Preservation to find out about donated conservation easements.

Program accepts donated conservation easements that meet where you want to farm, the Michigan Department of Agriculture resource for help.

cannot undertake a project, the conservancy may be a great purchase conservation easements or land in fee. Even if they their capacity to undertake the work, and whether or not they conservancy’s interest and experience in farmland preservation, how farmland preservation might fit into that mission, the It is important to understand the land conservancy’s mission, how farmland preservation might fit into that mission, the their website specifically for landowners that describes their land project examples. Most land conservancies have a section on other helpful information such as staff, board members and you will also find

For any land conservancy you wish to approach, take some time to look at their website to better understand their mission and whether farmland protection is a priority. You should also find other helpful information such as staff, board members and project examples. Most land conservancies have a section on their website specifically for landowners that describes their land protection tools. It is important to understand the land conservancy’s mission, how farmland preservation might fit into that mission, the conservancy’s current projects, and whether they are currently accepting conservation easements or if they have any land that is currently protected.

To find your land conservancy, go to michigan.gov/mdard and search for Farmland Preservation.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR & WHAT TO EXPECT

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WHAT WILL BE INVOLVED?

The steps found in Finding Farmland to negotiating and closing the deal can be as simple as a general guideline, but you should talk to a land conservancy partner about their procedures and processes to get a more complete understanding. Potential funding sources can also dictate procedures and timing. For example, federal or state grants may or may not be available to cover some of the easement transaction costs at the time you want to complete the easement.

FINDING THE RIGHT LAND

Make certain you first have a land conservancy that is willing to work with you if you are interested in buying farmland that has been, or that you hope will be, permanently protected through a conservation easement.

OTHER MICHIGAN RESOURCES

Although most of the following do not have specific programs to link farmers with farmland, these agencies and organizations may provide assistance or other resources:

Michigan Association of Conservation Districts
Contact your local Conservation District

Michigan Integrated Food and Farm Alliance

Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems
Conducts various activities to support farms and farmers in local food systems. They also advocate the goals of the Michigan Great Food Charities

Michigan State University Extension
Contact your County Extension office

FINDING THE PURCHASE OF CONSERVED FARMLAND

SOURCE OF FUNDING

Local
In Michigan, approximately 20 counties, 9 townships and one multi-township unit have state-approved purchase of development rights programs. These programs provide property owners with financial assistance to sell their development rights. Other state and local entities may also provide financial assistance to help conserve farmland. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development’s Farmland Preservation Program is the primary source of funding for the purchase of development rights on farmland.

WHAT'S NEXT?

With the information and resources in Finding Farmland and the Companion, take the next step and reach out to your Michigan land conservancy. They may be able to assist you in your search for farmland. If you are interested in purchasing farmland, you should talk to the land conservancy partner about their procedures and processes to get a more complete understanding. Potential funding sources can also dictate procedures and timing. For example, federal or state grants may or may not be available to cover some of the easement transaction costs at the time you want to complete the easement.

The timeline provided in Finding Farmland on page 29 assumes that all the issues on page 28 have been addressed. Be mindful that resolving those issues can be the most time consuming!

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Understanding the Basics

WHAT IS A LAND TRUST?

In Michigan, land trusts are most often called land conservancies, and the terms are used interchangeably. Section 02 of this Companion follows Finding Farmland and is organized with the same chapter and section headers for easy access. To find your local or regional land conservancy by name, county or even current location visit directory.healththebasics.org. For example, the Leelanau Conservancy and several Michigan land conservancies.

HOW TO USE THIS COMPANION

This Companion Finding Farmland is designed to be used in tandem with Conservation Easements in Michigan. The Companion follows Finding Farmland and is organized with the same chapter and section headers for easy access. For more information on conservation easements, check with the land conservancy about their policies and other sources such as the Conservancy’s. If they are not able to help directly, conservancies still may be able to point you to the right people to ask.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT EXPECT FROM LAND CONSERVANCIES

Land conservancies cannot provide specific legal, financial, or tax advice. If working with a land conservancy on a land transaction, the conservancy will recommend that landowners consult with their own professional advisors.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Building envelopes are often identified in conservation easements but tend to be fixed and not floating. Floating building zones are not a general practice in Michigan.

NATURAL RESOURCES & FARMLAND CONSERVATION

Finding Land & Networking

Land conservancies are very active in local or regional efforts to promote local and regional agriculture. If they are not able to help directly, conservancies still may be able to point you to the right people to ask.

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