



**Economic
Development and
Growing the
Economy**

**UW
Extension**

Profiles of Best Practices

Growing and Expanding Area Business—Farmland Preservation

Community, County

Bayfield Township, Bayfield County

Area of Project Impact

Town of Bayfield

Population Affected

600

Situation

Bayfield, Wisconsin is a gateway to the Apostle Islands and is experiencing growth due to second home and retirement construction in an area of great scenic beauty. The Town of Bayfield has unique soils and temperatures that provide an excellent microclimate for a strong fruit industry on Lake Superior. Many of the orchards are located in areas of high scenic value with views of Lake Superior. Growers are under pressure to sell their orchards for residential development, yet many want to continue farming as a way of life.

Economic Development Strategies

The goal is to preserve the land that supports the fruit industry. The Town of Bayfield voted to establish a Farmland Preservation Program that would pay growers for the development rights on their farms. The value of these development rights is the difference between the value of the land if it were to be developed and the value of the land if it were to remain in agriculture. The grower still owns the land, but the land is permanently restricted from development. In the fall of 2002, the first applications will be ranked and work will begin to develop the transactions to permanently protect the land by purchasing the development rights.

Implementation

In spring of 2000, the Town established a study committee that researched farmland preservation techniques. The result was a proposal to implement a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program. In the summer of 2002, the Town residents voted to financially support the program with local tax dollars. The residents voted to contribute up to \$330,000 in the next eight years to purchase development rights. In addition, the Town is seeking \$500,000 in federal funds through the 2002 Farm Bill to match the local funds. The remainder of the \$1,000,000 initiative is being sought through private foundations, individual gifts and other grants.

In addition to the creation of a PDR program to preserve farmland in the Bayfield region, the community also supports farming in other ways. For instance, the town's land use plan identifies its first goal as one of preserving the rural character and the fruit microclimate that make the area special and contribute greatly to the local economy. In addition, an annual "Applefest" celebration of the area's apple orchards is a huge event that regularly draws between 35,000-50,000 people to the area in early October each year. The event is a major market for fruit growers, yet it also accounts for up to 10% of sales for downtown merchants.

Partners and Leadership

Throughout the development of the Farmland Preservation Program, the Town worked closely with the Bayfield Regional Conservancy, a local land trust organization. The BRC will administer the program and co-hold the conservation easements that restrict the future use for farming.

Outcomes

The Town hopes to purchase development rights on at least 600 acres of the most critical fruit-growing land over the next 8 years. Preserving a core of agricultural lands will be necessary to insure the continued viability of fruit growing as a part of the local economy.

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