



Farms Forever Initiative



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(AOLC rebranded in 2024 as Farmers Rising)

These slides were originally presented in 2017
during a workshop on collective land
ownership models during the conference of
the Wisconsin Local Food Network (WLFN)



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What is worth protecting?





















































What do we want to protect?



- **Angelic Organics farm:**
 - A vibrant biodynamic, certified organic, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) farm
 - Grows vegetables on 60 acres in rotation and aggregates fruit
 - Delivers to more than 2,500 member households
 - Founded by farmer John Peterson in 1990
 - First CSA in northern Illinois
 - Employed more than 30 individuals (2017)
 - Story of conventional demise and regenerative rise

What do we want to protect?



- **Angelic Organics Learning Center**
(in 2024 rebranded as **Farmers Rising**)
 - Builds sustainable local food and farm systems via experiential education and training programs in partnership with urban and rural people.
 - Founded in 1998 as a partner to the CSA farm.
 - Engages annually more than 5,000 farmers and community members in N. IL and S. WI:
 - Farmer training, on-farm education, organizing/advocacy
 - Employed 15 full-time and 20 part-time (2017)

Angelic Organics Learning Center

We build sustainable local food and farm systems

Vision

We envision a dynamic and enduring partnership between farmers and eaters

who strive for economies, ecologies, and cultures that respect the land and honor the people who work it,

know healthy food as a human right,

celebrate the beauty and mysteries of life and the living earth,

encourage authenticity and self-reliance and cooperation, and

are sustainable over many generations.

(in 2014, Angelic Organics Learning Center became Farmers Rising)

What do we want to protect?

- **Opportunities:**

- To build the local sustainable food & farm economy
- To grow more fully our community-based farm
- To resurrect former enterprises:
 - Dairy
 - Grains
- To expand nascent enterprises:
 - On-farm store
 - Pastured meats
- To launch new enterprises:
 - Visiting students program / residential facility
 - Bakery

Farms Forever Initiative

- We seek to protect the land in perpetuity for:
 - organic / biodynamic agriculture,
 - farming education, and
 - land regeneration.

Farms Forever Initiative - Questions

- How can we insure that coming generations will enjoy the benefits of Angelic Organics farm and learning center (life-giving food and life-changing education)?
- How will we manage the transition from veteran farmer John Peterson to junior farmers (retirement issues/entry issues)?
- How can experienced Latino/a farm team members be positioned to be junior farmers in the transition?
- How will the junior farmers find the resources to purchase the farm business if the core vegetable ground alone costs \$600,000 (22+39 = 61 acres at \$8-10,000/acre)? Is there a better way to transfer authority over the land without ownership?

Farms Forever Initiative - Questions

- How will we secure our land base when two of the four principal parcels have 15-year leases that sunset in 2014 (39 acres and 22 acres)?
- Can we structure the relationships so that we balance freedom and community? What kind of umbrella structure can bring this balance for all enterprises using the land?
- How will we raise the resources to move all our land parcels (nearly 200 acres) into long term land tenure arrangements?
 - (Long term = in perpetuity)
- How can we model a path for the hundreds of beginning farmers we've helped to start farms so they can protect their farms?

Strategies – Farms Forever Initiative

- Farmer succession planning
- Multi-stakeholder engagement in fundraising – gifts
- Multi-stakeholder investments with “slow money” loans from social investors
- Multi-stakeholder governance over land use/rights
- Community land trust models on working lands
- Land conservation easements
- Long-term land tenure arrangements (99 year leases)

A few inspirations for Farms Forever

- Jårna, Sweden
- Hawthorne Valley Farm, NY
- Troy Community Farm, WI
- Equity Trust, MA (Chuck Matthei)
- RSF Social Finance, Biodynamic Association & Associative Economics
- Liberty Prairie Foundation, IL
- Yggdrasil Land Foundation / Living Lands Trust

Examples of US Land Trusts Owning Farmland

- Trust Montana
South of the Sound
CLT (WA)
- Sustainable Iowa
Land Trust (SILT)
- Yggdrasil Land
Foundation / Living
Lands Trust
 - Biodynamic and
organic farmland
- Equity Trust
 - Caretaker Farm (MA)
 - Roxbury Farm (NY)
 - Live Power Community Farm
(CA)
 - Columbia Land Conservancy
(NY)
- Agrarian Trust

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Affordable land access for junior farmers
- Community access to biodynamic vegetables, organic fruit, and grass-fed livestock
- Community access to farmer training and 'eater' education
- All incomes and racial groups get, grow and eat good food
- Governance is shared among farmers and community
- Protect land in perpetuity
- A model for replication for farms, farmers and communities.
- Educational modules and tenure tools for farmers and communities.
- Food system built on pillars of 4 E's - economy, equity, ecology, and expression

