TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In 1998 the Richland County Commissioners requested $10,000 of the funding that was being offered by the State of Ohio for use by County's to draft farmland preservation plans. The Richland County Regional Planning Commission agreed to provide the required matching funding for this study. This planning effort began in early 1999 when local groups and individuals perceived to have an interest in the issue were asked to appoint representatives to serve on the Richland County Farmland Preservation Task Force. Thirty individuals were appointed to the Task Force, representing a cross section of community interests, and the Task Force began meeting in April 1999. Through analysis of information, and discussion at the meetings, the Task Force has crafted this "*Farmland Preservation Plan for Richland County.*"

Richland County's effort to prepare a Farmland Preservation Plan in 1999 takes place in the shadow of two major components of the community's heritage. The first part of the heritage that is of note is the very name of the County. The settlers of this area selected the name "Richland" for the new County when it was organized in 1813. The name describes the fertility of the land. Fairfield is the only other Ohio County named for its agricultural character.

The second component of our unique farmland heritage is that Richland County was the birthplace of Pulitzer Prize winning author Louis Bromfield, who use his fame and fortune to implement exemplary farming techniques at his Malabar Farm in southeastern Richland County from the late 1930's into the 1950's. His farm and his ideas live on as a model to this day as Malabar Farm State Park.

II. TASK FORCE COMPOSITION

A variety of local groups and individuals were asked to become involved with the Richland County Farmland Preservation Task Force. The following is the representation that was actively involved in the planning process:

ORGANIZATION/INTEREST	NAME:
Richland County Farm Bureau	Gary Ulmer/Angela Banbury
OSU Extension	Joe Cochran
Richland Soil & Water	Dale Hulit/John Hildreth
Richland County Commissioners	Dave Swartz
Richland County Engineer	Tom Beck
Richland County Tax Map Office	Elaine Kiefer
Township Trustees Association	Kay Leitenberger
City of Mansfield	Jim DeSanto
City of Shelby	Chris Brown
Village Representative	Chuck Pscholka
Richland Economic Development Corp.	Janet Keller/Audrey Cook
Mansfield/Richland Area Chamber of Commerce	Kevin Nestor
Shelby Chamber of Commerce	Jim Stoner
Building Industry Association of NCO	Steve Thomas/Courtney Hudson
Richland County Park District	Steve McKee
Farmer/Agriculture - North	Todd Fackler
Farmer/Agriculture - South	Cyndde DeWeese
Farmer/Agriculture	Kevin Kleer
Mansfield/Richland Co. Health Department	Stan Saalman
An Interested Citizen	Dr. Raymond Dominick
An Interested Citizen	Jeff Wilkinson
An Interested Citizen	Grant Milliron
An Interested Citizen	Duane Rader
An Interested Citizen	Virgil Barton
USDA/NARCS	Gary Mathes
USDA/FSA	Dan Blay
Task Force Chair Person	Bridget McDaniel
Richland County Recorder	Sarah Davis
RCRPC Staff	Ron Hout & Dick Adair

Additional groups were asked to be represented on the Task Force, but did not respond to several attempts to gain their participation.

III. GOALS

The Richland County Farmland Preservation Task Force identified the following goals for its effort:

1. The Task Force will study information and data concerning issues relating to farmland preservation in Richland County, and will hold discussion of the issues in an open and courteous fashion that is respectful of all points-of-view.

2. The Task Force will consider the statewide, national and international scope of issues relating to farmland preservation, but will only make recommendations concerning matters that may be influenced locally.

3. The Task Force will always consider "farmland" in relationship to all agriculture uses, including *farming; ranching; aquaculture; horticulture; viticulture; animal husbandry, including, but not limited to the care and raising of livestock, equine and fur-bearing animals; poultry husbandry and the production of poultry and poultry products; dairy production; the production of field crops, tobacco, fruits, vegetables, nursery stock, ornamental shrubs, ornamental trees, flowers, sod, or mushrooms; timber; pasturage; any combination of the foregoing; the processing, drying, storage, and marketing of agriculture products when those activities are conducted in conjunction with, but are secondary to such husbandry or production.*

4. The Task Force will produce a map of soils in Richland County that identifies prime farmland. If possible, the prime farmland will be identified in two to three categories, such as "*good, better and best.*" A determination of prime farmland will relate to the current characteristics of Richland County's agriculture production.

5. The Task Force will identify and study existing and potential tools that may be used accomplish farmland preservation in Richland County. These tools may include property tax programs, land trusts, purchase of development rights (PDR), transfer of development rights (TDR), zoning, subdivision regulations and other tools that may be identified.

6. The Task Force will consider the role of economic development in farmland preservation in Richland County from various perspectives, including the importance of agriculture as a component of the local economy, the possibilities of encouraging development by enterprises that support agriculture and/or create a market for local agriculture products, and to encourage general job creation efforts that may provide supplemental employment to farm families.

7. The Task Force will identify the public and private sector agencies, organization and groups in Richland County that may have a role in implementing recommendations, and will clearly acknowledge in the plan that the Task Force is only providing the actual

decision makers with information that they may use, as they see fit.

8. The Task Force will consider adopting the Richland County Vision as a part of the framework for making its decisions and recommendations.

9. The Task Force will consider the redevelopment of core areas in existing communities by reviewing the development tools that may facilitate this approach so that the use of "brownfield" sites may be as feasible and cost effective as using new "greenfield" sites.

10. The Task Force will consider issues related to farmland preservation in the context of "sustainable development," being that decision-makers will deal with today's problems without compromising the needs of future generations.

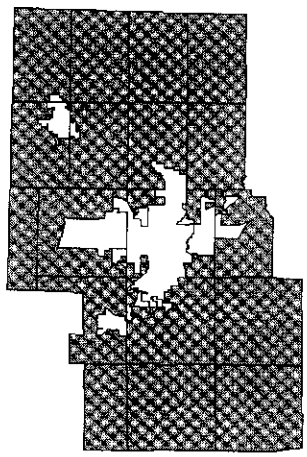
IV. FARMLAND DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION - URBAN AND RURAL: Richland County's population has remained relatively stable since 1970. Table I charts the population of the County in this period, and breaks out the urban and rural components of the total.

