- 7.4 Discourage development of year-round residences along seasonal roads.

## **8.0 Help keep hamlets good places to live.**

- 8.1 Plan for hamlet improvement projects, and apply for grants to assist in such work.
- 8.2 Direct development, through regulation and other means, into and around already existing hamlets and communities away from those portions of the region where significant physical and economic limitations to growth exist.

## Town of Harrisburg Development Laws

The Town of Harrisburg Zoning Law was adopted as “Local Law #1 of 1988.” This was amended by local laws in 1991, 1992, 1996, 1999, and 2011. The town has a subdivision law adopted first in 1985.

The town has also adopted the following laws: “Mobile Home Ordinance of the Town of Harrisburg” (date unknown), a law “providing for environmental quality review of actions which may have a significant effect on the environment” (1978), “Town of Harrisburg On-site Sewage Disposal Law” (1985) and a law establishing minimum maintenance roads (2006).

### **LAND USE & ZONING laws**

The Town of Harrisburg Zoning Law has been tweaked over the last 30 years. It establishes five districts, two of which are floating:

- **Agricultural/Rural Residential** – To preserve open space and natural resources and to promote residential development, open space, and other uses complementary to residential development.
- **River Front Conservation** – To preserve Deer River for its natural resources and scenic value.
- **Highway** – To encourage mixed development of commercial and residential uses of moderate density.
- **Industrial (floating)**
- **Multi-Family Mixed-Use/Mobile Home Parks (floating)**

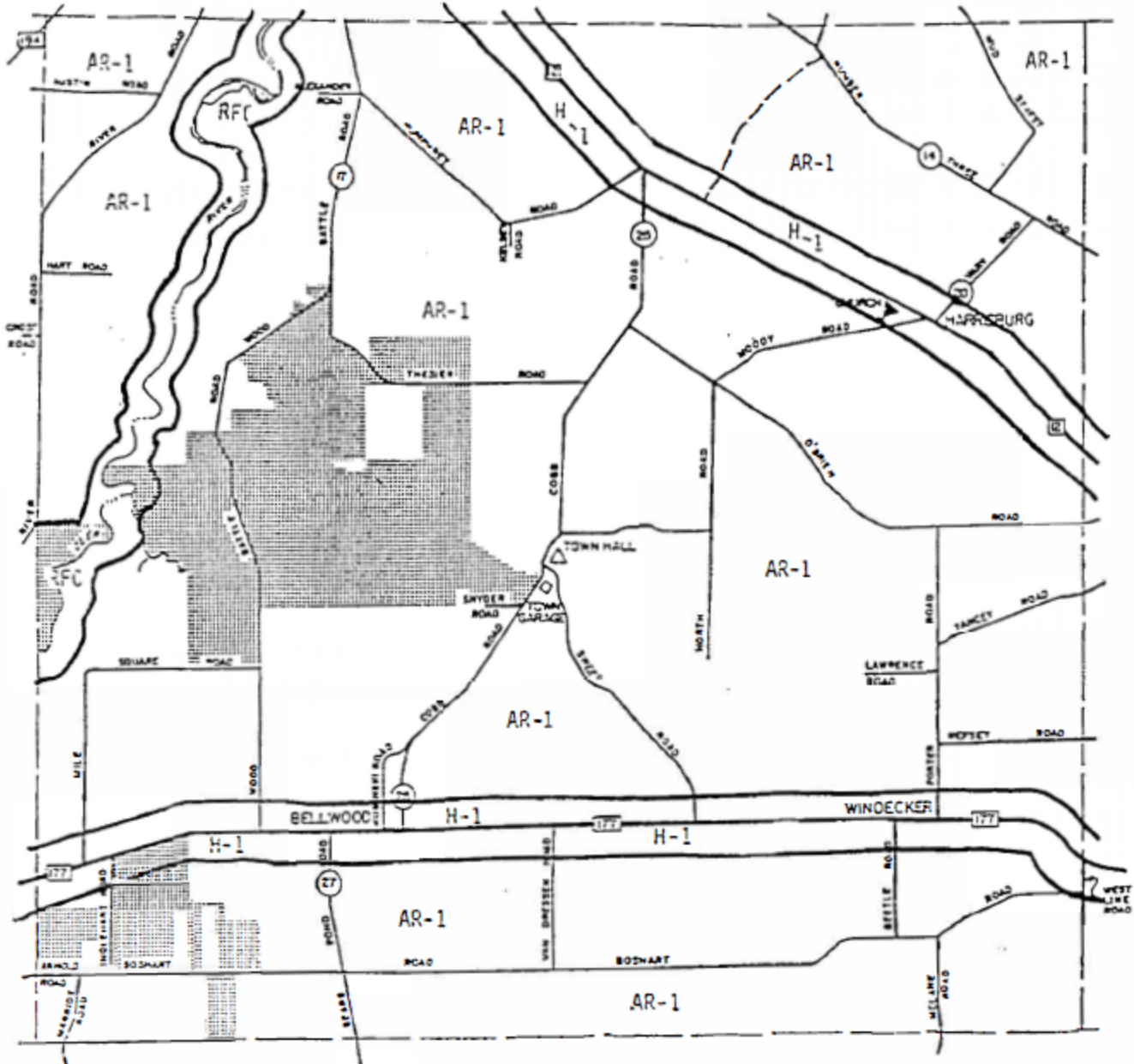
The law defines general regulations for all districts (and district-specific regulations), such as uses permitted, lot sizes, height, distance from road, and waste disposal standards. The law outlines processes and procedures and provides rules for amending the law, changing zoning, and applying for land use permits.

