

**STATE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

**GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING MUNICIPAL  
COMPREHENSIVE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLANS**

**ADOPTED: May 24, 2007**

The following guidelines provide uniform standards for the development of Municipal Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plans. These guidelines supplement proposed new rules at N.J.A.C. 2:76-17A, update previous planning standards and incorporate recommendations from the 2006 edition of the Agricultural Smart Growth Plan for New Jersey, the Planning Incentive Grant Statute (N.J.S.A. 4:1C-43.1) and the NJ Department of Agriculture Guidelines for Plan Endorsement under the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

Development of a Municipal Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan should be performed in consultation with the municipal Agricultural Advisory Committee, Municipal Planning Board, County Agriculture Development Board, County Planning Board and County Board of Agriculture. Where appropriate, the plan should also have a regional focus and be coordinated with surrounding municipalities and the County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan. At least two (2) public meetings are recommended including the required public hearing; one early in the process designed to gather input and another later in the process to review the draft Plan. SADC and Department of Agriculture staff will work in partnership with municipal officials to provide and identify sources for the latest data with respect to agricultural statistics, water resources, agricultural economic development, land use and resource conservation.

The attached timeline will help guide municipalities, the SADC and CADBs in developing plans to lead the Farmland Preservation Program into the future.

**I. Municipality's Agricultural Land Base**

The first section of the Municipal Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan should provide a clear description of the agricultural characteristics and trends within the municipality over the last 20 years. SADC staff will provide each municipality with the County's Agricultural Profile, a Municipal Agricultural Profile, combining Farmland Assessment, Census of Agriculture, Farmland Preservation, NJDEP Land Use / Land Cover, Building Permit and Census Bureau data. This data should be used by the municipality in preparation of its Municipal Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan.

- A. Location and Size of Agricultural Land Base including an inventory of farm properties in the entire municipality and a map illustrating significant areas of agricultural land and the proposed farmland preservation project areas
- B. Distribution of Soil Types and their characteristics
- C. Number of Irrigated Acres and available water sources
- D. Farmland Assessment and Census of Agriculture Statistics and Trends
  1. Number of Farms and Farms by Size
  2. Average and Median Farm Size
  3. Cropland Harvested, Pasture, Woodland, Equine, Total for Agricultural Use

## **II. Municipality's Agricultural Industry – Overview**

The second section of the Plan must provide a thorough overview of the municipality's existing agricultural industry in relation to the region, including historical crop trends and the market value of agricultural products over the last 20 years. This chapter should also discuss the status of agricultural related industries from equipment and supply providers and services to food processors and distributors and direct marketing. Counties should share their observations about where the agricultural industry within the municipality seems to be heading.

- A. Trends in Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold
- B. Crop / Production Trends over the last 20 years
- C. Support Services within Market Region (equipment and seed dealers, fertilizer/pesticide suppliers, processing facilities, farmers markets, etc.)
- D. Other Agricultural Related Industries

## **III. Land Use Planning Context**

The third chapter of the Plan must explore the land use planning context for farmland preservation and agricultural retention in the municipality. Starting with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan Planning Areas, Designated Centers and Endorsed Plans, the Plan should discuss the relationship of land use, land value, infrastructure and development trends to the municipal Master Plan and municipal development regulations. An overview of the municipal master plan, zoning and subdivision regulations, including the use of innovative planning techniques such as the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), mandatory clustering, non-contiguous clustering and lot size averaging, should also be provided.

