

VISION STATEMENT:

"In 2030, agriculture is an important feature of the economy and lifestyle of the East Central region. Development pressures have been diverted away from prime farmland and ample, un-fragmented agricultural districts exist. Farming is practiced on the most productive soils. A variety of farm types and sizes are operating successfully. The region's farming community supplies both local and global markets. Citizens, local officials, and farmers are aware of and continuously address interrelated economic and land use issues. The viable and stable farm economy, in terms of farm income and prosperity, reflects concerted efforts by the private and public sectors to balance free market forces and government programs for land conservation."



Town of Deerfield Farmsteads, Waushara County

Issues / Opportunities:

- While fifty percent of the region is farmed, the best agricultural land is under the most development pressure.
- The loss of prime farmland leads to a loss in agricultural production and economic decline.
- The traditional family farm is disappearing as the face of agriculture changes.
- Agriculture market prices put strains on farm income and on consistent and continued production.
- There seems to be no clear cut farm policy at any governmental level.
- Major government programs, many with long histories of mixed success, continue to direct major financial resources and subsidies to select farm commodities and sectors that results in farmer dependency on continued subsidies.
- While significant resources have and are being applied to agricultural educational efforts, there is still a general misunderstanding of the significance and plight of agriculture and farming in the region.



Larsen Coop, Town of Clayton, Winnebago County

Core Goals:

- Preservation and protection of Agricultural Lands
 - Protect prime agricultural soils for current and future farm use.
 - Preserve farms and farmland for productive agricultural use.
- Development of Sustainable Farming Opportunities
 - Preserve and promote a mix of farm types and sizes.
 - Provide economic incentives to assist farmers and stabilize income and promote new operations.
- Government Support for Mechanisms for Agriculture
 - Provide market-oriented economic governmental support programs for agriculture and farmers.
 - Promote tax and land use policies that support the enhancement of agricultural activities and the preservation of farms.
- Importance of Education in Agriculture's Future
 - Increase the public and local officials' awareness of the significance of agriculture and farming in their community.
 - Provide greater education opportunities and assistance to farmers and agricultural business.

So What?

- Preservation and protection of agricultural lands
 - There is a limited supply of prime farmland in the region.
 - The loss of farmland also leads to the loss of agricultural production and declining significance of farming in the economy.
 - Without a strong farmland protection strategy, prime farmland will continue to be lost.
- Development of sustainable farming opportunities
 - There is much debate about the future of farming and agriculture in East Central Wisconsin.
 - As farms become larger and more business like, larger capital and labor investments are required.
 - There is a growing shortage of farmers willing to commit additional resources resulting in a continuing decline in traditional family farms.
- Government support mechanisms for agriculture
 - Farming and agriculture are changing and it is important that government recognizes and reflects these changes.
 - Many of the government programs are intended to reduce the cost side of farming but increase the costs for environmental permits and improvements.
 - Property tax abatement reduces high property taxes but may cause leapfrog development or disruption of orderly urban development.
- Importance of education in agriculture's future.
 - People take the food they eat and the agricultural products they buy for granted and only become concerned when there are shortages or health issues.
 - An awareness of agricultural issues is not just an issue for the typical consumer but also for many farmers who produce the products.
 - It is important that government and local officials understand the complex relationship between the interests of farmers, who own most of the land, and citizens, who make up the voting majority.

What's Next?

June – November 2004:

- Evaluate goals and identify potential policies to support them.
- Finalize policies.
- Identify targets to enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of policies over time.

January 2005:

- Milestone Report 3: submitted to East Central Commission for approval.