

Launching a Cidery at 25 Clove Road, Wantage, NJ: Location and Market Analysis

Aerial view of the farmland at 25 Clove Road in Wantage (orchard at center, High Point monument on the horizon)



. This 50-acre preserved farm property – known as “Colonial Cider” – includes an 18-acre southeast-facing apple orchard, a historic 1740 farmhouse, and a large dairy barn renovated for cider production ¹ ² . Evaluating its viability as a cidery site requires examining local demographics, tourism traffic, road access, nearby agritourism competitors, and future expansion potential.

Local Demographics and Market Potential

Wantage Township is rural, with **about 10,900 residents spread over 66.8 square miles** (roughly **163 people per sq mi** – a low-density area) ³ . The immediate local population is modest in size, so a cidery here would rely on drawing customers from the broader region (neighboring towns and visitors), not just walk-in traffic. On the positive side, **household incomes are relatively high** – the median household income in Wantage is around **\$103,000**, slightly above New Jersey’s average ⁴ . This suggests **strong local buying power** and a community that can afford craft beverages and agritourism experiences. While the township itself is small, it sits within Sussex County (population ~140,000) and near the NJ/NY state line, meaning the **market radius** could include nearby Sussex Borough, the county seat Newton, and even parts of Orange County, NY. **Within a 30-minute drive** are other population centers (e.g. Vernon, NJ and Warwick, NY), providing a wider customer base for direct-to-consumer sales and special events. Overall, the local market is **affluent but sparsely populated**, so a new cidery would need to capitalize on **destination appeal** – attracting weekend visitors and enthusiasts – rather than relying on high volume daily local foot traffic.

Tourism Traffic and Outdoor Recreation Proximity

One of the biggest advantages of this location is its **proximity to tourism and outdoor recreation** in the Skylands region of New Jersey. **Wantage and Sussex County draw many visitors for hiking, scenic drives, and farm attractions.** In fact, the Appalachian Trail passes along the nearby Kittatinny Ridge – **hikers can follow the AT through this area, with spectacular views of farmlands and forests around High Point** ⁵. **High Point State Park**, just a few miles northwest, is a major draw: it's New Jersey's highest peak (with an iconic monument visible from the farm) and offers lakes, campgrounds, and **50+ miles of trails enjoyed by thousands of visitors each year** ⁶. These outdoor enthusiasts and sightseers frequently travel through Wantage/Sussex on their way to High Point and the adjacent Stokes State Forest. **Space Farms Zoo & Museum**, a long-established 100-acre family attraction in Wantage, also brings in tourism traffic – it houses over 500 wild animals and a large antique museum, drawing families from the NYC metro area for day trips ⁷. Additionally, the region features seasonal farm destinations like pick-your-own orchards, pumpkin patches, and the annual Sussex County Fairgrounds events (e.g. the NJ State Fair each August). During autumn especially, **leaf-peepers and apple-pickers flood the area**, creating an opportunity for a cidery to tap into fall tourism.

Roadside produce stands and farmers' markets in Sussex County (and just over the border in Warwick, NY) likewise attract weekend crowds. The cidery's site at 25 Clove Rd could capitalize on this traffic – especially if marketed as part of a **"farm trail" or weekend drive itinerary**. The farm lies along Clove Road, which is a county highway connecting the town of Sussex/Wantage area toward High Point and the NY border (historically known as a route **"on the way to High Point Park"**). Although it's not a major highway, **Clove Road (County Route 565)** sees steady local and tourist traffic, especially on weekends. Drivers heading to High Point or scenic routes often pass through this corridor, which gives the cidery some **drive-by visibility**. That said, the road is somewhat **winding and rural** – Sussex County has even considered realignments to improve Clove Road's curves and safety ⁸ – so it's not an interstate-style high-traffic artery. Visibility will depend on signage and perhaps partnering with local tourism guides. The address is roughly **58 miles from New York City** ⁹, meaning it's within a reasonable 1.5–2 hour trip for urban visitors seeking a country escape. In summary, the location is well positioned to intercept **outdoor recreation enthusiasts and agritourists**. By being open on peak days (e.g. fall weekends, holiday weekends) the cidery could leverage **seasonal tourism surges** to bolster its taproom attendance.

Road Access and Site Visibility

Access to the site by road is moderate and typical of a rural farm. Clove Road itself is a two-lane county road that connects to state routes (like NJ Route 23 and US 206) a few miles south, funneling traffic from more populated areas. It serves as a **scenic bypass** for those exploring the countryside or heading to hiking spots. While not a high-traffic commuter route, it likely sees **hundreds of vehicles per day** (and higher on fair-weather weekends) – enough to catch opportunistic visitors if the cidery is well-marked. The entrance via **Skytop Road** (as noted in property descriptions ¹⁰) suggests there is an upper access with a dramatic view, but most visitors would probably arrive via Clove Rd at the farmhouse/barn entrance. The **site has ample acreage for parking** (being a 50-acre farm) and is set in an open valley, so a cider barn or tasting room could be made visible with good signage. However, because this isn't on a major highway, **destination marketing will be important** – most customers will come intentionally rather than by pure chance. The benefit is that **traffic is not so heavy or fast** as to make turning in dangerous; visitors can safely slow down to enter. Overall, road accessibility is decent for a rural operation, but the cidery will need to become a known **"point of interest"** to truly drive taproom traffic (leveraging GPS, maps, and tourism

brochures to guide people there). As agritourism is popular in the county, local authorities may allow directional signage (“winery/cidery ahead”) on main roads, further aiding visibility.

