

Agriculture Small Group Discussion—Summary

Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Date: January 7, 2004

Attendees: Galen Alwin, Stan Buenzow, Loritta Buckford, Melvin Buckford, Paul Dietmann, Chris Fehrman, Jeff Hicken, Ken Multner, Jon Sawle

What defines farming in the Sauk Prairie area?

- Good hard working people make agriculture strong
- People committed over generations
- Wide variety of crops
- Strong – rich soil

New Opportunities and Current Threats

- Squeezing out of ag land. Want new housing development
- Very difficult to farm next to the Villages
- Smaller operation – big guys taking over
- Housing leads to increased conflicts if you want to farm
- Opportunity – direct marketing opportunities with four lanes coming in – find a way to direct market to those traveling through
 - Need to find volume
 - Wyttenbach Meats – overall amount of meat goes through is very small
 - *Are there direct marketing possibilities to Dells or Madison?*
 - Takes initiative
 - Takes a specific kind of person to do both direct and indirect sales
 - Keller's – Cornucopia are they making it work
- Farming is under pressure
- Sewer line went in for a purpose—development
- Highway 12 wasn't built/widened for tractors, but to move more people
- Coop is experiencing a decrease in users
- Basing land value on commercial usage – makes prices steeper
- Development value of the land is too expensive for farm owners to compete
- Some farm owners near Villages are not interested in selling

What is the viability of on-farm processing?

- Impractical – small volumes and rules
- On farm milk bottle plant costs between \$250,000 to \$500,000
- Milk marketing constraints
- 18 months for cheese apprenticeship, certified kitchen – a lot of cost
- Talk to milk truck drivers, they don't pick up the volume any more

Are there alternative crops/niche marketing opportunities?

- One farmer is trying to do organics
- More of a marketer than a farmer – must be a marketer first
- “Agritainment” – increase of traffic – opportunities long-term – volume of \$ with increased traffic (Chicago market)
- Development pressures preclude any chance for niche marketing
- Wyttenbach’s Meat Market
- Scattered around the area—Kellers, The Berry patch, Christmas Tree farms
- Big margin, but volume is low
- Most people aren’t farming because they want to be face-to-face contact with buyers—hampers direct marketing

Are there necessary agriculture-support businesses?

- Yes – but they need to diversify to stay in business
- Gearing more toward the farmette owner
- Coop concerns
 - Want to expand into a grain facility to shift grain traffic to train from trucks
 - Don’t want to run trains through Villages
 - Wants to know where housing is going to go
 - Hasn’t presented plan to village yet

What type of new development would you like to see?

- Leave some green space
- Smaller lots, but to have density, you need green space – green space coinciding with density
- What are the benefits of “pushing” development and growth
 - Not villages pushing for growth, but developers pushing it – hard time reining them in—developers can pay for whatever the communities ask for
 - They will be putting an extension of Broadway

Highway 12 Bypass alternatives

- Should have been done before bridge was built
- In 20 years there won’t be any room left
- Costs are going to be too high
- By-passing every place now – Belmont and Platteville example

New Farmers--Is there a next generation?

- Very small percentage if there is one
- 7% of farmers are now under age 35
- No one buys farmland for farming
- Farmers don’t have opportunities to buy land – rent for animal production – live stock production
- Not a lot of farm to farm transfers – no one does that anymore – just rent
- Average price near town \$25,000 to 35,000 per acre

- Average price outside \$4,000 per acre and up on a 40
- Current purchasers aren't intending to make money off of farming it – personal enjoyment – expansion of their wealth—reinvestment and capital gains interest?

Investment vs. Speculative

- People in real estate looking to buy up land near town
- Nothing bought around the villages for speculation – purchased and developed
- Along 12 and PF within ETZ
- Speculative price has already been paid first time it changes hands

Non-farm Business on Farm Land

- Tough to do non farm business
- Everyone seems to be doing something – farm related but should technically be rezoned

Policies

Are existing policies working?

- Zoning issues haven't been too bad
- ET area enforcement has been a question – confusion on enforcement
- 40-acre rule development rule created a loss of farmland— took ag land out of production, spreads houses out more instead of placing together on unproductive land
- Town has not promoted enough

Should the villages allow higher density housing within the villages?

- Right now big lots, big houses
- Villages may not have zoning districts for this
- Can do PUD – nobody is doing that
- Developers are moving toward larger lot sizes – end user wants

Do you feel residential cluster in rural areas is a good idea?

- Is this a good thing – yes
- TDR program keeps agriculture land in agriculture production
- Soil type should come into play – more houses on sandier soils
- Future is your 40s – some areas don't need any homes
- Could be conflict with more development – limits livestock
- People close to farm. No matter where you put them there are problems – people don't have a sense of what they got into—noise, smells, spraying, dust...
- Once people buy, they feel they have the right to their personal vision, no matter what was going on before

Should soil types define best farmland?

- If they are a “square 40” they are good land

Do you feel there should be some type of legal, formal agreement on what country home owners are getting in to?

- Yes

- Think definite boundaries for agriculture and non-agriculture areas