

# Morris County

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

### AN OVERVIEW

Agriculture is an important part of Morris County's economy and a major contributor to the State's and Country's farming industry. The 2007 US Census of Agriculture ranks Morris County 10th statewide in the market value of agricultural products sold, with \$27,312 million in sales. From a purely economic standpoint Morris County is a powerhouse in the market, with a 20-year trend of increasing sales.



The Morris County Farmland Preservation Program began with the permanent preservation of the Cupo Farm in Washington Township in 1987. Today, 119 farms have been preserved in 14 different municipalities. The total acreage of preserved farms in our county is 7,323 or 11.44 square miles.

Farmers preserve farms by selling the development rights of their property, resulting in an “easement”, which is a legal restriction against further development on the specified land. Ownership of the land remains the same. Future agricultural buildings are exempt from this restriction. Please see the enclosed “Questions and Answers” document for a more detailed explanation of the sale of development easements.

### THE BENEFITS

The value of development rights is determined by the potential for residential or office development on your property based upon zoning and accessibility (i.e. road frontage). Values are expressed on a “per acre” basis and vary based on the *specific* farm conditions. The average “per acre value” paid for a preserved farm in Morris County in the last five years has been approximately \$32,000 per acre. Morris County recommends that all landowners speak to their financial advisors prior to considering farmland preservation.

In addition to the legacy left by the preservation of a farm, there is no restriction on the use of funds received post-closing. Money can be used for a variety of purposes: retirement and estate planning, capital projects on the home or farm, purchase of additional lands, equipment or vehicles, etc., all while retaining ownership of the property. Historically, landowners have received unexpectedly high values when selling their preserved land. Our website provides specific sales data on preserved farms:

<http://www.morrispreservation.org/ResaleInfo.pdf>