Nearby Agritourism and Craft Beverage Competitors

The area surrounding 25 Clove Rd already hosts **several agritourism and craft beverage businesses**, indicating an existing market interest. In Wantage itself, just a few miles away, is **Ventimiglia Vineyard**, a small family-run winery. Ventimiglia opened to the public in 2008 and cultivates a few acres of grapes, producing ~1,000 cases/year; they offer **weekend tastings and tours** seasonally ¹¹. Their limited hours (typically only **Sat-Sun, April-Dec**) demonstrate a similar model – focusing on **weekend destination visitors** rather than daily traffic. The success of Ventimiglia (and its longevity) suggests that visitors are willing to travel to rural Sussex County for local wine. A cidery could similarly carve out a niche, potentially even cross-promoting with the winery to create a mini “beverage trail” in Wantage.

Just across the state line in New York’s Orange County is a robust network of craft beverage attractions. For example, **Warwick Valley Winery & Distillery** (about 15 miles northeast) is a well-known destination offering wines, a cidery (Doc’s Draft Hard Cider), plus a café and live music. They are open almost daily (11am–6pm, 362 days a year) and have built a large following ¹². Their success underscores the region’s **demand for agritourism** – people from NJ/NY will drive out for an afternoon of tasting, food, and entertainment. A new cidery in Wantage could capture some of this demand, especially from those looking for a quieter or more intimate alternative to the often-crowded Warwick spots ¹³. Other nearby competitors/peers include **Pennings Farm Cidery** (Warwick), **Orchard Hill Cider Mill** at Soons Orchard (Warwick area), and **Angry Orchard’s Cider House** (Walden, NY) – all within a 30–45 minute radius. On the New Jersey side, craft breweries are present too: **Angry Erik Brewing** in Hampton (10 miles south) operates a tasting room and beer garden off a local trail ¹⁴, and **Muckraker Beermaker** in Franklin specializes in wild ales. Sussex County isn’t saturated with cideries/breweries, but there are enough **related attractions to form a circuit** for visitors. This can be viewed positively (an existing craft beverage scene to draw tourists) but also means the cidery must differentiate itself. Fortunately, being on a historic farm with an orchard provides a unique selling point – it can offer an authentic farm-to-glass cider experience, whereas some breweries lack that pastoral setting.

Additionally, Sussex County tourism promotions actively feature **wineries, farms, and breweries** in their materials, so a cidery at 25 Clove Rd could get listed in regional agritourism guides. The presence of **other farms (dairy farms, pumpkin farms, sunflower mazes)** nearby also creates potential partnerships – e.g. a fall festival trail or cooperative events. In summary, the competitive landscape shows **viable agritourism businesses operating on limited schedules** and a strong interest from the public in rural tasting-room experiences. A new cidery here would be in good company, with the opportunity to both collaborate with and learn from these peers. It will need to offer quality products and a memorable farm setting to stand out, but the **market demand for local craft beverages in a country atmosphere is clearly established**.

Long-Term Expansion and Growth Potential

In the initial years, the plan is for limited taproom days (perhaps 1–2 times per month). This cautious approach fits the rural context – building a customer base gradually while minimizing overhead. Over time, however, there is **significant potential to expand** if regional demand warrants it. Sussex County’s continued push for tourism (part of the state’s “Skylands” tourism region) bodes well – the **county’s**

tourism economy was about \$550 million annually pre-pandemic ¹⁵, and it has been rebounding with double-digit growth as people seek outdoor leisure. As the cidery gains recognition, it could increase taproom frequency to weekly weekend hours, especially during peak seasons (spring through fall).

One promising avenue is **event hosting**. New Jersey recently adjusted regulations to allow special occasion events on preserved farmland, within limits. Under a 2023 law, qualifying preserved farms can host up to **26 events per year** (such as weddings, festivals, or concerts) as long as farming remains the primary use ¹⁶ ¹⁷. This means the Wantage cidery, being on preserved land, could in the future utilize its picturesque orchard and historic barn for rustic weddings, farm-to-table dinners, small music events, etc. Such events could provide lucrative revenue and draw large crowds on select days. The site's expansive acreage and scenic backdrop (with mountain views) is a natural fit for agritourism events, and the **existing barn could potentially be outfitted as an event space**. Of course, any expansion into frequent events or food service would require compliance with township ordinances, but Sussex County generally encourages agritourism growth under controlled conditions.

Food service is another long-term consideration. Initially, a limited taproom might just offer pretzels or allow food trucks occasionally. If demand grows, the cidery could consider adding a simple kitchen or partnering with local vendors to enhance the customer experience (as many wineries and breweries have done once they established a steady customer flow). Given that Warwick Valley Winery has a successful café and others host food trucks, there's precedent that **offering food can significantly boost dwell time and sales**. However, any permanent food operation would need approvals (and investment in facilities).

