

WHAT IS IT?

The Metropolitan Agricultural Land Preservation Program was established in 1980 to conserve valuable agricultural lands within the seven county region served by the Metropolitan Council. It is the region's main mechanism for protecting over 190,000 acres of farmland from development pressures.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Counties, cities, and townships, identify long-term agricultural lands in their comprehensive plans and establish protective zoning. Farmers can enroll qualifying land in agricultural preserves. These restrictive covenants limit land use to agriculture or forestry for a minimum of eight years. In return, farmers receive property tax credits, protection for standard agricultural practices, exemptions from most assessments, and other benefits.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Farmers can enroll their land in the program if their city, county, or township has guided the land for long term agricultural use with a maximum development potential of 1 dwelling unit per 40 acres. In most cases the farm must be at least 40 acres to enroll; however, there are some exceptions for noncontiguous parcels or land lost to right-of-way/survey irregularities.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Farmers receive the following benefits for enrolling their land in an agricultural preserve:

- A minimum \$1.50 per acre tax credit, potentially more depending on local factors.
- Exemptions from local ordinances that restrict normal agricultural practices
- Limits on annexation
- Expanded protection in eminent domain actions
- Prohibitions on public facility siting in preserve areas
- Exemptions from special assessments

Farmers participating in the Green Acres program receive an additional benefit. Land that is receiving Green Acres tax deferments may be converted to an agricultural preserve without having to repay the deferred taxes.

BESIDES AGRICULTURE HOW CAN LAND IN AN AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE BE USED?

Land in an agricultural preserve must stay in agricultural production/use. This includes wetlands, pastures, forest land, wildlife land, and other uses that depend on the inherent productivity of the land. Additionally, the land can be used for a small number of other uses that don't disrupt the integrity of the preserve, including

- Small commercial use of farm buildings such as for a carpentry shop, small mechanics shop, and other similar activities
- Wireless communication structures and equipment

HOW ARE THE TAX CREDITS FUNDED?

Tax credits for agricultural preserves are funded by a \$5 surcharge on each mortgage and deed recorded in the county. Half of the \$5 fee is deposited into a county conservation fund, one quarter into the state conservation fund, and one quarter into the state general fund. The tax credit must use county conservation funds first, followed by state conservation funds, then the state general funds last of all.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE AND GET STARTED?

Your city is responsible for determining which properties are eligible for the program and is often the best first point of contact. In some cases, especially for residents of townships, your county may be able to provide additional information about the program.

County Contacts/Resources:

Carver County: Land Management Department. Phone: 952-361-1820

Website: [Land Management | Carver County, MN](#)

Dakota County: Assessor's Office. Phone: 651-438-4200

Website: [Agricultural Preserves | Dakota County](#)

Scott County: Property and Taxation Services Department. Phone: 952-496-8115

Website: [Agricultural Property | Scott County, MN](#)

You can also visit the MDA website: www.mda.state.mn.us/environment-sustainability/farmland-protection-tools or
Metropolitan Council Website: [Agricultural Preserves - Metropolitan Council](#).