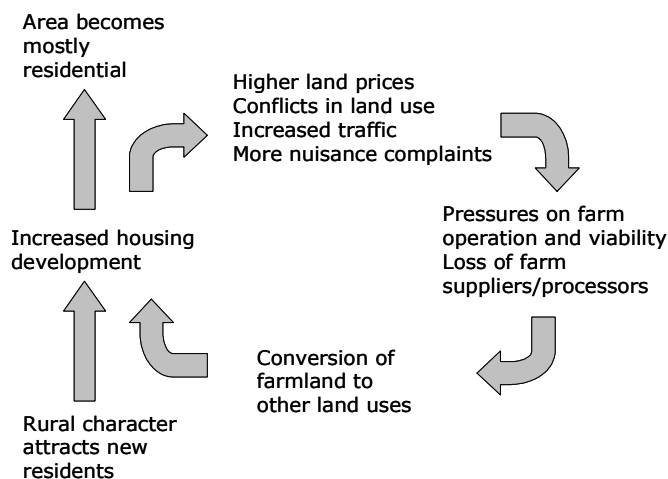


Cycle of Farmland Conversion



From 1997 to 2002, Michigan lost farmland at a rate of 8 acres per hour.
(Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture, USDA)

The St. Joseph County Agricultural Preservation Board is responsible for overseeing the County's Farmland Preservation Program. MSU Extension provides administrative support for the County Agricultural Preservation Board.

For more information or to apply to the program, visit: www.stjosephcountymi.org/farmland

Or, contact:

St Joseph County MSU Extension

612 E. Main Street
Centreville, MI 49032

Phone: 269.467.5522
Fax: 269.467.5641
Email: msue.stjoseph@county.msu.edu
Website: www.msue.msu.edu/stjoseph

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Benefits of Farmland Preservation

Environmental

- Controls flooding and erosion
- Provides wildlife habitat
- Protects drinking water and aquifer recharge areas
- Protects land resource for production of alternative renewable energies

Economic

- Lowers infrastructure costs to taxpayers
- Allows growth and development to continue in specified areas
- Strengthens tourism economy related to nature, history, and agriculture
- Creates a long-term business environment for farmers and agriculture support services and industries

Social

- Strengthens and preserves the rural heritage of our communities
- Preserves scenic open space
- Encourages revitalization of cities while maintaining rural communities
- Provides a local fresh food supply

Political

- Fosters cooperation among local governments
- Encourages community involvement in local land use decision making

Legal

- Protects private property rights through voluntary programs
- Decreases nuisance complaints and lawsuits



Now Here...

The St. Joseph County Farmland Preservation Program



St. Joseph County
Agricultural Preservation Board

St Joseph County
MSU Extension

St. Joseph County Agriculture

St. Joseph County agriculture is a **champion** among other Michigan agricultural counties. Our **unique soil types**, moderate **climate**, and **proximity to markets** makes agricultural production especially important here. The strength of St. Joseph County agriculture is also due to our **capacity for irrigation**, with over 104,000 irrigated acres amounting to 44% of the county's agricultural land. In fact, St. Joseph County has more irrigated land than any other county east of the Mississippi River. **Specialty crops** such as seed corn, snap beans, potatoes, and cucumbers would not be part of this agricultural economy if not for our location and **access to abundant ground and surface water**.



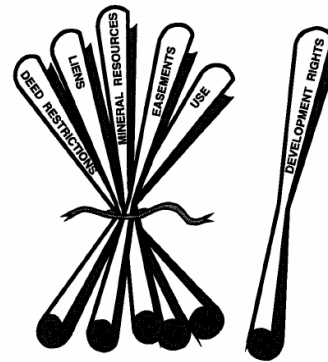
Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the Farmland Preservation Program is to protect farmland in order to:

- ▶ Maintain a long-term business environment for agriculture in the county.
- ▶ Preserve the rural character and scenic attributes of the county.
- ▶ Enhance important environmental benefits.
- ▶ Maintain the quality of life of county residents.

What is Purchase of Development Rights?

- PDR is a farmland preservation tool in which landowners are compensated for permanently limiting non-agricultural land uses on their property.
- With a PDR program for farmland preservation a landowner can voluntarily sell his/her development rights to the land to a protecting organization (State, County, Township, Conservancy, etc.) and the development rights are extinguished.
- PDR programs are based on the idea that a landowner holds a bundle of rights to the land, and the right to develop the land may be separated and sold to a purchaser who is committed to permanently retiring the development rights, while the landowner retains control of all other land rights.
- The purchaser of a farm's development rights gains partial interest in the real estate as reflected by an easement, which is a deed restriction that runs with the land (not the landowner) and is recorded with the Register of Deeds.
- PDR programs create value for development rights, allowing the landowner to access a portion of the land equity while retaining ownership of the land. On the other hand, exclusive agricultural zoning limits the use of land to farming and eliminates the development rights value of farmland.



PDR - What it Does:

- Permanently restricts a property's use in order to protect its agricultural values.
- Runs with the land; future owners are also bound by the agreement terms.

What it Does Not:

- Allow the public access to the land.
- Prohibit the owner from using, leasing, or selling the property for agricultural purposes.
- Protect against eminent domain or court order.



Eligible Farmland

A property must be at least 51% in agricultural use, with preference given to farmland that (according to the state's general requirements):

- ▶ Is productive
- ▶ Complements documented, long-range local farmland preservation plan
- ▶ Creates a block of protected farmland
- ▶ Is enrolled in a PA 116 agreement
- ▶ Supported by local matching funds

Grant Funds for Preservation

State and Federal grant dollars are available to support the purchase of development rights. These funds require a local 25% match of the development rights value of a property, which can come from the property owner by accepting less than the fair market value for the development rights, the township, county, land conservancy, or any combination thereof.

