

Issues: Agriculture

This is where our catchy intro goes

Agriculture 1000 Friends of Iowa supports agricultural systems that will allow future generations to enjoy a quality of life with productive soils, clean water, fresh air, good neighbors and healthy, abundant food systems that will support our local communities. Iowa's agricultural heritage is a legacy worth protecting for beginning farmers and sustainable agriculture. When prime farmland gets needlessly paved over to accommodate sprawling development, this is a permanent change in land use that compromises one of Iowa's most precious resources—our world-class soils. Iowa holds .1% of the world's landmass, but also holds 10-15% of the world's most fertile farmland. The most recent study on farmland loss to development was completed in 1998 by Iowa State University, and it showed that every year Iowa loses 26,000 acres of farmland to development. Development on farmland is often low-density, consumes a lot of land, and is completely dependent on the automobile. Meanwhile, vacant urban properties and contaminated brownfields sites are often wasted due to a lack of strong policies to prioritize and facilitate infill development. 1000 Friends of Iowa works with citizens who aim to protect farmland for future generations. We also educate policymakers about how to pursue land use planning to save farms and slow the alarming rate of conversion of farmland to development. Many farm families and landowners sell their land to developers partially because of a lack of financially viable opportunities to attract future generations and beginning farmers. Local food systems, diversified farms, and changes in farm policy to support independent farmers can help keep young people on the land. A diverse agricultural landscape that produces goods for local consumption gives urban residents a more meaningful connection with the agricultural resources surrounding them. In rural communities, keeping farmers on the land and attracting new farmers brings more economic activity into small town Main Streets. 1000 Friends of Iowa showcases models of diversified farms, local food systems, and assists citizens in raising these solutions when land use planning occurs. We also support policies and programs that advance sustainable agricultural systems, like the recently established Iowa Farm to School program at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.