Table I: RICHLAND COUNTY POPULATION, URBAN AND RURAL 1970 - 1990[1]

Richland County	1970	1980	1990
Total Population	129,997	131,205	126,137
Urban	90,256	88,608	86,147
Rural - Farm	8,850	3,390	2,979
Rural -Non Farm	30,891	39,207	37,011
Rural Total	39,741	42,597	39,990
Percent Rural	30.57%	32.47%	31.70%
Ohio Percent Rural	24.68%	26.67%	25.89%

The "rural" portion of the County's population has also remained somewhat constant over these years, accounting for approximately 30 to 32 percent of the County's population. Rural population is counted as those living outside municipalities with populations of 2,500 or more as well as those outside the urban fringe area with population density of more than 1,000 per square mile.



Map I Census "Rural" Areas

In Map I the shading illustrates the areas within Richland County that are considered "rural" in the 1990 Census

LAND USE AND LAND IN FARMS IN RICHLAND COUNTY

There are two sets of statistics that address conversion of farmland to other uses. The first approach deals with existing land use based on studies completed at various times, while the second approach is to compare statistics for "land in farms" from the US Census of Agriculture.

LAND USE STUDIES: Statistical data concerning the existing land use in Richland County has been gathered by various methodologies over the years. The two most recent studies were completed in 1974 by the Richland County Regional Planning Commission staff using a

[1]Source: U.S. Census

combination of the windshield survey methodology and aerial photography, and in 1991 by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), as a part of their Ohio Capability Analysis Program (OCAP) project. ODOR utilized a methodology of digitizing land use area through an examination of aerial photos. The two studies used different classifications for land uses, so it is not possible to precisely compare all data. The three most critical development land uses that impact on farmland areas could however be compared, and Table II reflects this comparison.

Table II: Existing Land Use 1974 & 1991

Existing Land Use	1974[2] (Acres)	1974 (% of Land)	1991[3] (Acres)	1991 (% of Land)	Acres Converted	Converted Per Year
Residential	18,447.0	5.8%	24,044.6	7.5%	5,597.6	349.9
Commercial & Service	2,078.5	0.7%	3,662.3	1.1%	1,583.8	99.0
Industrial	2,449.2	0.8%	2,617.7	0.8%	168.5	10.5
Subtotal	22,974.7	7.2%	30,324.6	9.5%	7,349.9	459.4
Vacant & Agriculture	272,759.5	85.6%	265,409.6[4]	83.3%		

Over the course of the years from 1974 to 1991 approximately 7,350 acres of Richland County vacant or agricultural land was converted to residential, commercial or industrial use. In excess of 75 percent of the conversion in this period was to residential uses.

LAND IN FARMS: The US Census Bureau completes an Agricultural Census in five year intervals. Respondents to the Census are asked to provide information that is then tabulated and summarized in the Agricultural Census reports. The information concerning "Land in Farms" is defined as the following:

"The acreage designated as 'land in farms' consists primarily of agricultural land used for crops, pasture, or grazing. It also includes woodland and wasteland not actually under cultivation or used for pasture or grazing, provided it was part of the farm operator's total operation. Large acerages of woodland or wasteland held for nonagricultural purposes was deleted from individual reports during the processing operations. Land in farms includes acres set aside under annual commodity acreage programs as well as acres in the Conservation Reserve and Wetlands Reserve Programs for places meeting the farm definition.

---

[2] Source: Comprehensive Land Use Plan, RCRPC June 1977.

[3] Source: Land Capability Analysis for Richland County, ODOR, July 1991

[4]The OCAP Land Use study indicates 276,664 acres of vacant and agricultural land. This figure is calculated by subtracting residential, business and industrial acres converted from the 1974 acreage for vacant and agricultural.

Land in farms is an operating unit concept and includes land owned and operated as well as land rented from others. Land used rent free was to be reported as land rented from others."[5]

Over the past forty years Richland County has experienced a decline in the number of farms and the total number of acres of land in farms. Table III details this information in five year increments from 1959 to 1997, and provides a comparison to Ohio. In this period the number of farms in Richland County decreased by 49 percent, with Ohio's numbers decreasing 51 percent. Richland County's acreage decreased by 23 percent and the size of the average farm increased by 57 percent.

Table III: Farm and Land in Farms Demographics 1959 -1997[6]

Richland County	Farms	Total Acres	Average size in acres	Percent of County land
1959	1,769	216,000	122	68%
1964	1,537	203,000	132	64%
1969	1,475	200,000	135	63%
1974	1,261	187,000	148	59%
1978	1,190	187,000	157	59%
1982	1,168	190,000	162	60%
1987	1,022	168,992	165	53%
1992	922	160,734	174	51%
1997	908	155,516	171	49%
Richland 1959-1997	-49%	-28%	40%	
Ohio 1959-1997	-51%	-23%	57%	

The table also indicates that the percentage of Richland County's land used for farming dropped below the 50 percent figure in 1997 for the first time since the County was formed.

RECONCILIATION OF LAND USE AND LAND IN FARMS ACREAGE: The most direct comparison of the land use and the land in farms data is obtained from using the 1974 and 1992 Census of Agriculture statistics. In this comparison the land use studies demonstrate a conversion due to residential, commercial or industrial uses at a rate of 432.3 acres per year, while the Census of Agriculture shows a loss of land in farms at a rate of 1459.2 acres per year, a difference of 1,027 acres per year. The difference can not be precisely explained. It is possible that some of the former "land in farms" is set aside for residential development, in a subdivision or in a development plan, but has not yet been developed. It also may be that land is associated with a residential structure,

[5] Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture -1992, Appendix A, Page A-8.

[6] Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

TABLE IIIA: Reconciliation of Land Use and Land in Farms Data

Year	Land use (acres)	Year	Land in Farms (acres)
1974	272,759.5	1974	187,000.0
1991	265,409.6	1992	160,734.0
Change	(7,349.9)	Change	(26,266.0)
Per Year	(432.3)	Per Year	(1,459.2)
Difference in Annual Acreage Change			(1,026.9)

but includes more land than typically required for a home. For example, a home may be built on a 5 to 20 acre tract, yet the land use survey only identified several acres around the identified housing structure as a residential use. The difference may also include former farmland that is owned by individuals for investment or for speculation concerning future development, and is not being farmed. Finally the land may be owned by families of former farm operators and is not being farmed because it cannot be rented, they do not wish to bother, they cannot afford to farm the land, or it is too small or to hard to access to make it practical to farm. Some of the former land in farms may have been converted to other land uses, such as parks, golf courses, cemeteries, transportation facilities, etc.

