

# Agriculture

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## A. INTRODUCTION

### Agricultural heritage and historic roots contribute to The Manchester Experience

Agriculture is an integral part of the Manchester area’s cultural heritage and its economy. Possessing some of the region’s most prime agricultural soil, the Manchester area initially drew settlers from New England, and later from the Swabian region of southern Germany. These German immigrant settlers established farms and agriculture-related businesses throughout the area. While eastern Washtenaw County developed over time into manufacturing and higher education, western Washtenaw County, particularly southwest Washtenaw continues to have significant agricultural operations.

Agriculture plays a key role in defining the character of the community and the Manchester Experience. That experience includes driving through the countryside and observing working farms. Farmsteads, barns and out buildings, plowed and planted fields, livestock, wildlife, farm machinery moving from field to field, sometimes on public roads, all contribute to the Manchester Experience and sense of place that Manchester area residents so treasure.

### Protecting and preserving agriculture is a key component of the local economy

The MCJPC area is within a vast agricultural area of west central, southwestern, and south central Washtenaw County, and interconnected with agricultural areas to the west in Jackson County, and to the south in Lenawee and Monroe Counties. This agricultural region is primarily a feed and grain corn/soybean/livestock/dairy agricultural region with some specialty crops and the raising of sheep (primarily Southwestern Washtenaw County). This agricultural region could, perhaps, be described as the northern fringes of both the “Corn Belt” and the “Grain Belt” that exists in a vast contiguous area from Ohio on the east to the Great Plains states on the west, with southern Michigan, including Washtenaw County, on the northern fringes.

Agriculture is an important part of the MCJPC area’s economy. ~~In addition to jobs and contributing food and fiber production to society, agriculture preserves MCJPC area’s heritage, provides a buffer between unique landscapes, and adds value to the quality of life for County residents. The preservation of farmland will contribute to sustaining the Manchester area agricultural sector and its quality of life.~~

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~~While A~~gricultural output data at the Township level is not available. ~~However,~~ in 2002, Washtenaw County was ranked in the upper 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Michigan Counties in the market value of agricultural products sold for grain (25<sup>th</sup> out of 83), and ranked 14<sup>th</sup> out of 83 in the market value of agricultural products sold related to the raising of cattle and calves. Additionally, Washtenaw County ranks 29<sup>th</sup> out of 83 Michigan Counties in the market value of agricultural products sold related to milk production and other dairy products, as well as 1<sup>st</sup> out of 83 Michigan Counties in the market value of agricultural products sold related to the raising of sheep. Washtenaw County is also the top ranked county (#1) east of the Mississippi River in the United States in the market value of agricultural products sold related to the raising of sheep.

Overall, in 2002 Washtenaw County, with \$54,618,000 in market value of agricultural products sold ranks 25<sup>th</sup> out of 83 Michigan Counties. It also ranks number 1,052<sup>nd</sup> out of 3,075 US Counties — nearly a top 1/3<sup>rd</sup> agricultural economy in the nation among all counties throughout the U.S. (source: 2002 US Census of Agriculture, USDA-NASS).”

Of note, whereas SEMCOG projects a decline in “agricultural-related employment” \* between 2000 and 2030, the Manchester community is striving to modify that apparent trend through continued participation in the PA 116 program and PDR program, as well as becoming more heavily involved in the Food Systems Economic Partnership (FSEP). FSEP is a Southeast Michigan regional initiative to expand and support a regional agricultural “Farm to Table” economy. [Manchester area leaders and community planners participate in the Food Systems Economic Partnership \(FSEP\) to develop local and regional markets for locally produced agricultural products. FSEP and similar food-oriented groups are promoting a “farm-to-table” market development strategy that encourages end consumers to eat food that is raised within 100 miles.](#)

\* “Agriculture-related employment” does not refer to farmers, who are classified as small business owners by the U.S. Department of Labor. Rather, it refers to employees of businesses in support of agriculture, such as farm-equipment dealers, seed and feed dealers, etc.

### Prime Ag-land as a vital irreplaceable natural resource, irreplaceable

Prime agriculture soil is a significant and vital natural resource. Once it is built on or paved over, it is gone forever. Protecting prime agricultural soil is a goal that meets the needs of current residents and future generations.

