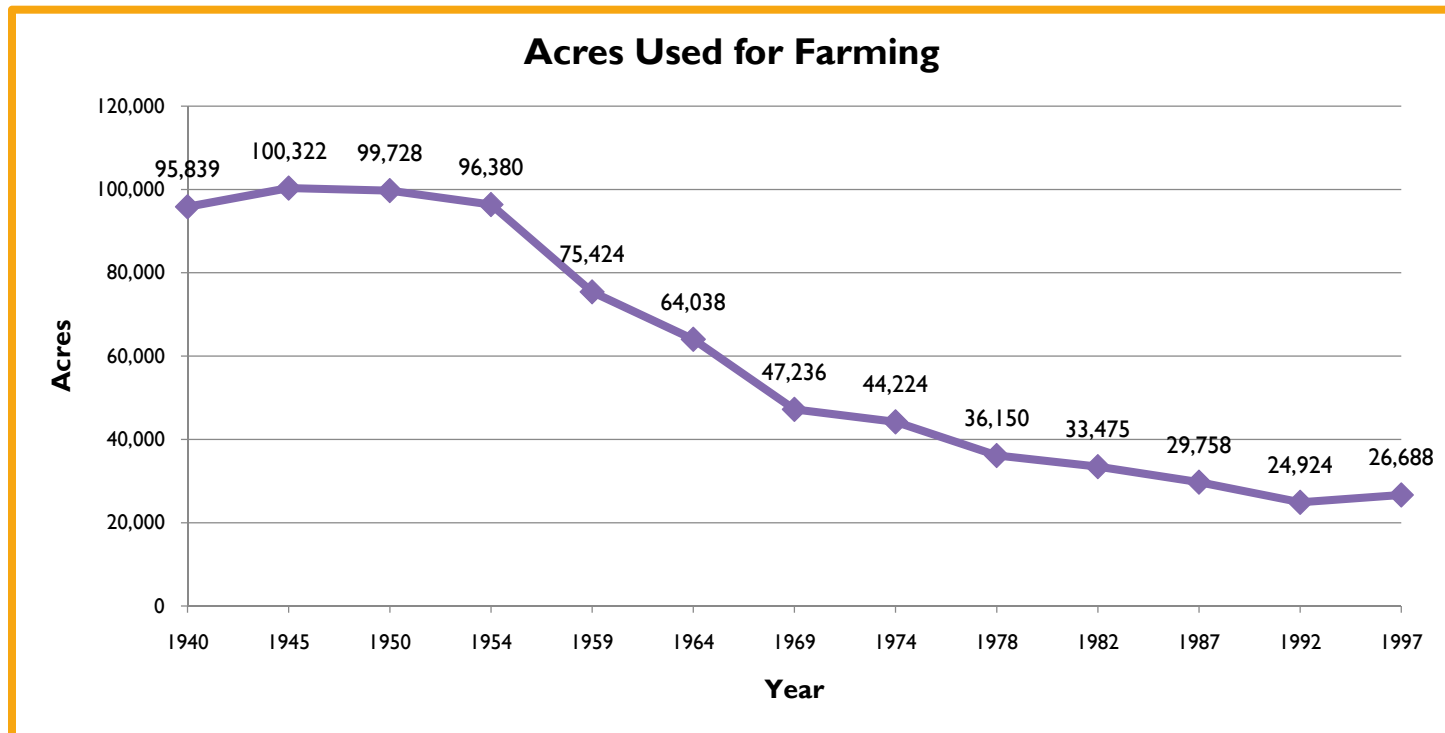


Acres used for farming in Roanoke County decreased continuously since World War II.