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS: Residential uses are the largest component of the conversion of land uses. Table IV compares the number of residential building permits issued in the 1990's in each of the County's political subdivisions to the individual government subdivisions proportional share of Richland County's population.

This data confirms the growth of residential uses in the rural areas of the County. The subdivisions shaded in this table are those identified as being primarily urban. The rural villages and townships in Richland County, from 1991 to 1998 accounted for 40 percent of the new residential building permits, while only representing 30 percent of the County's total population.

Table IV is on the next page

TABLE IV: Residential Building Permits 1991-1998[7] (shaded political subdivisions are primarily "urban")

Building Permits & Population	Building Permits-91-98	%of Total Building Permits	% of total Population
RICHLAND COUNTY	3,120		
CITIES			
MANSFIELD	844	27.1%	40.1%
SHELBY	147	4.7%	7.6%
VILLAGES			
BELLVILLE	8	0.3%	1.2%
BUTLER	9	0.3%	0.8%
LEXINGTON	215	6.9%	3.3%
LUCAS	1	0.0%	0.6%
ONTARIO	471	15.1%	3.2%
PLYMOUTH(PART)	14	0.4%	0.8%
SHILOH	4	0.1%	0.6%
CRESTLINE(PART)	0	0.0%	0.0%
TOWNSHIPS			
BLOOMINGGROVE	39	1.3%	0.8%
BUTLER	24	0.8%	0.9%
CASS	21	0.7%	0.7%
FRANKLIN	49	1.6%	1.4%
JACKSON	58	1.9%	2.1%
JEFFERSON	167	5.4%	2.1%
MADISON	87	2.8%	10.5%
MIFFLIN	114	3.7%	5.4%
MONROE	93	3.0%	1.5%
PERRY	47	1.5%	1.0%
PLYMOUTH	21	0.7%	1.0%
SANDUSKY	34	1.1%	0.7%
SHARON	23	0.7%	0.9%
SPRINGFIELD	164	5.3%	3.5%
TROY	143	4.6%	1.6%
WASHINGTON	140	4.5%	5.1%
WELLER	83	2.7%	1.2%
WORTHINGTON	100	3.2%	1.2%

[7] Source: RCRPC, Compiled from community building permit records

FARMING STATISTICS: Table V highlights additional information concerning farming and farm operations in Richland County. Among items of note in this table are the following:

- The per acre value of farmland increased by 56% from 1992 to 1997
- Only 48% of farm operators considered farming as their principal occupation in 1997, down from 50% in 1992.
- 58% of farm operators worked some time off the farm, and 41% worked at least 200 days off the farm in 1997.

Table V: Richland County Agricultural Highlights 1992 & 1997[8]

Value of land and buildings	**1997**	**1992**
Average per farm	$328,597	$250,786
Average per acre	$2,045	$1,308
Value of machinery&equipment (Average per farm)	$53,580	$49,882
Farms by size: 1 to 9 acres	46	47
10 to 49 acres	214	215
50 to 179 acres	429	414
180 to 499 acres	155	185
500 to 999 acres	50	42
1,000 acres or more	14	19
Farms by value of sales: Less than $2,500	225	190
$2,500 to $4,999	97	104
5,000 to $9,999	128	147
$10,000 to $24,999	122	158
25,000 to $49,999	96	112
$50,000 to $99,999	95	84
$100,000 or more	145	127
Average production expense per farm	$42,329	$40,176
Operators by principal occupation: Farming	439	465
Other	469	457
Operators by days worked off farm: Any	508	543
200 days or more	362	391

Of the 908 farm operators tabulated in the Census of Agriculture in 1997, 59 were female. Only 2 of the 908 were black or other race. The average age of an operator was 51.9, up from 50.7 in 1992.

FARM PRODUCTION: The nature of Richland County's farming is outlined in Table VI.

[8] Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1997 (dollar values are not adjusted for changes in price levels)

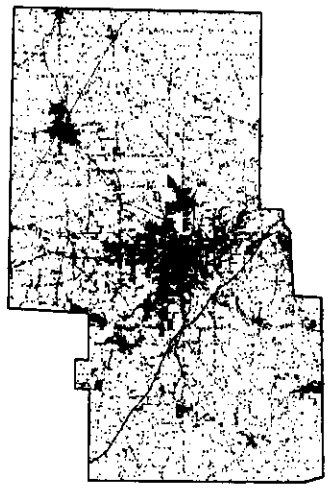
Based on the value of products sold, the County is nearly equally divided between livestock and crops. The greatest value to the County in sales is in dairy products, while the most land is devoted to corn, followed by soybeans.

Table VI: Richland County Agricultural Production, 1997[9]

Richland County Agricultural Production	Richland County Total	State Rank
Total Value of Agricultural Products Sold	$47,145,000	44
Value of Livestock & Poultry	$24,047,000	19
Value of Crops, Including Nursery	$23,099,000	51
Top Five All Commodities - Value of Sales		
Dairy Products	$12,619,000	12
Soybeans	$8,721,000	47
Corn for Grain	$7,600,000	47
Cattle and Calves	$5,990,000	12
Nursery and Greenhouse Crops	$3,916,000	28
Top Five Commodities - Livestock Sold (number)		
Broilers and other Meat Type Chickens	936,586	6
Layers, Pullets, and Pullet Chicks	100,248	13
Turkeys	43,781	11
Hogs and Pigs	28,051	40
Cattle and Calves	11,517	20
Top Five Commodities - Crop Area (acres)		
Corn for Grain	36,411	42
Soybeans for Beans	35,142	46
Hay Crop	16,732	28
Wheat	9,625	36
Corn for Silage	4,816	10

[9] Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1997

V. SOILS AND PRIME FARMLAND



Map 2
Developed Land

The Soil Survey of Richland County, Ohio was issued in September 1975. Field work for the study was done in the period 1966 - 1970. The survey was completed by the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Lands and Soils, and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center.