AOA & LAND:
5 rural parcels:

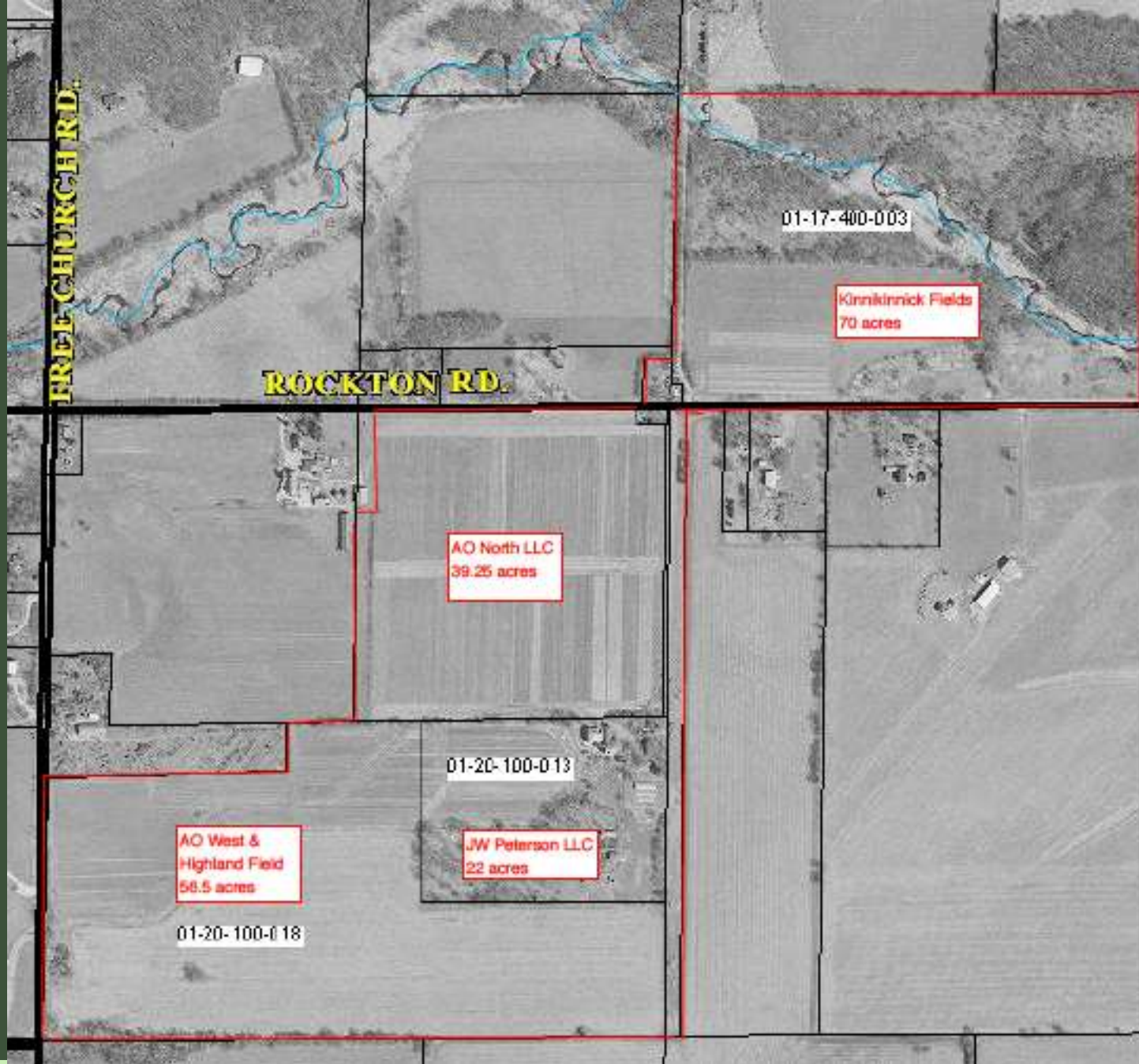
Kinnikinnick Fields – 70 acres
(Farmers Rising owns)

AO North – 39 acres (AOA is majority owner)

Farmstead – 23 acres (AOA owns - social investors)

Highland & West Fields – 56 acres
(neighbor owns – annual lease)

Lodge – 10 acres
(AOA owns – social investors)



**AOLC (now Farmers Rising) manages
2 urban farms Chicago & Rockford:**

**Eat to Live Farm – farmers are Dulce and
Juan Cedillo of Cedillo Produce**
Princeton & 71st, Englewood
(NeighborSpace land trust owns land)

**Blackhawk Farm & Garden – Roots &
Wings farm team led by Yatte Moore**
Meadow Court & 15th Avenue
(Rockford Housing Authority owns land)



