St. Clair County
Agricultural and Rural Character Protection Plan

Laura Bell, Katie Bennett, Robert Carson, Bradley Kotrba, Ian Louisell, and Lincoln Sweet

Michigan State University Practicum 2007
Presentation Outline

- County Overview
  - Goals, Socioeconomic Profile, and Land Use
- County Agriculture and Agricultural Trends
- Farmland Preservation in St. Clair County
- Zoning Ordinances
- Methods of Increasing Farm Profitability
- Raising Public Awareness
- Recommendations
Introduction

- Client:
  - St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) and Senior Planner David Struck

- Project
  - Agricultural and Rural Character Protection Plan in coordination with County Master Plan Update

- Goal
  - To protect farmland proactively using a system of planning and legal tools, increasing agriculture profitability, raising public awareness, and directing growth to appropriate areas in the County.
St. Clair County Goals

Goals related to farmland and rural character, as provided in the St. Clair County Master Plan, include:

- Preserve Rural Character
- Protect Farmland
- Sustain the health, diversity, and extent of natural resources
- Protect viable farmland while accommodating nearby land use change
- Preserve agriculture as an economic component
Location of St. Clair County

Source: SCCMPC
County Profile

- Median age: 36.6 – predicted to rise to 39.9 by 2030
- Median family income: $46,313 in 2000 (compared to $53,457 for Michigan)
- Services and retail trade main sectors in the economy
- Agriculture accounts for 3% of employment, compared to 1% in Southeast Michigan

Population and Housing Estimates and Projections

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Michigan</td>
<td>4,907,628</td>
<td>6.91%</td>
<td>15.29%</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Clair County</td>
<td>174,080</td>
<td>19.55%</td>
<td>27.36%</td>
<td>16.76%</td>
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<td>189,106</td>
<td>63.52%</td>
<td>73.35%</td>
<td>59.21%</td>
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Source: SEMCOG

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Source: SEMCOG
St. Clair County Land Use

Land Use (2000)

- Residential: 62%
- Commercial/Industrial: 14%
- Utility/Transportation: 2%
- Water: 2%
- Agriculture/Open Space: 0%

Source: SEMCOG
St. Clair County Land Use

Land Use Change St. Clair County, 1990-2000

Residential Density St. Clair County, 1990-2000

Source: SEMCOG
Metropolitan Planning Commission
Designated Districts

- Urban and General Services District
- Rural Residential District
- Rural and Agricultural Conservation District
Prime Farmland Soils

- The Rural and Agricultural Conservation District contains vast amounts of prime soils.
- These soils are not found in abundance elsewhere in the County.

Legend:
- St. Clair County Districts
- Soil Type
  - Black soil: 0 to 2 percent slopes
  - Black soil: 2 to 6 percent slopes
  - Black soil: 6 percent slopes

Source: USDA-SSCS
# County Agriculture Trends - Top 10 Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking In Ag. Production by Market Value</th>
<th>State of Michigan</th>
<th>St. Clair County</th>
<th>Lapeer County</th>
<th>Macomb County</th>
<th>Sanilac County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Nursery, Greenhouse Crops</td>
<td>Corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Soybeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dairy Products</td>
<td>Nursery, Greenhouse Crops</td>
<td>Dairy Products</td>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Other Crops (sugar crops, dry beans, dry peas, etc.)</td>
<td>Cattle, Calves</td>
<td>Nursery, Greenhouse Crops</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>Cattle, Calves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hay, Silage, Field Seeds</td>
<td>Other Livestock, Livestock Specialties</td>
<td>Cattle, Calves</td>
<td>Cattle, Calves</td>
<td>Nursery, Greenhouse Crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nursery, Greenhouse Crops</td>
<td>Vegetables, Melons, Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>Fruit, Tree Nuts, Berries</td>
<td>Oats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vegetables, Melons, Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>Hay, Silage, Field Seeds</td>
<td>Dairy Products</td>
<td>Other Crops (sugar crops, dry beans, dry peas, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hogs, Pigs</td>
<td>Hogs, Pigs</td>
<td>Other Crops (sugar crops, dry beans, dry peas, etc.)</td>
<td>Other Livestock, Livestock Specialties</td>
<td>Hogs, Pigs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: USDA
County Agriculture Trends

- Total farmland in St. Clair County has declined since 1982, but cropland and harvested cropland grew between 1997 and 2002.

- The number and market value of farms decreased steadily between 1982 and 1997, then increased between 1997 and 2002.

- The top agriculture product in St. Clair County in 2002 was corn, but nursery and greenhouse crops gained the most market share between 1997 and 2002.

- Direct sales of agriculture products grew strongly between 1997 and 2002.