Agricultural parcels in Harrisburg are additionally subject to New York State laws such as Article 25AA.

### **SUBDIVISION laws**

The Town of Harrisburg Subdivision Law regulates the process for creating subdivisions. It provides general design standards and road standards, and outlines cluster development requirements. The Town of Harrisburg’s authority to maintain development standards and outline development procedures is further protected by this law.

# TOWN OF HARRISBURG ZONING MAP



**LEGEND:**

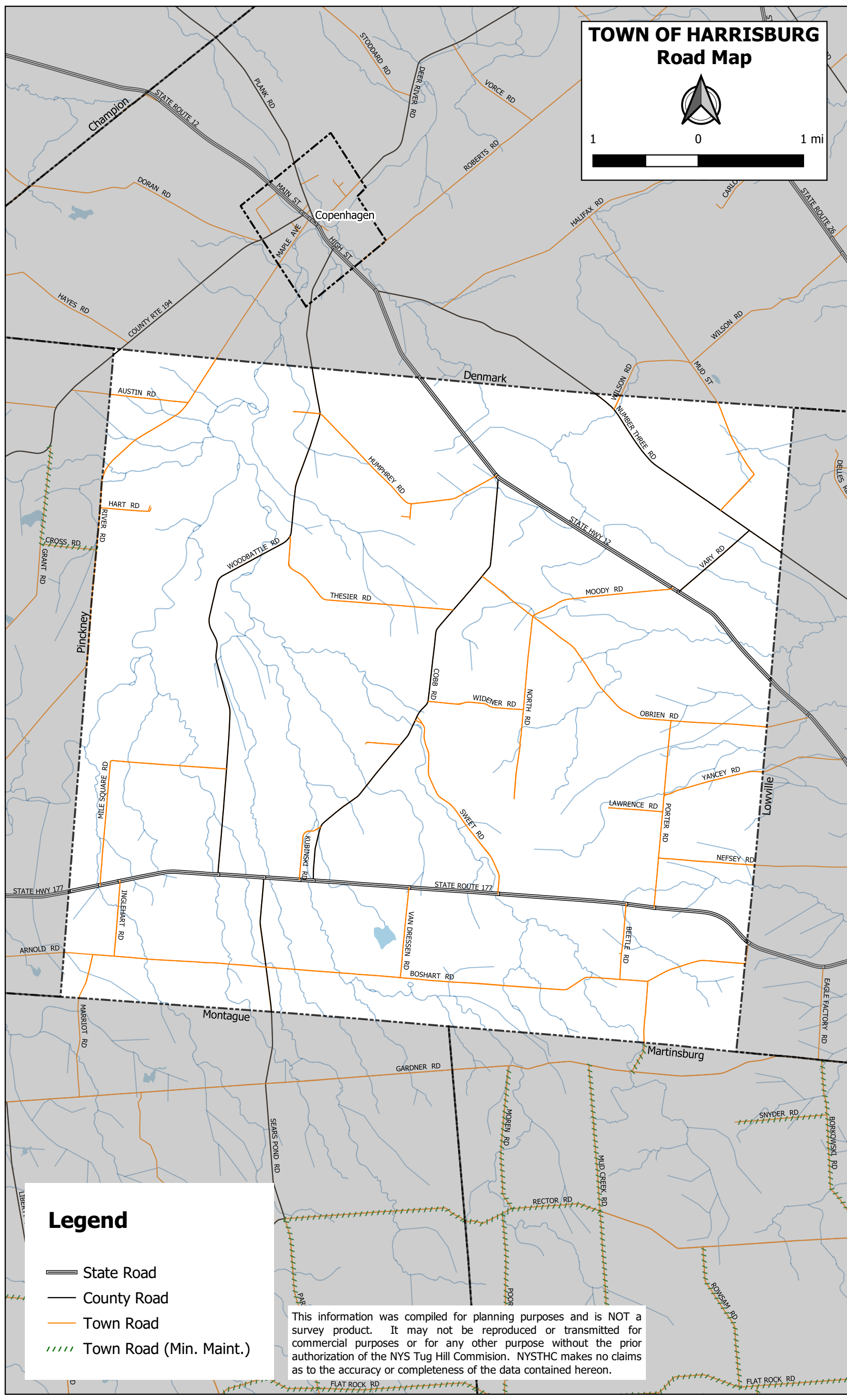
- STATE ROADS — □ —
- CCOUNTY ROADS — ○ —
- STATE LAND [Cross-hatched pattern]