The Richland County Soil Survey was the basis for the development of a map of prime agricultural land by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in the Richland County OCAP study. In this analysis the "land available for agriculture is first determined from the land use/land cover mapping for Richland County. From a soils standpoint, prime farmland is usually defined as land best suited and available for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. It has the quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields economically when treated and managed, including water management, according to modern farming methods."[10]

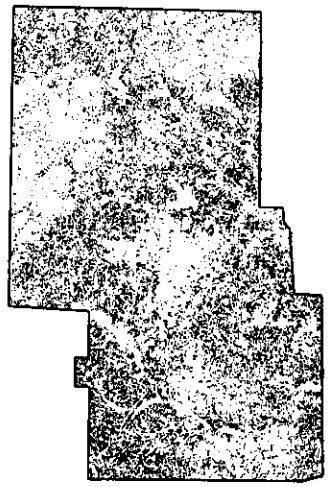
Through this process, general areas of "prime agricultural land" have been identified. The first step is to identify developed land and areas not available for agriculture. Map 2 illustrates these developed areas in Richland County.

An analysis of the soil survey resulted in identifying four potential types of prime agricultural land. The first classification was that for soil types that are unqualified prime agricultural types. The second was a non-prime classification unless well drained. Third was non-prime unless protected from flooding or not flooded frequently during the growing season. The fourth category was non-prime unless drained and protected from flooding.

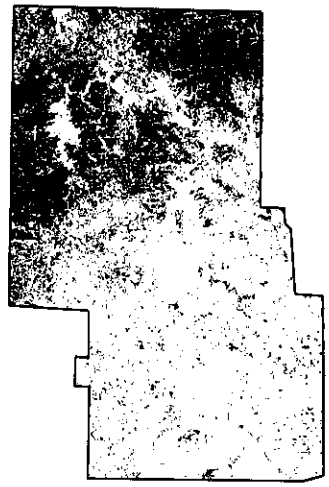
Maps 3-5 illustrate the location of the various categories of prime agricultural lands in Richland County.

---

[10] ODNR, Richland County OCAP, 1991, page 50



Map 3
Prime Agricultural

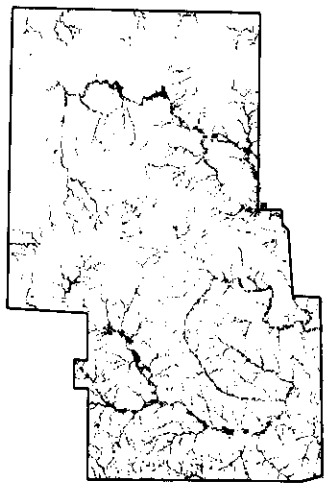


Map 4
Prime if Drained

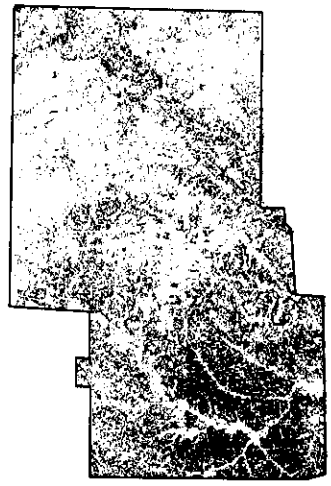
The soils analysis also reveals that there are certain soils that are non-prime, or there are some soils that are simply not rated as a agricultural soil. Map 6 identifies these areas of Richland County.

All of these soil based factors can then be combined into one map. Map 7 illustrates the areas of Richland County, based on a soil analysis, that may be considered prime agricultural land. This map shades those areas that are prime, prime if drained and prime if protected from flooding.

Based on an understanding of the soils in Richland County as they relate to prime agricultural



Map 5
Prime if Protected
From flooding



Map 6
Non-Prime

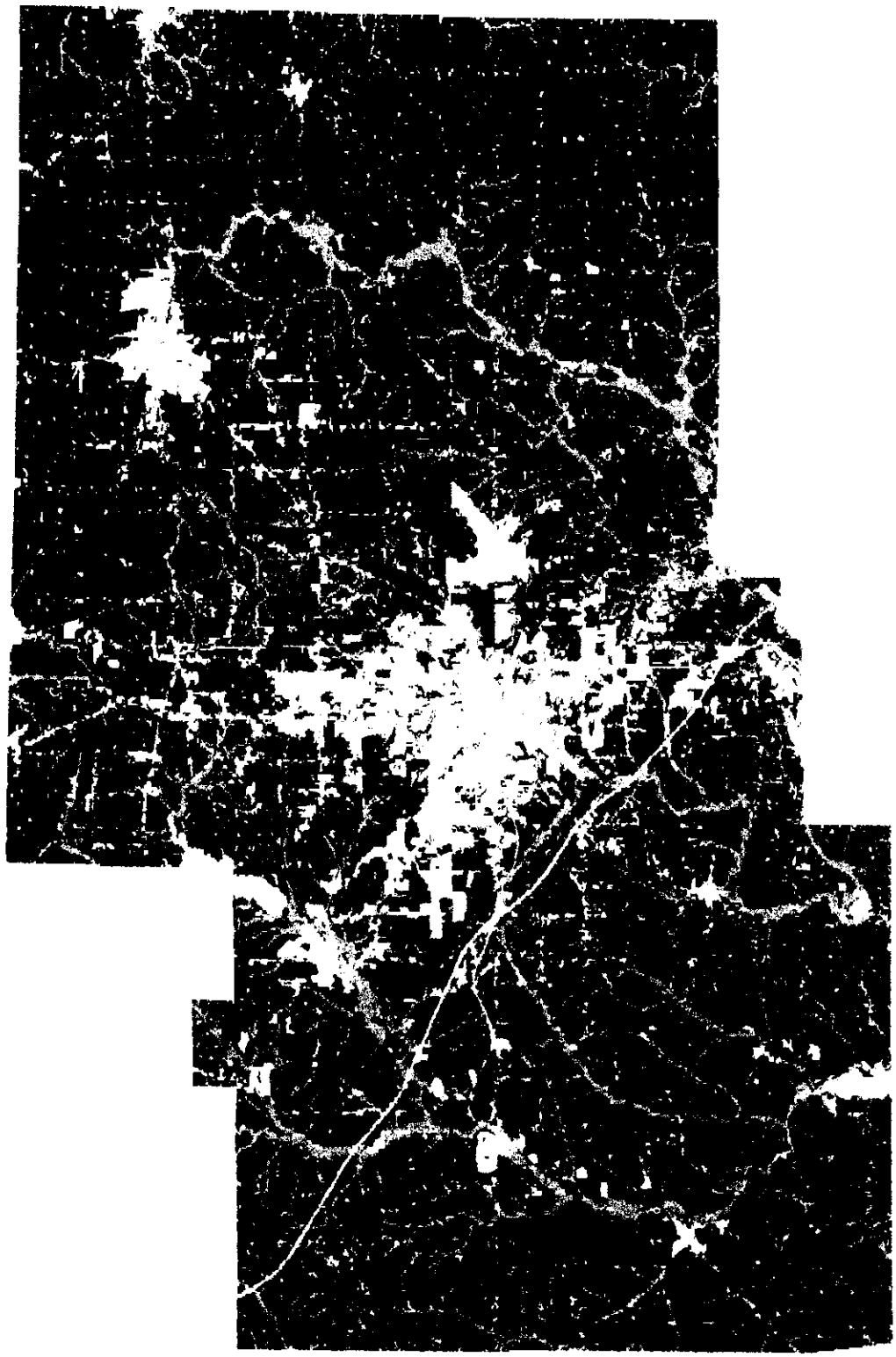
land, combined with an awareness of existing development patterns, a map (Map 8) has been developed which identifies Prime Agricultural Land in Richland County. This map provides a buffer around existing development areas, and is laid out so that it corresponds to township section lines, that have long been used as boundaries in farming areas. The map for Richland County also considers more than just soils to locate prime farmland. It also incorporates the suitability for livestock and forest production, and thus areas in southeastern Richland County that are classified with "non-prime" soils are prime for these other components of agriculture.