Finally, as the brand builds, the cidery could expand its production and distribution. Direct-to-consumer sales on-site are typically high-margin, but distributing bottled cider to local stores, farmers' markets, or bars could supplement income. Sussex County's demographics (with that high median income) include many who support local craft products – a cider club or CSA-style pickup could be feasible. The farm's organic practices and heirloom apple varieties (the property boasts **20 varieties of 200-year-old American apples and even European pear varieties for perry cider** ¹⁸ ¹⁹) provide a great story for marketing and could command premium pricing in niche markets.

In conclusion, **25 Clove Road appears to be a viable location for a small cidery with room to grow**. The local population is affluent but sparse, so success will depend on drawing tourists and weekend explorers – fortunately, the site sits in a corridor rich with attractions like state parks and farms. Road access is adequate, and while not a high-traffic highway, it's along a route used by many outdoor enthusiasts heading toward High Point. The concept aligns with nearby agritourism businesses that have proven the model of limited-hour, rural tasting rooms can be profitable in this region (e.g. Ventimiglia Winery's weekend tastings ¹¹). By leveraging the farm's authentic orchard setting, tapping into regional tourism circuits, and eventually expanding into events and more frequent openings, the cidery can cultivate a strong direct-to-consumer following. The **market potential is there – a mix of local residents seeking craft cider and a steady influx of tourists looking for unique rural experiences** – which suggests that over time this site can indeed support profitable taproom sales and even diversified agritourism offerings. **In the long run, a cidery at 25 Clove Road could grow into a destination farm cidery, hosting events and welcoming visitors much more frequently, as the demand in the region continues to rise.**

Sources:

- U.S. Census Bureau & NJ Data – *Wantage Township demographics (population ~10.9k, density ~163/sq mi; median household income ~\$103k)* ³ ⁴
- NJ Skylands Tourism – *Outdoor attractions in Sussex County (Appalachian Trail, High Point State Park)* ⁵ ⁶
- Space Farms (Wantage) – *100-acre zoo/museum with 500+ animals draws family tourists* ⁷
- Property Listing (Colonial Cider) – *Description of 50-acre cidery homestead and orchard at 25 Clove Rd* ¹ ²
- Sussex County Roads – *Clove Road (CR 565) noted as a north-south route toward High Point* ⁸
- Ventimiglia Vineyard (Wantage) – *Opened 2008, ~5 acres grapes, open for weekend tastings* ¹¹
- Angry Erik Brewing (Hampton) – *Local craft brewery with tasting room/beer garden off a Sussex trail* ¹⁴
- Warwick Valley Winery & Distillery (NY) – *Major nearby winery/cidery open daily with food and music (high visitor volume)* ¹² ¹³
- NJ Farmland Preservation Rules – *New 2023 law allows up to 26 special events per year on preserved farms (weddings, etc.)* ¹⁶ ¹⁷
- NJ Tourism Economic Reports – *Sussex County tourism spending pre-COVID ~\$557 million, highlighting significant visitor activity* ¹⁵

¹ ² ⁹ ¹⁰ ¹⁸ ¹⁹ 25 Clove Rd, Wantage, NJ 07461 | MLS #3963308 | Zillow

https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/25-Clove-Rd-Wantage-NJ-07461/201853935_zpid/

³ ⁴ Wantage township, Sussex County, NJ - Profile data - Census Reporter

<http://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US3403776790-wantage-township-sussex-county-nj/>

⁵ Wantage | VisitNJ.org

<https://visitnj.org/city/wantage>

⁶ High Point State Park & New Jersey Veterans' Memorial - NJ.gov

<https://nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/highpointstatepark.html>

⁷ Space Farms: Zoo & Museum | Animal Farm in Sussex County, NJ

<https://spacefarms.com/>

⁸ Sussex County Route Listing - East Coast Roads

<https://www.eastcoastroads.com/listings/nj/sussex>

¹¹ Ventimiglia Vineyard - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ventimiglia_Vineyard

¹² Frequently Asked Questions - Warwick Valley Winery & Distillery

<https://www.winery.com/frequently-asked-questions/>

¹³ Warwick Valley Winery (2025) - All You Need to Know BEFORE You ...

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g48804-d2432033-Reviews-Warwick_Valley_Winery-Warwick_New_York.html

¹⁴ Angry Erik Brewing

<https://angryerik.com/>

¹⁵ Microsoft PowerPoint - Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey 2021 - client_full version.pptx

https://visitsomersetnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Economic_Impact_of_Tourism_in_New_Jersey_2021_Final-1.pdf

- 16 NJ will allow special occasion events on protected farmland - NJBIZ

<https://njbiz.com/nj-will-allow-special-occasion-events-on-protected-farmland/>

- 17 Preserved Farms May Now Hold up to 26 Special Events Per Year

<https://www.bracheichler.com/insights/preserved-farms-may-now-hold-up-to-26-special-events-per-year/>