Scale 1" - 4,740'

Adopted May 10, 1988



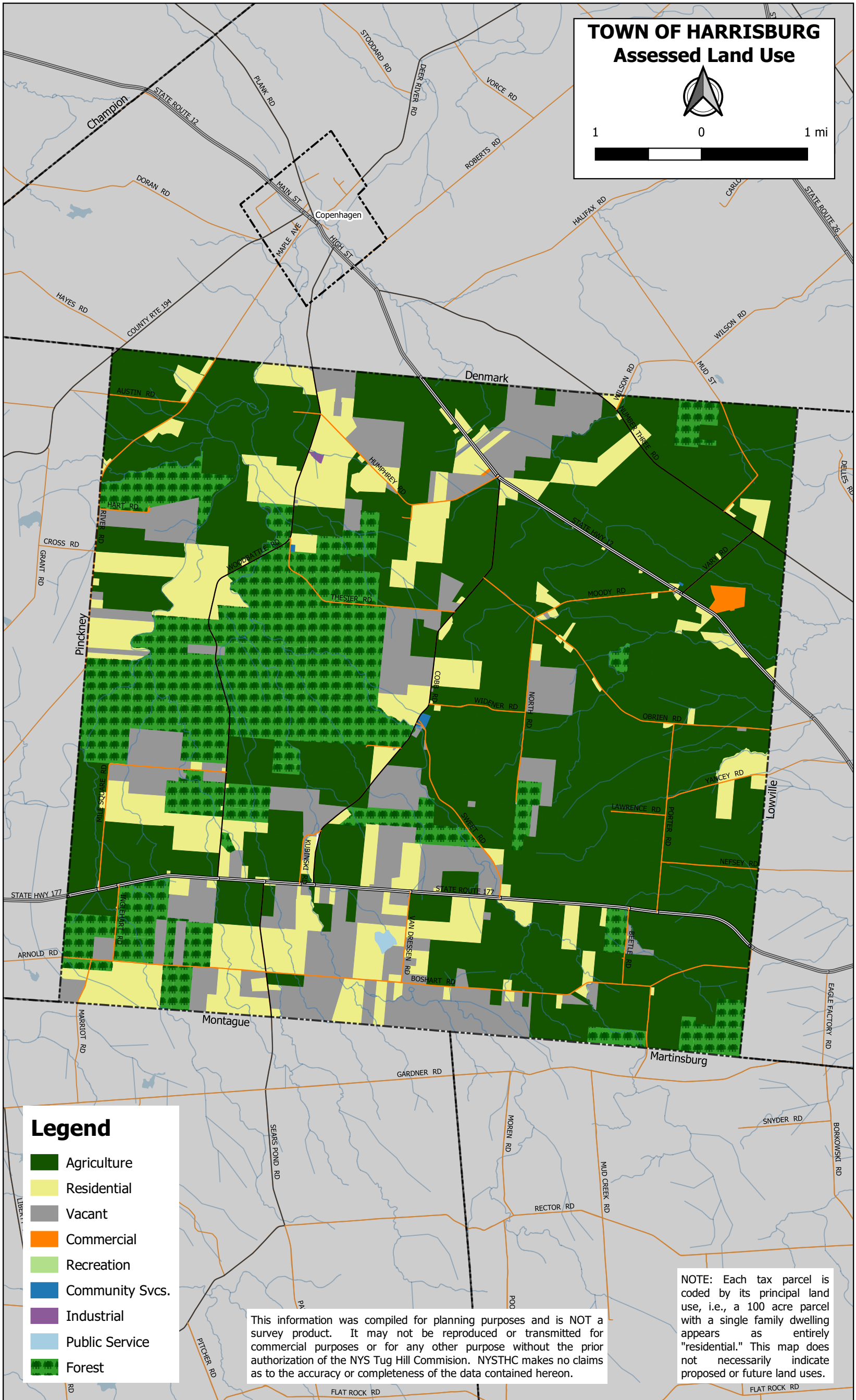
# TOWN OF HARRISBURG Road Map



### Legend

- State Road
- County Road
- Town Road
- Town Road (Min. Maint.)