This map is presented as a part of this planning process with the following qualifications:

1. Although the Richland County map of Prime Agricultural Lands will serve as a principal indicator of where efforts at preservation should be directed, it may also be appropriate to try to preserve some farmland outside the boundaries of the areas identified. In addition to soil type and farm productivity, the easement program being developed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture recognized other criteria that will influence the awarding of funding, including "development pressure" and "proximity to protected areas." It is possible, for example, that a farm outside the identified areas is near a park or wildlife refuge and where development threats might rank higher than a farm within the identified area, away from both recreation areas and development pressures.

2. The demarcation line between the prime agricultural lands and the other areas of the County should not be interpreted as either Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB) or Urban Service Area Boundaries (USA).

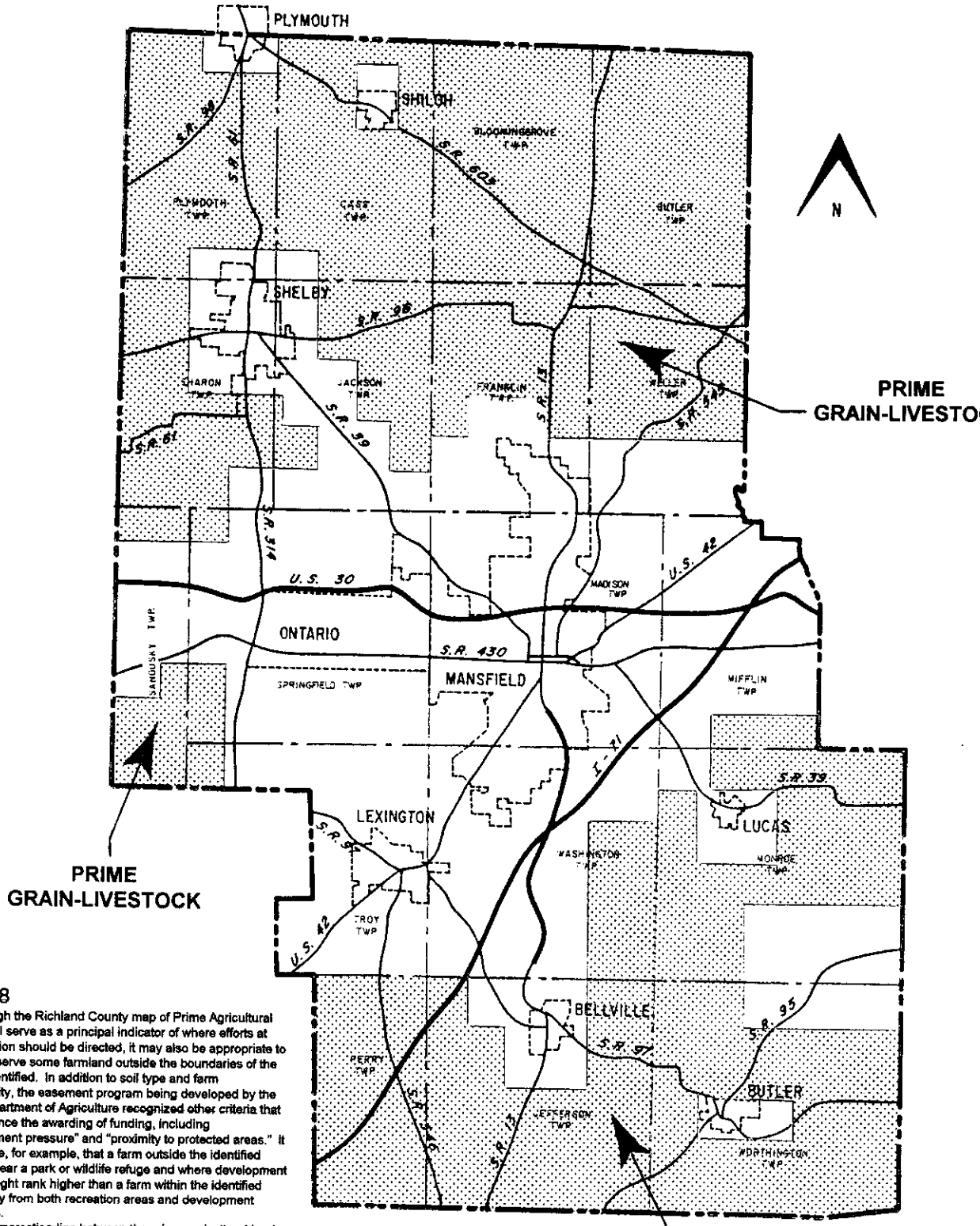
3. This map is intended to be only a recommendation to decision makers. It is not being offered as a mandate of how things must be done, and any eventual adoption and/or approval of this plan in no way implies that the entity adopting/approving the plan assigns any official meaning to those areas.