### Preserving large tracts encourages the continued viability of farming

Farming is more viable on larger tracts of land, particularly with respect to field crops and to livestock needing pastureland. Agricultural equipment for raising field crops requires large tracts of land to be operated efficiently and cost-effectively. More intensive farming, such as truck farming, market gardening, and nursery operations, can be done on smaller parcels. Freedom Township, Bridgewater Township, and to a lesser extent Manchester Township still have several large tracts in active farming. Encouraging preservation of these large tracts will help preserve agriculture overall in the area.

Establishing a “Village Limit Line” or growth boundary Growth Transition Area linked to public sewer and water services around the Village of Manchester and potentially the Hamlet of Bridgewater (for sewer only) is one strategy for directing major growth in the MCJPC area away from tracts with prime soils.

### Energy costs will change market considerations

The increasing cost of energy and its resulting effects on the cost of transportation and therefore the cost of food may create opportunities for local agricultural producers to find and secure more local and regional markets.

[Insert Prime Ag Lands Map]

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**Local markets/Local sourcing/"Farm to Table" movement**

In order to maintain agriculture as a viable and significant part of the local economy, agricultural producers need markets. Manchester area leaders and community planners participate in the Food Systems Economic Partnership (FSEP) to develop local and regional markets for locally produced agricultural products. FSEP and similar food-oriented groups are promoting a "farm to table" market development strategy that encourages end consumers to eat food that is raised within 100 miles.

**B. INVENTORY/CURRENT CONDITIONS**

**1. Land Use Inventory**

An inventory of land uses as of 2007 is in the tables below:

	Bridgewater Township	Freedom Township	Manchester Township	Village of Manchester	Total Acres
<b>Existing Land Use Category in Acres (Approx)</b>					
Agriculture	14,342	14,222	9,071	147	<b>37,782</b>
Low Density Residential (less than 1 DU per acre)	1,061	815	1,686	101	<b>3,663</b>
Medium Density Residential (1 to 4 DU per acre)	16	29	23	205	<b>273</b>
High Density Residential (more than 4 DU per acre)	-	5	-	41	<b>46</b>
Commercial Retail	22	6	41	17	<b>86</b>
Commercial Office	-	1	-	1	<b>2</b>
Mixed Use (Commercial and Other Uses)	-	-	-	4	<b>4</b>
Research and Industrial	-	34	19	58	<b>111</b>
Extractive	125	80	83	-	<b>288</b>
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	5	27	8	12	<b>52</b>
Public/Quasi-Public/Institutional	21	25	46	86	<b>188</b>
Recreation	285	260	282	276	<b>1,103</b>
Open or Vacant	7,864	7,318	12,886	828	<b>28,896</b>
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>23,740</b>	<b>22,821</b>	<b>24,145</b>	<b>1,774</b>	<b>72,480</b>

Source: Washtenaw County 2007 Existing Land Use Inventory

## Types of agricultural activity

According to SEMCOG, as of the year 2000, the following types of agricultural activities were in operation, as measured in acres:

As of 2000, in acres	Bridgewater Township	Freedom Township	Manchester Township	Village of Manchester	TOTAL
Cropland	13,973	14,703	8,972	99.6	<b>37,747.6</b>
Orchard, Bush Fruit & Vineyard	48	94.2	108	0	<b>250.2</b>
Confined Feeding Operation	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Permanent Pasture	51.4	12.8	7.1	0	<b>71.3</b>
Other Agricultural Land	54.8	0	0	0	<b>54.8</b>
Farmstead	463.5	516.8	404.9	5.5	<b>1,390.7</b>
<b>TOTAL Acres in Agriculture &amp; Farmsteads</b>	<b>14,590.7</b>	<b>15,326.8</b>	<b>9,492</b>	<b>105.1</b>	<b>39,514.6</b>

Field crops: Primarily corn, soybeans, wheat, potatoes, oats, hay, and straw.

Livestock: Primarily sheep, dairy, beef, pleasure horses, some llama's, and alpaca's.

Note: Totals in the two tables above may vary since the Land Use Inventory is based on a 2007 Land Use Inventory, while the Types of Agriculture Activity table is based on the 2000 Census.