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**TOWN OF HARRISBURG**  
**Assessed Land Use**

1 0 1 mi

**Legend**

- Agriculture
- Residential
- Vacant
- Commercial
- Recreation
- Community Svcs.
- Industrial
- Public Service
- Forest

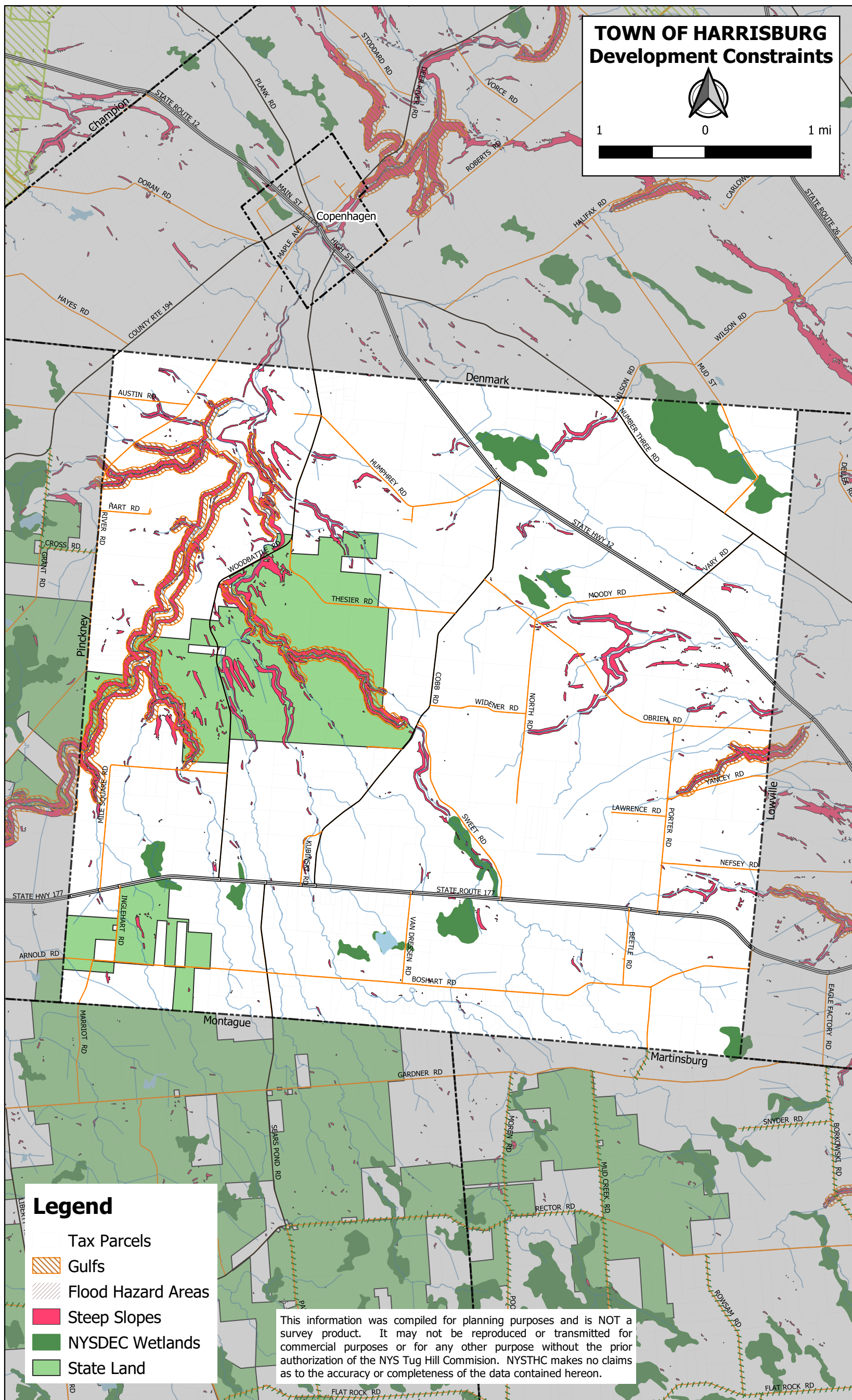
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NOTE: Each tax parcel is coded by its principal land use, i.e., a 100 acre parcel with a single family dwelling appears as entirely "residential." This map does not necessarily indicate proposed or future land uses.