Primeag
- Prime Agricultural Soil
- Prime, If Drained
- Prime, If Protected From Flooding
- Non-Prime Soils
- Developed Land /Areas Unavailable for Agriculture, or not rated

MAP 7
Richland County Prime Farmland By Soils

PRIME AGRICULTURAL LANDS



RICHLAND COUNTY, OHIO

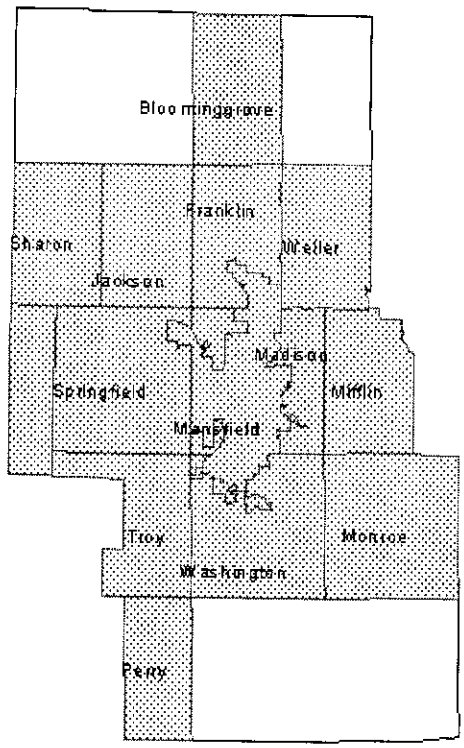
MAP 8

1. Although the Richland County map of Prime Agricultural Lands will serve as a principal indicator of where efforts at preservation should be directed, it may also be appropriate to try to preserve some farmland outside the boundaries of the areas identified. In addition to soil type and farm productivity, the easement program being developed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture recognized other criteria that will influence the awarding of funding, including "development pressure" and "proximity to protected areas." It is possible, for example, that a farm outside the identified areas is near a park or wildlife refuge and where development threats might rank higher than a farm within the identified area, away from both recreation areas and development pressures.
2. The demarcation line between the prime agricultural lands and the other areas of the County should not be interpreted as either Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB) or Urban Service Area Boundaries (USA).
3. This map is intended to be only a recommendation to decision makers. It is not being offered as a mandate of how things must be done, and any eventual adoption and/or approval of this plan in no way implies that the entity adopting/approving the plan assigns any official meaning to those areas.

VI. LAND USE REGULATIONS

Zoning and Subdivision regulations are the two primary land use control measures in Richland County. Zoning is used to control what type of development is permitted at a particular location. The basic zoning classifications are residential, business and industrial. Zoning also controls minimum lot size, lot width, setbacks, etc. Subdivision regulations control how the land may be divided to create new parcels of land or new "subdivisions." These regulations also govern how new developments are designed and provides specifications as to how roads and other public improvements are to be built.

Richland County has had subdivision regulations since 1963. The most recent update was completed in 1997. Also in 1997 the state eliminated the 3-mile jurisdiction previously held by cities concerning subdivision maters beyond their boundaries. Richland County has 18 townships, 11 of which were already zoned by 1958, and 2 additional have approved zoning



Map 9: Zoned Townships

since then, with Perry Township's approval in 1991 being the last to take place.

Map 9 illustrates the townships in Richland County that are zoned. The un-zoned townships are Butler, Cass and Plymouth in northern Richland County and Worthington and Jefferson in

southern Richland County. All of Richland County's municipalities have their own zoning and subdivision controls.

There is little in the township zoning resolutions in Richland County that may be considered as tools to encourage farmland preservation. An indicator of the townships' intentions regarding this issue can be found in the minimum lot size and lot width that they require for residential development in their township. In theory, the larger the minimum lot size required, the more it would discourage residential development in the rural areas, due to cost factors. Table VII summarizes this information for Richland County's zoned townships.

Table VII. Township Zoning[11]

TOWNSHIP	USE DISTRICT	MINIMUM LOT AREA REQUIREMENTS (LOTS FOR ONE FAMILY DWELLINGS, LESS THAN 5 ACRES, WITHOUT CENTRALIZED SEWER)	
		AREA (ACRES OR SQ. FT.)	WIDTH IN FEET
Bloominggrove	A Agriculture	1 Acre	60
	R Residential	1 Acre	60
Franklin	R-1 Residential	1 Acre	150
	R-2 Residential	1 Acre	150
Jackson	R-1 Residential	1 Acre	125
	R-2 Residential	1 Acre	125
	R-3 Residential	1 Acre	75
Madison	A Agriculture	5 Acres	150
	R-1 Residential	1 Acre	150
	R-2 Residential	1 Acre	150
	R-3 Residential	1 Acre	150
	R-4 Residential	1 Acre	150
	R-5 Residential	1 Acre	150
Mifflin	R-1 Residential	20,000	90
	R-2 Residential	20,000	90
Monroe	R Residential	20,000	75
Perry	A Agriculture	3 Acres	150
	R Residential	1 Acre	150
Sandusky	R Residential	20,000	100
Sharon	A Agriculture	1 Acre	100
	R Residential	1 Acre	100
Springfield	A Agriculture	20,000	100
	R-1 Residential	20,000	100
	R-2 Residential	20,000	100
Troy	A Agriculture	1 Acre	200
	R-1 Residential	20,000	100
	R-2 Residential	20,000	100
	R-3 Residential	20,000	100
Washington	R-1 Residential	29,000	75
	R-2 Residential	17,500	75
Weller	RR Residential	1 Acre	200
	R-1 Residential	16,500	100

In the past there were townships that had larger minimum lot sizes, however they have chosen to

[11] Source: RCRPC

reduce to the current minimums.