### 2. Soils classifications/Soil conservation

U.S. Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Conservation Soil Survey data indicates that the southwest Washtenaw region has a significant amount of prime agricultural soils. Map , "Prime Agricultural Land," illustrates that all three Townships in the MCJPC area have prime soils. This is particularly the case with Freedom and Bridgewater Townships. Manchester Township has prime agriculture land primarily in its southeast quarter.

### 3. Agriculture - related businesses

The local agricultural economy needs goods and services to support those who are producers of agricultural products. Fuel, equipment, feed, fertilizer, supplies, etc. need to be a part of the local economy in order for farming to be feasible.

Agriculture requires not only production of crops and livestock, but processing, distribution, marketing and sales at the wholesale and retail levels. Since few local communities will have all the facilities necessary to take agricultural products from farm to table, a regional system must be in place.

#### 4. Development and its effects on agriculture

One of the major impacts on agricultural lands within the MCJPC area has been non-agricultural land use infringement. This factor has accounted for significant amounts of land going out of production, which to a degree affect the continued stability of adjacent parcels. Successful agricultural enterprises need stability in order to continue, make economic and physical investments, and adequately plan for the future. Non-agricultural land use infringement has taken several forms. One of the first indicators of a non-agricultural infringement is a reduction of lot size. Lot splits tend to reduce the stability of an agricultural area, especially when the split results in a single-family dwelling being constructed which has no correlation with the farm operation.

Large agricultural properties that are split into smaller segments affect taxation practices due to the lots acquiring developmental rather than agricultural potential. Lot splits often result in the lots being too small to be viable agricultural operations.

~~The size of land parcels in areas suitable for agriculture can affect the long-term viability of these areas for farming purposes. When parcels are split from large parent parcels, intended to be used for activities other than agricultural, they will diminish long-term prospects of continued agricultural production. This loss of productive agricultural lands has partially resulted from the numerous single-family dwellings constructed within agricultural areas, primarily along the rural roads.~~

Between 1998 and 2007, the MCJPC area lost approximately 1,600 acres of farmland to development and other factors, based on the Washtenaw County 2007 Existing Land Use Inventory (1998: 38,985; 2007: 37,385 acres).

#### 4. Agricultural Preservation-Inventory of tools

##### a. Public Act 116

PA 116 of 1974, otherwise known as Michigan's Farmland and Open Space Act, enables a farm owner to enter into a Development Rights Agreement with the state. The agreement ensures that the land remains in agricultural use for a minimum of 10 years, and is not developed for any non-agricultural use. In return for maintaining the land in agricultural use, the landowner may be entitled to certain income tax benefits, and the land is not subject to special assessments for sanitary sewer, water, lights, or non-farm drain projects.

To illustrate the Manchester community's commitment to maintaining the agricultural economy, of the 610 Washtenaw County farms participating in the PA 116\* program, 171 or 28% are in Bridgewater, Freedom and Manchester Townships. ~~Were one to add the nearby Sharon Township's 35 farms in the PA 116 program, 206 or 34% of the total county farms in PA 116 agreements are in the Manchester community region.~~

##### b. Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)

PDR is a land protection tool that pays landowners to protect their land from development and is used most often to preserve agriculture and natural features. It is a voluntary program through which a government agency

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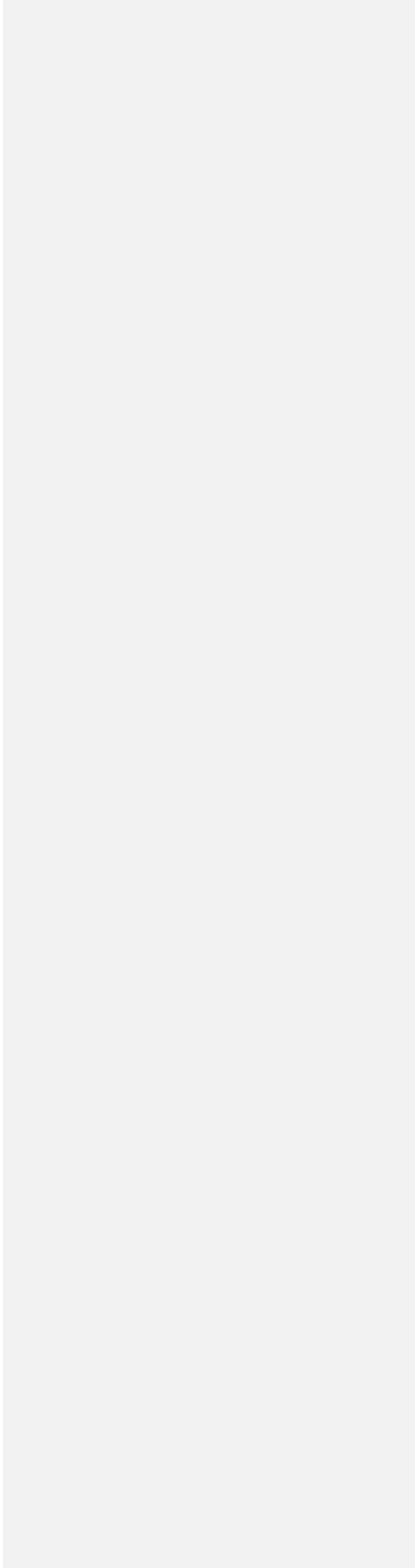
or non-profit organization buys the development rights from a landowner in exchange for limiting development on that land in the future.