# TOWN OF HARRISBURG Development Constraints



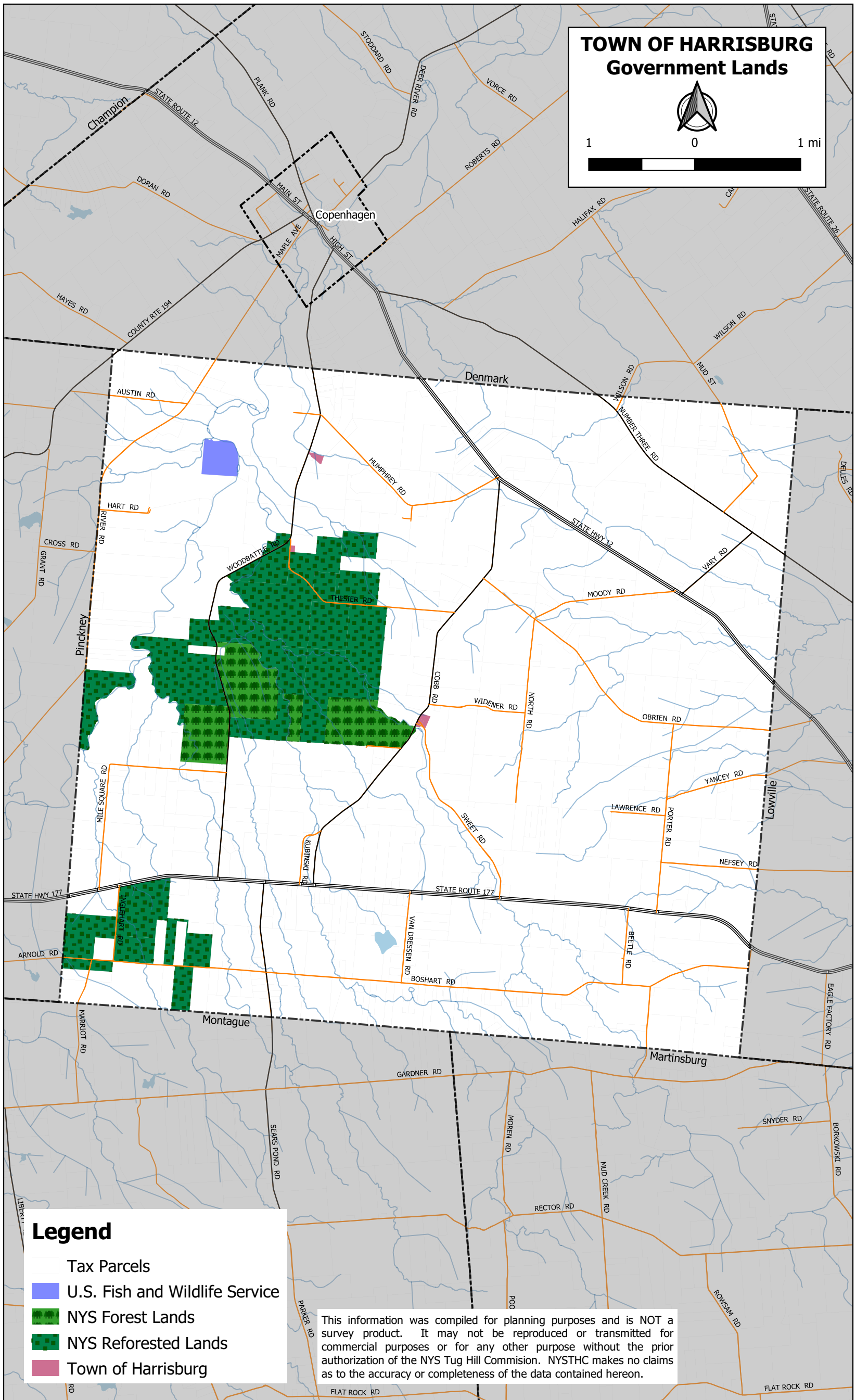
1 0 1 mi



## Legend

- Tax Parcels
- Gulfs
- Flood Hazard Areas
- Steep Slopes
- NYSDEC Wetlands
- State Land

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**TOWN OF HARRISBURG  
Government Lands**

1 0 1 mi

**Legend**

- Tax Parcels
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- NYS Forest Lands
- NYS Reforested Lands
- Town of Harrisburg

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