There are two exemptions to land use regulations in Ohio law that affect farmland development.

1. Agricultural uses are exempt from zoning. Barns, storage buildings, fences, and anything else that relates to agricultural production does not have to be concerned with zoning. Farm residential structures are not exempt. While historically this exemption served to insure that there was no interference with the farmers ability to produce, an emerging downside of this exemption is the "factory farm" which can go anywhere in Ohio, and looks more like an industrial building than a farm.

2. The subdivision of land creating parcels 5+ acres is exempt from subdivision regulations, so long as the property will have at least 60 feet of frontage on an improved road. Ohio law also permits 4 new lots of less than 5 acres to be created from an existing parcel along an improved road without being subject to subdivision regulations. It is not clear why this five-acre exemption was granted, or what advantages can be attributed to this exemption. The downside to the exemption is that developers have devised approaches to dividing up large parcels to provide lots in the country which are not controlled by subdivision regulations and storm water/erosion regulations. These developments may negatively impact surrounding properties, and some developers have created an extensive market for lots just over the 5 acre exemption. In many cases homes are built on the 5 acres parcel, using only 1 acre for a house, leaving 4 unused acres of what once was probably productive farmland.

It is not know how much rural acreage has been divided into building lots exempt from the subdivision regulations. In the 1990's a total of 541 acres has been approved for development through the official subdivision process in the "rural" townships. The largest concentration of the officially approved subdivisions is in Troy Township, with new subdivisions totaling 329 acres in this period. Richland County Subdivision Regulations can control development in farmland areas to some extent through the requirements for good quality public improvements.

When development takes place in rural areas outside the regulatory authority of the Subdivision Regulations, it is also outside the regulations governing stormwater runoff. A grouping of house on 5+ acre lots in what was formerly an open field can alter the amount and direction of water runoff during rain storms. This may create problems for adjoining property owners and it may also create problems between the adjoining lots created under the 5 acre exemption. The ability to control road access to lots is also lost due to this exemption. Adding a number of new driveways to what was once a little use road can increase the possibility of accidents.

There are a number of innovative approaches that can be used by local decision makers if they wish to use zoning as a tool to support farmland preservation.

- Sliding Scale Zoning: The number of houses permitted in a rural area is dependent of the size of the original acreage. For example, for a parcel from 1 to 3 acres, only one building lot would be permitted. For a parcel 3.1 to 30 acres, two residential lots could be created, from 30.1 to 90 acres, three house lots, and so forth.

- Quarter/Quarter Zoning: This approach limits non-farm development to one one-acre residential lot for every 40 acres of farmland. A farmer who owns a 120 acre parcel can a total of three houses on a total of 3 acres. (This approach is named from the section/quarter-section system, where a quarter section was 1/4 of a 160 acre section, and this 40 acre size is 1/4 of 160 acres.)

- Large Lot Zoning: Zoning regulations can specify minimum lot sizes for uses in various zoning districts. In order to discourage the extensive division of farmland into residential properties, decision makers could, for and example, specify a minimum lot size of 40 acres. This would likely make the cost of land acquisition greater, and thus may discourages some of the building in rural areas. There would certainly be those who could afford to purchase this amount of land for their home in the country, and unfortunately land would still be removed from farming. Any such large lot zoning provision must state clearly that its purpose is to preserve farmland, so that there is no appearance of "exclusionary zoning," where the lot size is intended to keep lower income families from housing opportunities.

- Exclusive Agriculture Zoning: Under such a zoning classification the only permitted use in such a zone would be agriculturally oriented. The only houses built in such a zone would be to house farm families or farm workers.

- Planned Unit Development (PUD)/Cluster Development: This type of zoning tool is more common to urban settings, where a developer can package a plan for a site, and in return for allowing more open space, the density of units may be increased. In some cases PUD developments can be use to combine uses. For example, a PUD may include single family housing, multi family, offices and retail stores.

VII. TOOLS FOR FARMLAND PRESERVATION

In addition to the land use regulations discussed in the previous section, there are a number of other tools that may be used by those interested in preserving farmland.

The following briefly summarizes some of these tools:[12]

Conservation Easement: A conservation easement is a restriction placed on a piece of property to protect the resource associated with the parcel. In the context of farmland preservation, this restriction would be a legal document that prohibits certain types of development to occur on the property (residential or commercial), thus insuring that the land will remain available for agriculture in the future.

Land Trusts: A land trust is a local, regional, statewide or national organization established to protect land and its resources. Land trusts may be formed to protect a variety of land resources such as forests, farmland, open space, wetlands, natural areas, or historic districts. Land trusts use a variety of tools to protect land, such as conservation easements, direct purchase, donation, life estates and limited development strategies.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR): PDR is a voluntary program when a land trust or another agency or local government purchases the development rights on a parcel of land. In return for an agreed upon amount of money, generally the difference between the land's value as undeveloped farmland and the amount that a developer may be willing to pay for the land for development purposes, a deed restriction is placed on the property that insures that it will not be sold for development.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): a TDR is similar to a PDR, in that restrictions are placed on a piece of property to protect it from being developed. In this case, however, developers may exchange the restriction on one piece of ground for the ability to develop another parcel in such a fashion that it creates more value. (*Example- A developer may own a parcel of ground in a growing residential area, and also a parcel of farmland that is considered prime. In return for limiting the future development rights on the prime farm, the community will permit him to increase the density of his housing development from 4 units per acre to 6 units per acre on the land in the growing residential area.)*

Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB): A UGB is a line drawn around a community. The line is accompanied by regulations that prohibits all growth beyond the "line."

Urban Service Areas (USA): The USA is also a line drawn around a community. This boundary line does not prohibit development, but rather is tied to the fact that the community will not provide basic urban services such as sewer and water beyond that line.