- Net farm losses are rising.
County Agriculture Trends

Number of Farms and Value of Agriculture Production in St. Clair County, 1982 - 2002

Number of Farms

Market Value of Agricultural Production
Since 1997, the number of farms participating in direct sales increased by 15 and total direct sales increased 140.3%.
Agricultural Land and Open Space Preservation Toolbox

- Comprehensive Planning
- Zoning
- Conservation Easements
- Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Programs
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Programs

- Michigan Farmland Preservation Act (P.A. 116)
- Right to Farm Act
- Michigan Agricultural Fund
- Direct Development to the Urban and General Services District
Current State of Farmland Preservation in St. Clair County

- P.A. 116
  - 338 parcels of land totaling 30,076 acres in St. Clair County, are currently enrolled in P.A. 116

- Purchase of Development Rights
  - 13 Townships have passed PDR resolutions
Rural and Agricultural Conservation District Zoning - Outline

- Reviewed Township Zoning Ordinances
- Preformed Township Ordinance Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis
- Determined Level of Support for Agriculture
- Provided Best Practices Examples
- Zoning Ordinance Language and Definitions
Rural and Agricultural Conservation District Zoning

- Reviewed Township Zoning Ordinances
  - Focused on Agricultural, Open Space, River Conservation designations and ordinance adoption dates

- Township Ordinance SWOT Analysis
  - Assessed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of each zoning designation

- Determined Level of Support for Agriculture Zoning
  - High, Medium, and Low Support
  - Location Concerns
## Township Ordinance Rating Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Approximate Percent of Prime Farmland</th>
<th>High Support</th>
<th>Medium Support</th>
<th>Low Support</th>
<th>Location Concerns (Bordering Other Counties)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greenwood Township</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Township</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussey Township</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Borders Lapeer County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmett Township</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clyde Township</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Close Proximity to Ft. Gratiot and Port Huron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Township</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Borders Macomb and Lapeer County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales Township</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Borders Macomb County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brockway Township</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus Township</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Borders Macomb County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenockee Township</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Township</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Borders Lapeer County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riley Township</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Borders Macomb County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MSU Practicum Team, 2007
Level of Support for Agriculture

- **High Support**
  - Multiple agricultural zones
  - Allows direct sales

- **Medium Support**
  - Often allow residential development in agricultural zones
  - May or may not allow direct sales

- **Low Support**
  - Single agricultural zone
  - Allows residential development
  - No direct sales
## Current and Expected Population Growth

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emmett Twp.</td>
<td>68.99 %</td>
<td>96.60 %</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenwood Twp.</td>
<td>58.15 %</td>
<td>46.10 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Twp.</td>
<td>57.36 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riley Twp.</td>
<td>57.13 %</td>
<td>68.10 %</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussey Twp.</td>
<td>54.44 %</td>
<td>52.80 %</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Twp.</td>
<td>53.09 %</td>
<td>58.80 %</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Clair Twp.</td>
<td>52.88 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus Twp.</td>
<td>51.75 %</td>
<td>52.20 %</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales Twp.</td>
<td>45.42 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Huron Twp.</td>
<td>43.70 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenockee Twp.</td>
<td>65.90%</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Twp.</td>
<td>52.80 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burtchville Twp.</td>
<td>48.20 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brockway Twp.</td>
<td>48.00 %</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend**
- Top 10 Twp. Expected to Grow 2000 - 2030
- Top 10 Fastest Growing Twp. 1990 - 2007
- St. Clair County

Source: SEMCOG and MSU Practicum Team, 2007
Rural and Agricultural Conservation District Zoning

- Best Practices Examples:
  - Greenwood Township
    - I-A (Intensive Agriculture) District
    - OS (Open Space, Recreation Conservation) District
  - Clyde Township
    - RSF (Residential Suburban Farms) District
  - Ira Township
    - Agribusiness Amendment
  - Peninsula Township (Grand Traverse County)
    - A-1 (Agricultural District)
Rural and Agricultural Conservation District Zoning

- Updating Zoning Ordinance Language and Definitions
  - Agricultural Tourism
  - Value Added Products
  - Agricultural Products
  - Non-Agriculturally Related Uses
  - Farm Market/On-Farm Market/Roadside Stand
  - Seasonal Signs

Source: Michigan Agricultural Tourism Commission
Value Added Agriculture

- The use of innovative methods to increase the market value of existing farm products
  - Direct Marketing
  - Agricultural Tourism
Value Added Agriculture

- Direct Marketing
  - Farmers Markets
    - Blue Water Farmers Market in St. Clair
  - Community Supported Agriculture
    - Maple Creek Farms in Yale
  - Niche Markets
    - Additional studies required to determine specialty products demanded in St. Clair County

Source: Maple Creek Farms
Value Added Agriculture

- Agricultural Tourism
  - Includes: bed and breakfast, U-pick farms, cider mills, corn mazes, and Christmas tree farms

- Benefits
  - Allowing for continued farming and keeping the farm viable
  - Generating additional income or off season income
  - Increasing and diversifying the market
  - Responding to a need or opportunity in the market (specialty product)
Public Awareness Campaign

Goal: Increase the consciousness of community members about farmland preservation

- **Education**
  - Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) Chronicle Newsletter, MPC Workshops, Channel 6/Public Access Television

- **Participation**
  - Master Plan Update Visioning Session, County Department Visioning, Open Forum Meetings, Public Hearings

- **Communication**
  - Public Radio and Television, Pamphlets, Community Web-sites, The Voice Newspaper, Channel 6/Public Access

- **Preservation**
  - Education, participation, and communication aid in preservation
Recommendations

1. Update Township Ordinances in the Rural and Agricultural Conservation District

1. Implement Public Awareness Campaign

1. Identify Growing and Niche Markets in St. Clair County

1. Explore Direct Marketing in St. Clair County

1. Increase Current State of Participation in Farmland Preservation

1. Explore Opportunities for Preservation Funding
Take a Proactive Stance on Farmland Preservation.

Thank you!

Questions?