

9.0 Agricultural & Economic Development

Recommendation 9.1| Continue to support the viability of the local agricultural industry through the development and implementation of an *Agricultural Sustainability Plan (ASP)* for Monmouth County. (No significant action since 2016)

Recommendation 9.2| Incorporate the *Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2014)* as a component of the Agriculture & Economic Development Element of the *Monmouth County Master Plan*; recognizing the *CEDS* as the county's economic development plan (Completed). The *CEDS* was adopted as a component of the *Master Plan* in 2016. As per the *CEDS*, the County Office of Economic Development focused significant efforts in building the Grown in Monmouth (GIM) brand to help retain and grow the County's agricultural industry.

Recommendation 9.3| Provide professional and technical support for the efforts performed by the Monmouth County Division of Economic Development that promote the long-term economic and agricultural viability of the County such as assisting with the implementation of the *Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2014)* and Grow Monmouth programs (Continuous). Planning staff continue to promote and foster GIM participation and the brand, including sponsoring a spring 2017 Monmouth County Environmental Council (MCEC) roundtable event on aquaponics that was extremely well attended. The GIS Section has provided assistance for the creation of GIM directories and GIS technical support in the creation of associated story maps. Planning staff worked with Economic Development to review and complete the USDA grant-funded study.

Recommendation 9.4| Develop model ordinances for municipalities that will help expand and develop agricultural businesses while decreasing the number of Right to Farm cases brought before the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB). (Continuous) Planning staff conducted ordinance research of farming communities within and outside the County as the first step in developing model ordinances or suggest amendments to existing municipal ordinances. Ordinances that address farm markets and special events are of particular interest.

Recommendation 9.4 should be modified to read as follows; "Provide assistance to municipalities in reviewing ordinances to help expand and develop agricultural businesses in their community while decreasing the number of Right to Farm cases brought before the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB)."

Recommendation 9.5| Through coordination between the MCADB and the Development Review Section of the Division of Planning, draft and implement a required statement of acknowledgement for site plans and subdivision plats proposed in an Agricultural Development Area (ADA) to help raise awareness of potential neighboring agricultural activities and potentially reduce right-to-farm complaints (Initiated). The ADA GIS layer has been shared with Development Review Section to coordinate review of incoming plans. ADA language will be incorporated into the Development Review regulations when they are updated in the coming year.

9.4 Stakeholder Efforts

9.4.1 Grown in Monmouth | Since the inception of the Grown in Monmouth program, 84 farms have created accounts on the County's searchable online directory (SOD). 99 vendors, including restaurants, have signed Grown in Monmouth logo agreements. The Grown in Monmouth web page has incorporated seven special directories using GIS story maps covering community farmers' markets, restaurants,

wineries and breweries, pick-your-own farms, community gardens and Christmas tree farms. Program staff has assisted with advocacy issues and provided business coaching. As the Grown in Monmouth program matures, it will continue to support the marketing and business needs of Monmouth County's agricultural community and coordinate with local and regional land use authorities.

NEW! Opportunity Zones | On April 9, the U.S. Treasury Department released the full list of approved Census tracts, including all 169 submitted by Governor Phil Murphy in New Jersey for identification as Opportunity Zones. While the Federal government established the universe of eligible distressed Census tracts, it was up to each state to narrow the list to 25 percent or less of the eligible tracts. The Opportunity Zone program was created as part of the Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017), and will provide Federal community development tax incentives to encourage long-term private investment in eligible Census tracts in "distressed areas." The Program allows investors to temporarily defer payment of Federal income tax on realized gains if the gains are invested in a qualified Opportunity Fund within 180 days of the date of the particular taxable sale or exchange. A qualified Opportunity Fund is an investment vehicle that is organized as a partnership or a corporation for the purpose of investing in Opportunity Zone Property. Eligible Opportunity Zone Property generally includes (i) stock in a domestic corporation; (ii) any capital or profits interest in a domestic partnership; and (iii) tangible property used in a trade or business of the Opportunity Fund that substantially improves the property. In addition, when a taxpayer disposes of an investment in a qualified Opportunity Zone held by the taxpayer for at least 10 years, the taxpayer can elect to exclude from gross income the capital gain on the investment in the Opportunity Zone Fund. The next step in the implementation process is for the Treasury Department to promulgate regulations for the establishment of Opportunity Funds. (Sources: NJ Future, governemntaffairsalert.com)

9.3 Emerging Issue & Long Range Challenges

NEW! Special Occasion Events on Farms | Related to agritourism is the emerging issue of special occasion events on farms. The trend is being driven by consumers seeking a rustic venue for weddings and milestone celebrations as well as farm owners looking for extra income. The ability for farms to rent their facilities for such use depends on local zoning ordinances, whether or not the parcel is preserved under the Farmland Preservation Program, and the Uniform Construction Code. Because New Jersey's Right to Farm regulations do not cover weddings and similar parties, a farm in a zone that does not allow such events would need to obtain a use variance. Further complicating the matter is that with the exception of wineries, which are subject to a special State pilot program, most commercial lifetime milestone events are not allowed under the provisions of the deeds of easements covering preserved farms. Moreover, under New Jersey's Uniform Construction Code a farm building cannot be used for "special amusement" more than 15 times a year without changing its status under the code. Interestingly, some municipalities such as Holmdel are getting into the wedding venue game themselves. Bayonet Farm (technically a park not a preserved farm) is available for rent for special events.

New data from the 2017 Agricultural Census has yet to be released; therefore, there are no updates available at this time.

See Chapter 2.0, Property Tax Abstract Table for an update on the number of 3B- Farm Qualified parcels in Monmouth County.

NEW! Figure 9.5 Monmouth County Opportunity Zones