---

[12] Source: OSU Extension Land Use Series Fact sheets, & American Planning Association Zoning News

Brownfield Redevelopment: Developed areas within municipalities have seen manufacturing or other commercial facilities abandoned. With their active years predating current environmental regulations, these facilities often have on-site environmental conditions that present an obstacle to reuse. Reuse of these sites with access to existing infrastructure can divert some development from development on vacant land on the urban fringe. Unfortunately, the regulatory and legal constraints to this type of redevelopment make it undesirable to many who do not want to face uncertain responsibilities in the future. State and federal regulators are often in conflict, and are often changing their ideas as to how these sites must be considered. Mansfield is pursing a designation as an "Urban Setting" which provides opportunities to redevelop brownfields over a larger portion of the community, rather than just for a specific site. Critical in any successful brownfield development is a "covenant not to sue" which grants to the company taking the risk at redeveloping a site the assurance that they will not in the future be required to assume the liability for the actions of those who previously occupied a site.

Economic Development: Farmland preservation can benefit in two ways from local economic development efforts:

1. The community can nurture the development of facilities that create and expand a market for local agriculture products. This can range from a farmers market to a major industrial production facility.

2. The community's efforts in economic development can generally create jobs that can enable farmers to keep working their land, while having an opportunity to gain a second income by family members securing work off the farm. Statistically, this is already a big factor in existing farming operations in Richland County.

Sewer Restrictions: Counties could possibly be given authority to restrict the issuance of residential household sewage disposal permits. While restricting septic permits may have the indirect effect of preserving farmland, authorities should limit their use of any such restriction to the direct environmental consequences of the action. Any limitation should be based on the public health concerns.

Impact Fees: Development in rural areas creates an additional burden on the public services for the area. Schools, fire, police and roads are the most notable example of the services that become burdened by growth, and the new tax base resulting from the growth may not always cover the full financial impact. Impact fees are used in some communities to determine the financial impact of development, and to require the developers to share in those costs.

There are certainly other farmland preservation tools that may be used, however this section has outlined those that are most commonly discussed. The discussion of these tool in this section should in no way be taken as a recommendation.

VIII. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force presented alarming statistics concerning the rate of the conversion of Ohio farmlands to non-agricultural land use. The Ohio study reported that 28.7 percent of Ohio's "Land in Farms" has been converted to non-agricultural land use in the period from 1954 to 1992.

Richland County has also experienced a significant decline in farm acreage over the years, and in 1997 farmland represented less than one-half of the entire County. In Richland County this loss of farm land is a concern. Although it does not appear that all of the conversion of farmland is directly to residential, commercial and industrial use, it is land being removed from production, and is possibly being held for future development. It may also be that the interest and financial incentive to farm no longer is attracting current generations, and farming is simply being abandoned.

This acreage that is being converted may have an impact on farmland beyond acreage statistics, in the scattered nature of the new development, and how that may hinder the farmers ability to farm efficiently. Scattering development among the fields can reduce the economy of scale where a farmer can be more efficient and economical in farming large tracts, and not have to struggle with neighborhood disputes about the side effects of farming, such as dust, noise and odors.

The Richland County Farmland Preservation Task Force presents the following recommendations for this area to consider. In keeping with the mission[13] of the Ohio Farmland Preservation effort, the ideas presented should all be considered as incentives, not mandates to preserve Richland County's farmland.

1. Map 8 of this report presents the Task Force's recommendation of the areas of the County that should be considered prime farmland.

   Responsibility for Implementation of #1: Guideline for use by all.

2. Communicate to the five un-zoned townships the value of zoning and emphasize its potential role in farmland preservation. Renew RCRPC's willingness to assist in the preparation and adoption of zoning.

   Responsibility for Implementation of #2: RCRPC

3. Communicate to the thirteen zoned townships information about farmland preservation and the ways that zoning can be used to preserve prime areas identified in this study.

---

[13] Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force Report, June 1997

Responsibility for Implementation of #3: RCRPC

4. Recommend "Large Lot Agricultural Zoning", "Exclusive Agricultural District Zoning" and "Planned Unit Development" as the most logical and direct approach to preserving farmland.

Responsibility for Implementation of # 4: Guideline for use by all.

5. Recognize and respect the fact that townships in Richland County have already made choices concerning zoning, and that this plan is for their use, and not intended to take away any of their local decision making authority.

Responsibility for Implementation of #5: Guideline for use by all.

6. Recommend that Ohio change the five acre exemption from subdivision regulations. The preferred approach would be to eliminate the exemption entirely.

Responsibility for Implementation of # 6: State officials.

7. Recommend that Ohio enable counties to regulate stormwater, drainage and road access matters relating to development outside the authority in subdivision regulations.

Responsibility for Implementation of # 7: State officials.

8. Recommend that private sector groups should initiate any voluntary efforts to control development rights associated with farmland preservation, modeling their efforts after the North Central Ohio Land Conservancy which is involved in protecting natural areas. These privately led efforts may first involve Ohio's new "Agricultural Easement Program." Richland County governments may encourage and support the private efforts, and may explore public policy initiatives to protect prime farmland, however given Richland County's history relating to taxation issues, public funding for programs for farmland preservation should be approved by a voter referendum.

Responsibility for Implementation of #8: Guideline for use by all.

9. Recommend that brownfield redevelopment should be encouraged in all of Richland County's developed areas, and that federal and state elected and administrative official work to streamline the process of approving sites, and eliminating liability for redevelopers.

Responsibility for Implementation of # 9: Federal & State officials.

10. Recommend that the Richland County Farmland Preservation Task Force become a

standing committee of the Richland County Regional Planning Commission to meet annually or semi-annually to review the status of the situation in Richland County, and any changes in local state or federal regulations affecting farmland preservation. At present the County is not experiencing the development pressure as in Medina and Delaware Counties, which are located on the fringe of Ohio's two largest metropolitan areas. Richland County is, however in the path of development, and could, in coming years begin to feel the overflow of these County's development pressures. An ongoing committee will be able to monitor the situation, and anticipate rather than react to events and circumstances.

Responsibility for Implementation of # 10: RCRPC.

11. Recommend that the Farmland Preservation plan serve as the foundation for a comprehensive plan reevaluation for Richland County. The original comprehensive plan was approved in 1971, and the last complete reevaluation of that plan was made in 1975.

Responsibility for Implementation of # 11: RCRPC.

12. This Richland County Farmland Preservation Plan will be widely distributed to citizens of Richland County, elected and appointed decision makers at the local and state level. The Task Force that developed this plan represents a broad cross section of community interests, and those members will report back to their particular interest area on matters relating to this Plan.

Responsibility for Implementation of # 12: RCRPC & Task Force