Washtenaw County has a Purchase of Development Rights program that is administered by the Department of Planning & Environment (P&E). Currently, there are seven townships in the County PDR program, including Bridgewater and Freedom Townships. The Washtenaw County Agricultural Lands Preservation Advisory Committee, ALPAC, reviews and prioritizes applications to the state PDR program for funding of purchase of development rights. Manchester Township has a Purchase of Development Rights ordinance, but is not currently part of the County PDR program.

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[Insert Farm in PA 116, etc. Map]

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The following characteristics should be considered for determining which areas should be preserved as Agriculture on the Land Use Plan:

- ~~**Prime Farmland:** Prime farmland contains soils identified by the Soil Conservation Service as composed of the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops.~~
- ~~**Contiguous Farmland:** In close proximity to other parcels of existing agricultural land that when viewed as a whole will provide significant acreage to maintain a viable agricultural base.~~
- ~~**Major Farmsteads:** Existence of large contiguous properties, and historic large farmsteads depicted should be preserved.~~
- ~~**Public Act 116 Agreements:** Properties identified through state and local records as enrolled in the farmland and open space program. Identified farmers (or landowners) who have an interest in remaining in agricultural production or allowing their property to remain as open space.~~
- ~~**Centennial Farm Registration:** Farms registered with the Michigan State Department of History as a Michigan Centennial Farm. These farms have historical importance to the community, and should be recognized as part of an agricultural conservation program.~~
- ~~**Historically Significant:** Farm buildings and other structures of a historically significant nature should be recognized as part of an agricultural conservation program.~~

**Note to MCJPC:**

Every jurisdiction in the MCJPC will need to agree on the following, in order to qualify for funding from the state PDR program:

1. The areas intended for agricultural preservation are clearly depicted on the future land use map in the joint master plan as an overlay map.
2. A description of how and why the preservation area(s) were selected.

For the MCJPC consideration: Bridgewater Township's current master plan has language that meets the state PDR program standards.

**c. Conservation Easements/Land Trusts**

The MCJPC area has three land trusts with holdings via conservation easements, the Washtenaw Land Trust, Raisin Valley Land Trust, and the Nature Conservancy. Most of the acreage currently in conservation easements is for the preservation of open space. The MCJPC will encourage property owner to make use of conservation easements for the preservation of agricultural land whenever opportunities arise.

**d. Transfer of Development Rights/Non-Contiguous PUDs**

There is currently no state enabling legislation for a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. However, the same outcome may be attainable through use of a "non-contiguous Planned Unit Development (PUD) strategy. In a non-contiguous PUD, the "sending" parcel would be in a different part of a given municipality than

the “receiving” parcel. The two parcels would not touch at any point or line. Density allowed in the sending parcel could then be used for development in the receiving parcel at a greater density in the receiving parcel than would be allowed in the underlying zoning. The development rights in the sending parcel are sold to the receiving parcel. The sending parcel is then protected from further development through a conservation easement.

