

Open Space Committee

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Board of Supervisors	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Agricultural Lands Preservation</h2> <p>Agricultural land in Franklin Township is used to grow hay or corn to supply the mushroom and equestrian industries, raise horses for business or recreation, or for more specialized crops such as grapes. There are several properties in Agricultural Security Zones, but only one large holding with a Conservation Easements.</p> <h3>Agricultural Lands Preservation Priorities</h3> <p>Agricultural lands contribute to the overall rural aesthetic which residents would like to preserve. [See Franklin Township Community Values Survey (September 24, 2004) 📄.]</p> <p>The Committee established agricultural priorities based on Pennsylvania's criteria to qualify for Agricultural Conservation Easement and Challenge Grant programs.</p> <h3>Agricultural Conservation Easement</h3> <p>–The State Agricultural Land Preservation Board has established minimum requirements that farmland tracts must meet to be eligible for consideration for easement purchase. Farmland tracts must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be located in an agricultural security area consisting of 500 or more acres Have contiguous acreage of at least 50 acres in size unless the tract is at least 10 acres in size and is either contiguous to a property which has a perpetual conservation easement in place or utilized for a crop unique to the area Have at least 50% of the soils that are available for agricultural production and are of capability classes I-IV Contain the greater of 50% or 10 acres of harvested cropland, pasture, or grazing land." 	Open Space Committee
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Challenge Grant

–The following basic criteria must be met of each application:

Located in a municipality or municipalities whose Board of Supervisors has committed, in writing, to participate by providing matching funds for successful applications for development right acquisition. Or the above may be waived if applicant indicates 50% donation on their application, or if other match-funding source is committed in writing.

Enrolled in an adopted municipal Agricultural Security Area(s)

Situated in areas designated as a "Rural" or "Natural" landscape in the Chester County comprehensive policy plan, Landscapes. In cases where an applicant straddles the boundary between a 'Rural' and/or a 'Natural' landscape and a 'Suburban' or 'Urban' landscape, farm tract applied must have at least 50 percent in the 'Rural' and/or 'Natural.'

Contain a minimum parcel size of 25 acres if not contiguous to an existing protected parcel; or a minimum of 10 acres if contiguous to another protected parcel

Contain at least 50% cropland, pasture or grazing land."

Using these criteria, we have identified 6 priority #1 properties of equal or greater than 50 acres meeting the Agricultural Conservation Easement program criteria, 11 priority #2 properties of 25 to 50 acres meeting the Challenge Grant program criteria, and 1 priority #3 property of 10 and 25 acres meeting the above criteria. There are over 800 acres of prime agricultural land– exclusive of Strawbridge property– which might be preserved.

Agricultural Lands Preservation Strategy

Use leveraged open space funds to obtain agricultural / conservation easements on lands meeting the County's criteria and the owners long-term plans.

Agricultural Lands Preservation Progress

To date, we have identified three landowners who wish to preserve their farmland. We have put them in contact with The Brandywine Conservancy who will help them through the Chester County preservation process. No land has been preserved yet, but two applications have been submitted for the current grant round.

September 26, 2007

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