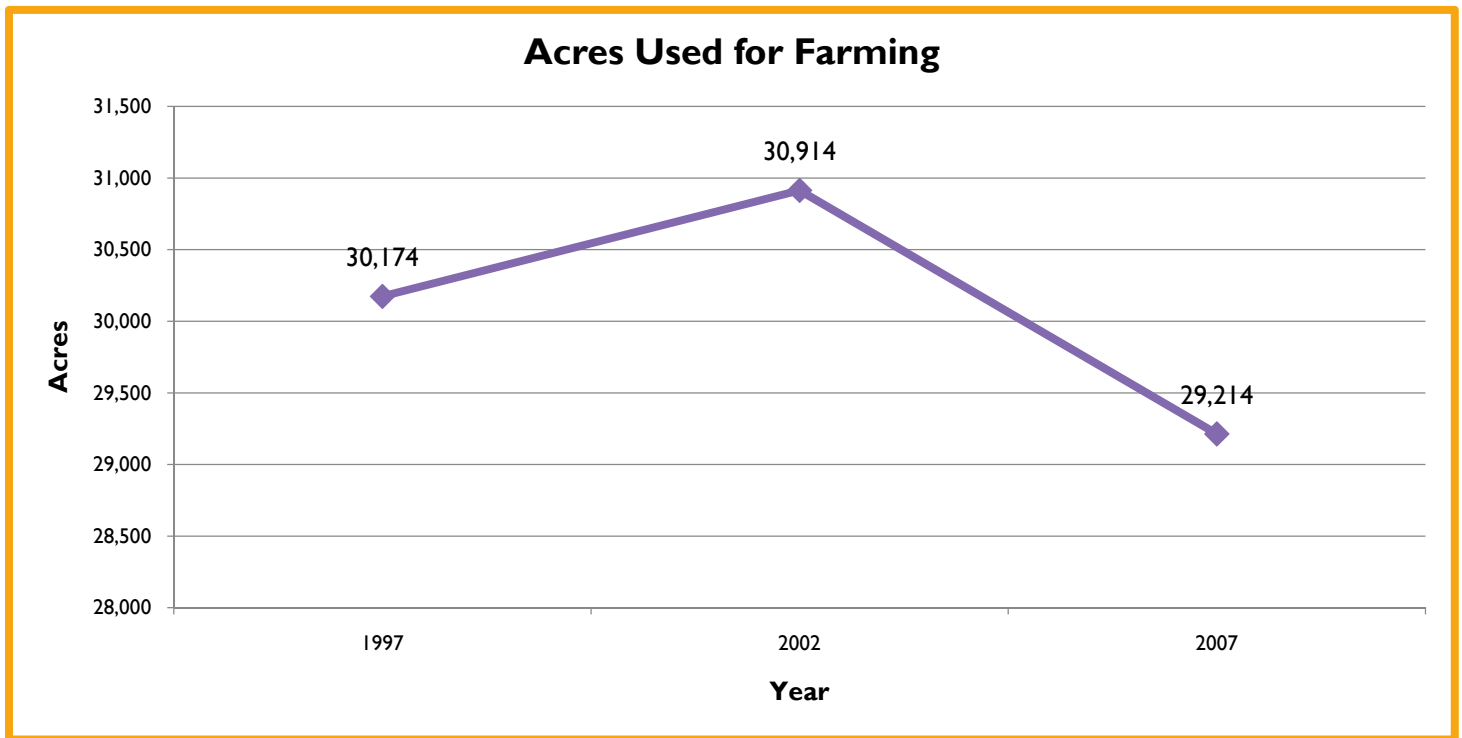


Source: 1997 USDA Census of Agriculture

The graph above shows that the acres used for farming in Roanoke County decreased continuously from its peak in 1945 to the present. The greatest decrease in farmland was between 1954 and 1959 in which total acreage decreased by 22% from 96,380 acres in 1954 to 75,424 in 1959. This is likely due to increasing urbanization and industrialization of Roanoke County following World War II. Between 1969 and 1992, the rate of farmland loss in Roanoke County ranged between 6 and 18 percent.* Between 1992 and 1997, however, farmland acreage increased by 7% from 24,924 acres in 1992 to 26,688 acres in 1997.

* The data is not shown for consistent time periods. From 1840-1950 the Agriculture Census was conducted as part of the decennial Economic Census as well as in 1945. From 1954-1974 the Agriculture Census was conducted for all years that ended in 4 and 9. The Census conducted in 1978 served as a transition to where the Agriculture Census took place in years ending in 2 and 7.

Fewer acres are used for farming today than 10 years ago.



Source: 2007, 2002 and 1997 USDA Census of Agriculture

From 1997* to 2002 the acres of land used for farming in Roanoke County increased 2% from 30,174 acres in 1997 to 30,914 in 2002. Over the next 5 years, from 2002 to 2007, land used for farming decreased by approximately 5% to 29,214 acres despite an increase in the number of farms. This may indicate that Roanoke County farms are becoming smaller. As of 2007, 18% of Roanoke County land was in farms.

Virginia is losing farmland at twice the rate of Roanoke County. In 2002, the American Farmland Trust (AFT), ranked Virginia 11th in states losing the most prime farmland and losing it at an increasing rate. In 1997, 8.75 million acres, or 31.9%, of Virginia's land was in farms. In 2002, Virginia farm acreage decreased to 8.62 million, or 31.6% of land area, and to 8.1 million, or 29.6% of Virginia's land area, in 2007 resulting in an overall decrease of 7.4% from 1997 to 2007. Roanoke County, however, was not listed as a county in which development threatens prime farmland.

* The number of acres used for farming in 1997 differs between this graph data and previous graph data due to adjustments made for undercoverage beginning in 1997.