

**Grand Traverse County Farmland and Open Space Development  
Rights Ordinance  
Grand Traverse County, Michigan**

**Adopted by the Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners  
Ordinance NO. 26**

AN ORDINANCE creating a farmland and open space protection program **in cooperation with other local units of government**, designed to protect farmland and open spaces by acquiring development rights voluntarily offered by landowners creating agricultural conservation easements. This ordinance sets forth the guidelines, procedures and restrictions.

*BE IT ORDAINED BY THE GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY BOARDS OF COMMISSIONERS:*

Section 1: Declaration of Purpose

- A. *Purpose of the program.* It is the primary purpose of the Grand Traverse County Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program and this Ordinance to implement a permanent option to protect farmland; to maintain a long-term positive business environment for agriculture; preserve the rural character and scenic attributes; enhance tourism and other important environmental benefits and to maintain the quality of life of county residents.
- B. *Mechanism to achieve purpose.* The purchase of development rights and the placement of an agricultural conservation easement on farmland through the Grand Traverse County Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program as provided for in this Ordinance is a public purpose of Grand Traverse-County. Financing of such purchases requires that Grand Traverse County enter into agreements with property owners to obtain such development rights. Properties of which the County has purchased development rights and entered into an agricultural conservation easements should remain substantially undeveloped in order to remain viable for agricultural use.
- C. *Economic importance of farmland and agriculture.* Grand Traverse-County's agricultural lands are an economically important resource. These lands support a locally important and globally unique agricultural industry, which includes excellent fruit production and processing, dairy, and livestock, food from grains, and vegetables, as well as nursery and greenhouse crops. The climate, micro-climate, topography and accessibility of the area make these counties uniquely suited for the production, processing, and distribution of agricultural products on a regional, national, and international level.
- D. *Importance of other non-agricultural attributes of farmland.* In addition to its economic benefits, Grand Traverse County's farmland contributes significantly to open space and natural resources that are important to the region's tourism industries. Preserving the rural character, scenic beauty, cultural heritage of the area as well as other recreational opportunities such as hunting will help maintain the quality of life and continue to make the county an attractive place to live, work and visit.
- E. *The impact of farmland loss.* Land suitable for farming is a non-renewable natural resource with soil and topographic characteristics that have been enhanced by generations of agricultural use. When such land is converted and fragmented, a critical community resource is permanently lost to the citizens of the county. Residential development in agricultural areas also makes farming more difficult by increasing conflict over farming practices,