- A. State Development and Redevelopment Plan Planning Areas, Designated Centers and Endorsed Plans
- B. Special Resource Areas (Highlands, Pinelands, CAFRA, etc.)
- C. Municipal Master Plan and Development Regulations
- D. Current Land Use and Trends
- E. Sewer Service Areas / Public Water Supply Service Areas
- F. Municipal Master Plan and Zoning – Overview
  - 1. General Lot Size Categories and Distribution throughout the municipality
    - a. Small lots (less than 1 acre minimum lots on sewer/water)
    - b. Medium lots ( $\geq 1 \leq 5$  acre minimum; septic/well)
    - c. Large lots ( $> 5 \leq 10$  acre minimum; septic/well)
    - d. Very large lots ( $> 10$  acre minimum; septic/well)
  - 2. Description of Innovative Planning Techniques
    - a. Cluster zoning
    - b. Non-contiguous cluster zoning
    - c. Lot size averaging
    - d. Transfer of Development Rights
    - e. Use of mandatory vs. voluntary options
  - 3. Description of the Buffer Requirements that separate agricultural uses from other land uses
  - 4. Discussion of Development Pressures and Land Value Trends
- G. Discussion of Municipal and Regional TDR Opportunities including implementation strategy recommendations

#### **IV. Municipality's Farmland Preservation Program – Overview**

The municipality's Farmland Preservation Program is presented in chapter four of the Plan. In addition to a thorough description of farmland preservation program participation and expenditures by program type, the municipality must provide its latest agricultural land use map identifying the county's adopted ADA within the municipality and preserved farmland. This section should also compare the municipality's progress to date in relation to the SADC's Strategic Targeting Project and any municipal and / or county Planning Incentive Grant Project Areas or TDR programs in the area. Coordination with municipal and county open space and recreational preservation initiatives as well as easement monitoring and enforcement should also be discussed.

- A. County Agricultural Development Areas
  - 1. Geographic Information System Mapping / current location map
- B. Farmland preserved to date by program
  - 1. County Easement Purchase
  - 2. County Planning Incentive Grants
  - 3. Municipal Planning Incentive Grants
  - 4. SADC Direct Easement Purchase
  - 5. SADC Fee Simple
  - 6. Non-profit
  - 7. Transfer of Development Rights
  - 8. Other programs and partnerships
- C. Consistency with SADC Strategic Targeting Project, including:
  - 1. Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Program(s) – Targeted farms and Project Areas / Agricultural Advisory Committee Coordination
- D. Eight Year Programs
- E. Coordination with Municipal and County Open Space Preservation Initiatives
- F. Farmland Preservation Program Funding Expended to Date by Source
- G. Monitoring of Preserved Farmland
- H. Coordination with TDR Programs

#### **V. Future Farmland Preservation Program**

Chapter five must provide clear goals and objectives for the municipality's farmland preservation efforts over the next 10 years. Municipal and county ranking and minimum eligibility criteria as well as municipal and county policies with respect to housing opportunities, division of the premises and exceptions should be presented in detail. This section should also include a staffing and funding plan to ensure efficient and effective program implementation in the years to come. Efforts to develop and utilize a municipal Geographic Information System and Farmland Preservation Program database must be described. Factors that would limit implementation of the Plan should be identified with potential strategies provided to minimize their impact.

- A. Preservation Goals (1, 5 and 10 year acreage targets)
- B. Project Area Summaries
- C. Municipal and County Minimum Eligibility Criteria Coordination
- D. Municipal and County Ranking Criteria used to prioritize farms
- E. Municipal and County Policies Related to Farmland Preservation Applications, including:

1. Approval of Housing Opportunities
  - a. Overall housing opportunities permitted
  - b. House replacement
  - c. Residual Dwelling Site Opportunity allocation
2. Division of the Premises
3. Approval of Exceptions
  - a. Severable
  - b. Non-severable
- F. Funding Plan
  1. Description of Municipal and County Funding Sources (dedicated tax, bond proceeds, annual revenues (total), annual revenues dedicated to Farmland Preservation Program)
  2. Financial Policies related to cost-share requirements between county and municipal / other funding partners / installment purchases
  3. Cost Projections and funding plan associated with 1, 5 and 10 year preservation goals
  4. Any Other Financial Information as appropriate
- G. Farmland Preservation Program / Agriculture Advisory Committee Administrative Resources
  1. Municipal Staff and/or Consultant Resources
  2. Legal Support
  3. Database Development
  4. Geographic Information System Capacity and staff resources
- H. Factors Limiting Farmland Preservation Implementation
  1. Funding (county or municipal)
  2. Projected Costs
  3. Land Supply
  4. Landowner Interest
  5. Administrative Resources
  6. Other

