

Beyond a Critical Mass: The Spatial Configuration of Preserved Farmland in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

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A primary goal of working landscape conservation is to protect large blocks of farmland. This pattern supports the long term interests of farmers and farm support industries. There are a variety of metrics a community could use to track success in this area, with dollars spent and acres preserved among the most common. Less common, but particularly important for communities like Lancaster County, Pennsylvania which have active and mature farmland preservation programs, is the configuration of preserved land.

This study uses GIS and the raster analysis application Fragstats to examine the configuration of preserved farmland in Lancaster County over time with a focus on farmland cluster size, shape, and connectivity. It also examines the location of preserved farmland with respect to desirable locations such as urban growth boundary edges and agricultural zones. The paper concludes by highlighting and explaining key gaps in the county's network of preserved farmland and providing recommendations for communities interested in enhancing the connectivity of their preserved land.

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