

**Agricultural Preservation Strategy Panel Meeting and CMAP Staff Responses,  
March 18, 2009**

**Attendees**

<b>In Person</b>	Robert Palmer	Village of Hazel Crest
	Kai Tarum	Kane County
	Jerry Conrad	Cambridge Homes
	Lenore Beyer-Clow	Openlands Project
	Bona Heinsohn	Cook County Farm Bureau
*2 <sup>nd</sup> presenter-Local Food Systems	Lee Peemoeller*	CFAC
	Roger Dahlstrom	NIU Regional Development Institute
	David Dubois	Will County
	Lisa DiChiera	Landmarks Illinois
	Mark Avery	DuPage County
	Karen Stonehouse	Illinois APA
	Jim LaBelle	Chicago Metropolis 2020
<b>Via Webinar</b>	Bill Hunt	Lake County
	Kevin Garcia	UIC
	Steve Arnold	Kane County Farm Bureau
	Michael Walkup	CMAP CAC
	John Church	University of Illinois Extension
	Michael Sands	Prairie Crossing
	Darrell Moore	McHenry County
	Robert Wagner	American Farmland Trust
	Julia Leis	Chicago Community Trust
	Janice Hill	Kane County

***Questions and Responses: Purchase of Development Rights Program***

**Q: Why are we protecting farmland in this region? Is agriculture the most appropriate use of land?**

**A:** This is a fundamental question and we hope that it receives more discussion as our scenario evaluation process continues. Farmland preservation can provide economic value, preserve the character of agricultural communities, and create environmental benefits, to name a few examples. Our region has a long history of preserving farmland, and the legislation, zoning controls, and other policies created to protect it demonstrate its desirability. However, it is definitely worthwhile to fully evaluate the purpose of farmland preservation, and we encourage future discussions on this topic.

**Q: Is an assessment of farmland based on real estate value?**

**A:** No, farmland assessments are not based on market value of property and/or land. Instead farmland is assessed by the differential assessment tax property law, which is a preferential farmland

tax policy. The assessment process for valuing farmland is inclusive of statewide studies of land use, soil productivity, and the net income of farms. In general, farm acreage is assessed based on its ability to produce income; farm buildings are assessed based on the value that they contribute to the farm's productivity; and farm dwellings are assessed at normal rates.

**Q: Has CMAP considered a TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) program as an alternative to a PDR program for the region?**

**A:** Implementation of a TDR program would be difficult because the "sending" and "receiving" areas would likely be in different jurisdictions, so the development rights could not be easily transferred. However, staff would welcome ideas on how this jurisdictional barrier could be overcome.

**Q: Is the target of 273,000 acres set to support local food production?**

**A:** We assume that if an aggressive preservation strategy is implemented then it will increase the opportunities for supporting local food systems around the region. Maintaining more farmland in the region can lead to more diversification of farmland crops, such as specialty crops. However, the target of 273,000 acres was not set based on any objective assessment of the amount of land needed for this purpose.

**Q: Will the PDR program preserve smaller farms?**

**A:** In this modeling exercise we didn't include subzones (a grid of ½ mile by ½ mile zones that covers the region; similar to quartersections) that had less than 10 acres of agricultural land because smaller, isolated farms are not usually targeted in PDR programs. However, we do recognize that small farms are very important in the region and are part of a growing trend, as identified in the recent agricultural census, and are important to local food systems, described in the second part of the discussion.

**Q: The cost of purchasing development rights would be much higher in DuPage and Lake Counties and overall appear to be too low for the region. How will CMAP address the high variance in cost of development rights around the region?**

**A:** It is difficult to determine the cost range for purchasing development rights of farmland across the region because of the large variances in market values. However, we recognize that costs are considerably higher in areas with high growth pressure. We will experiment with different ways to approximate this, and expect that this will lead to costs that are more locally specific and accurate.

**Q: Is the selection of farmland in subzones considerate of sustainability, meeting a 'tipping point'? Farmland should be connected with infrastructure and networks that support farmers and their businesses.**

**A:** We do believe that preserving a cluster of farms creates a sustainable network and this objective would be part of a regional PDR program. This issue was not addressed in the modeling exercise but would be an important part of program design and implementation. After reviewing other PDR programs within the region and outside of the region, we found that clustering was consistently a criteria used in PDR applications.

**Q: Isn't ten acres the minimum number of acres for agricultural zoning purposes? By eliminating farms with ten acres or less this may exclude many farms that meet the minimum zoning requirements.**

**A:** The ten-acre minimum was applied to subzones, not farms. Since a subzone totals 160 acres there can be numerous farms and farmland parcels within one subzone. This analysis does not exclude ten-acre farms that are near other farms; those farms would collectively total more than ten acres. This only screens out areas where farms make up less than ten of the 160 acres of a subzone.

### ***Questions and Reponses: Local Food Systems Strategy***

**Q: Has any study been completed on demand in local food markets which considers food that can be grown in the region? This could be included in the strategy report.**

**A:** We have not found existing metrics for this kind of study. This will likely be one of the recommendations in the report we submit.

**Q: Will this food systems report consider hydroponics as a possible method of growing food?**

**A:** The report will consider all methods of growing food for the region

**Q: How is organic food included in the local food production plan?**

**A:** Organic food will be addressed in terms of consumer demand and growing practices. Our goal is to produce a report that represents a wide variety of perspectives. It is important to note that organic food is not necessarily synonymous with local food. Organic is a USDA certification program related to growing, harvesting, and processing standards while local food can be anything growing within the region.

**Q: Are there training programs for farmers in the region addressing the issue of next generation farmers?**

**A:** We are lucky to have at least a few farmer training and development programs in the region

- The Land Connection- helps farmers find farm land and offers a farm-dreams workshop
- Angelic Organics Learning Center- offers a farm beginnings program
- Several State funded colleges are exploring the possibility of offering sustainable agriculture curriculum

**Q: How will the food systems strategy be merged as part of the GO TO 2040 plan?**

**A:** CMAP is getting ideas for potential recommendations from many sources, including internal technical analysis, public involvement, and work being conducted on contract, such as the local food study. The working committees will be involved in constructing a "preferred scenario" for the region, which will combine the most effective policies and investments identified from all of these sources, during late summer and fall.