#### **e. Sliding scale zoning**

The sliding agricultural zoning approach limits the number of lot splits allowed in agricultural areas for uses other than agriculture. The number of divisions or splits of land, allowed depends on the size of the original, parent parcel. The larger the parent parcel, the higher number of splits allowed, up to a cap of, for example, nine splits. Requirements are placed on new splits to prevent the creation of inefficient or undesirable parcels, which could include: division of land that is not well suited for agriculture or forestry; maximum lot sizes are usually one to two acres; lot width-to-depth ratios to prevent excessively long and narrow lots; and requirements that the lot have approved access to a public road. The sliding-scale zoning mechanism allows farmers to have some flexibility in the division and sale of some lots for development purposes, and it prevents large lot fragmentation in prime agricultural areas.

#### **Soils classifications/Soil conservation**

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#### **f. Agricultural Preservation Overlay Area**

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### **C. CRITERIA FOR FARM LAND PRESERVATION**

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- **Prime Farmland:** Prime farmland contains soils identified by the Soil Conservation Service as composed of the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops.
- **Contiguous Farmland:** In close proximity to other parcels of existing agricultural land that when viewed as a whole will provide significant acreage to maintain a viable agricultural base.
- **Major Farmsteads:** Existence of large contiguous properties, and historic large farmsteads depicted should be preserved.

- Public Act 116 Agreements: Properties identified through state and local records as enrolled in the farmland and open space program. Identified farmers (or landowners) who have an interest in remaining in agricultural production or allowing their property to remain as open space.
- Centennial Farm Registration: Farms registered with the Michigan State Department of History as a Michigan Centennial Farm. These farms have historical importance to the community, and should be recognized as part of an agricultural conservation program.
- Historically Significant: Farm buildings and other structures of a historically significant nature should be recognized as part of an agricultural conservation program.

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## **DC. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

**GOAL 1:** Preserve agriculture as a significant component of the local economy that leads directly to creating a rural sense of place and that helps define the Manchester Experience.

OBJECTIVES: Preserving Agricultural Land

1. Identify prime agriculture lands that are suitable for designation for preservation through participation in the Washtenaw County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program or similar program. Identify these lands on the MCJPC Future Land Use map.
2. Establish a region-wide Agricultural Preservation Overlay Area where they do not currently exist.
3. Maintain Purchase of Development Rights Ordinances in every MCJPC Township, so that all farmland (meeting PDR criteria) in all MCJPC townships can be eligible for funding from the State of Michigan PDR program.
4. Consider having all MCJPC jurisdictions join the County PDR program ~~by~~ (if no Township PDR Ordinance exists) or via an Urban Cooperation Agreement (required if a Township PDR Ordinance does exist).
5. Develop a Non-Contiguous PUD program as a Transfer of Development Rights-like program as an additional strategy for preservation of agricultural land.
6. Identify potential “sending” and “receiving” lands within each MCJPC township that would be suitable for a non-contiguous PUD approach for the preservation of agricultural land.
7. Work with landowners and land trusts and similar organizations to establish conservation easements as a strategy to preserve agricultural land.

**GOAL 2:** Support stable agricultural areas and operations

OBJECTIVES: Measures to Support Agricultural

1. Use Zoning Ordinance controls (e.g. sliding scale in Freedom Twp., cluster housing, etc.), to preserve existing agricultural activities, to minimize land consumption and to promote future agricultural uses.
2. Direct potential development away from areas designated as prime agriculture and to areas served by municipal sewer service, i.e. the Growth Transition Area Village Limit Line around the Village of Manchester and the Hamlet of Bridgewater.

3. Encourage tax assessment policies that tax agricultural land as agriculture, to help make agricultural operations less expensive and to reduce sprawl.
4. In areas where residential development is adjacent to agricultural lands, a buffer of land and landscaping on the non-agricultural land should be provided along the common boundary.

**GOAL 3H: Support agri-business in the MCJPC area**

OBJECTIVES: Supporting agri-business

1. Encourage local agriculture producers' and local officials' participation in the Food Systems Economic Partnership program (FSEP) led by MSU Extension to develop local and regional markets for agricultural products produced in the MCJPC area.
2. Develop model zoning ordinance language to allow limited agri-business activities (such as agricultural processing, hobby farms and u-pick business) in agricultural zoning districts to add value to the products generated in the MCJPC area.
3. Consider allowing roadside farm stands for the sale of agricultural products and crafts in areas where road conditions allow for safe roadside transactions.

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