## **VI. Economic Development**

Agricultural economic development strategies of the municipality in support of and in relation to county and state efforts must be described in chapter six. The municipality's perspectives on agricultural industry retention, expansion and recruitment strategies should be compared to the NJ Department of Agriculture's Economic Development Strategies and regional programs for consistency. Coordination with business and institutional support providers including marketing, public relations and education, estate planning, and community supported agriculture opportunities should be discussed. To the greatest extent possible, the municipality's Plan should also anticipate the needs of consumers, farmers and agriculture related industries in the years to come and discuss opportunities for new community markets, suppliers, processors and distributors.

- A. Consistency with NJ Department of Agriculture Economic Development Strategies and other regional economic development plans and initiatives
- B. Agricultural Industry Retention, Expansion and Recruitment Strategies
  1. Institutional
    - a. Farmer Support (e.g., Farm Link Program, Estate Planning)
    - b. Marketing / Public Relation Support (e.g., local use of the Jersey Fresh promotional program, agritourism)
    - c. Community Farmers Markets
    - d. Community Supported Agriculture

- e. Agricultural Education and Market Research Coordination
  - i. Rutgers Cooperative Extension
  - ii. New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station
  - iii. Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences
  - iv. Other
- 2. Businesses
  - i. Input Suppliers and Services
  - ii. Product Distributors and Processors
- 3. Anticipated Agricultural Trends
  - a. Market Location
  - b. Product Demand
- 4. Agricultural Support Needs
  - a. Agricultural Facilities and Infrastructure (e.g., farm markets, food processors)
    - i. Type
    - ii. Placement / Location
  - b. Flexible Land Use Regulations
  - c. Agriculture Representation in Economic Development Organizations
- 5. Agricultural Support Implementation
  - a. Cost
  - b. Funding Opportunities
  - c. Timeline

## **VII. Natural Resource Conservation**

The municipality's efforts to coordinate with regional efforts to promote natural resource conservation should be presented in chapter seven. The degree of coordination with established federal and state soil and water conservation programs, including landowner participation in conservation planning and matching grant programs must be discussed in this section of the Plan. Special attention should be paid to water conservation and allocation strategies in areas where water supplies are threatened by increasing competition from both agricultural and non-agricultural users. Non-traditional energy conservation and waste management efforts, as well as future conservation enhancements, should also be presented.

- A. Natural Resource Protection Coordination
  - 1. Natural Resources Conservation Service
  - 2. Soil Conservation Districts
- B. Natural Resource Protection Programs
  - 1. SADC Soil and Water Conservation Grant Program
  - 2. Federal Conservation Programs (EQIP, WHIP, CREP, etc.)
  - 3. NJDEP Landowner Incentive Program
- C. Water Resources
  - 1. Supply Characteristics
  - 2. Agricultural Demand & Supply Limitations
  - 3. Conservation & Allocation Strategies
- D. Waste Management Planning (e.g., animal waste, plastic mulch, tires, etc.)
- E. Energy Conservation Planning (e.g., solar, wind, etc.)
- F. Outreach and Incentives

## **VIII. Agricultural Industry Sustainability, Retention and Promotion**

Chapter eight should expand on the municipality's vision for farming and the agricultural industry beyond preservation of its agricultural land base alone. Coordination with CADB Right to Farm programming and agricultural mediation services should be described and include a copy of the municipal Right-to-Farm ordinance, as required (N.J.A.C. 2:76-17A.3). This section of the Plan should also document municipal and county efforts on issues from permit streamlining to agricultural vehicle movement, labor housing and general agricultural education and promotion.

- A. Existing Agricultural Industry Support
  - 1. Right to Farm / Agricultural Mediation Programs
  - 2. Farmland Assessment
- B. Other Strategies, including:
  - 1. Permit Streamlining
  - 2. Agricultural Vehicle Movement / Routes
  - 3. Agricultural Labor Housing / Training
  - 4. Wildlife Management Strategies
  - 5. Agricultural Education and Promotion