Farms Forever Initiative – Next Steps

Angelic Organics Association

Promotes social, economic, and cultural renewal through the integration of education, agriculture and the arts. Angelic Organics Association is the umbrella association uniting the following farming, educational, and creative enterprises:

Angelic Organics Farm



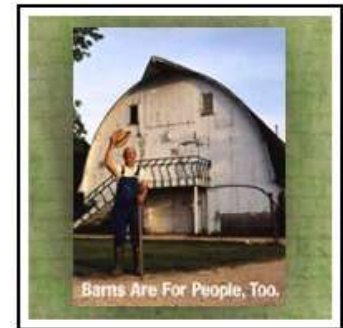
Angelic Organics Learning Center



Farmer John Productions

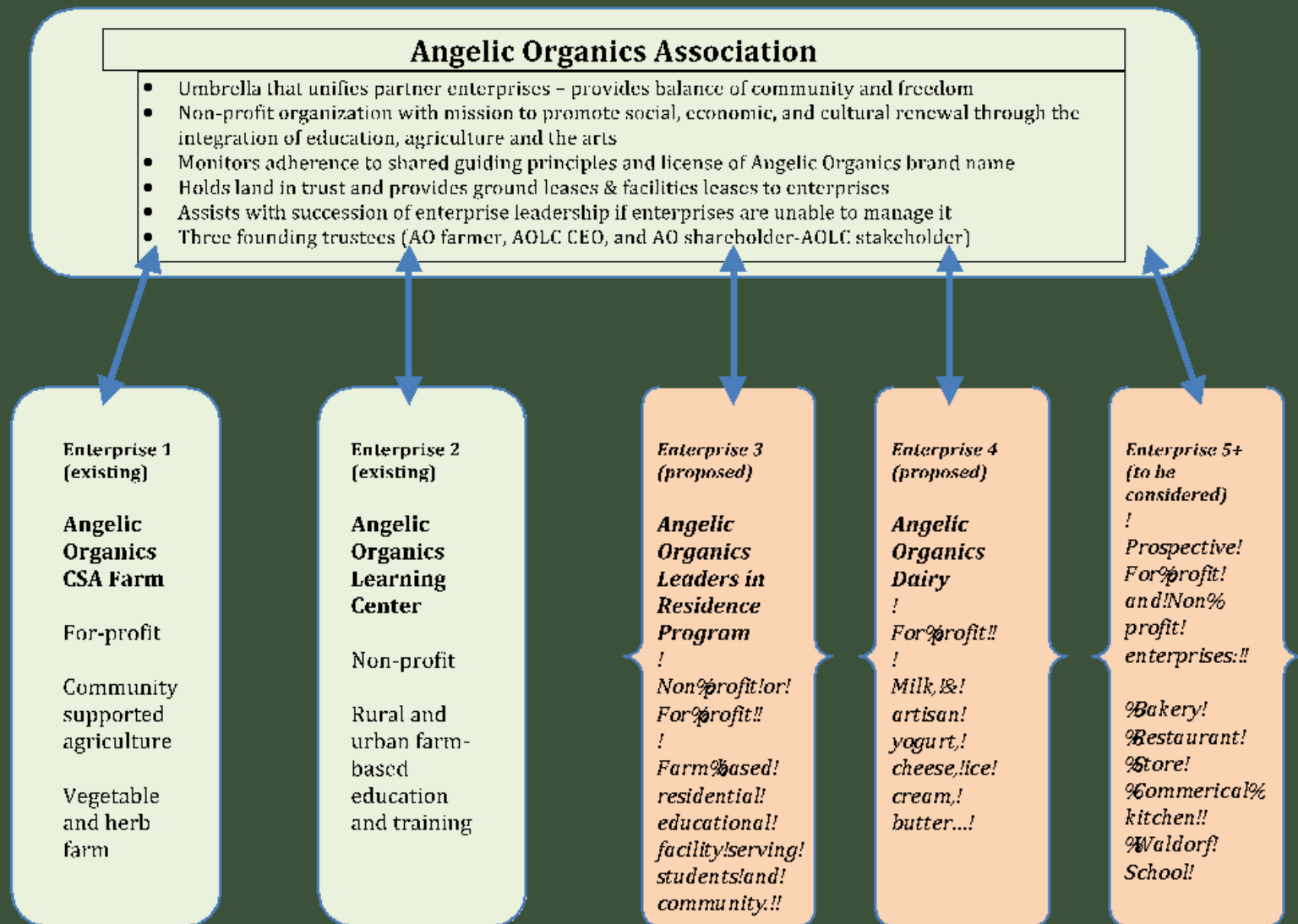


Barns are For People, Too



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AOA as an umbrella & community land trust



Farms Forever Initiative – Next Steps

- Form Angelic Organics Association as a non-profit community land trust (2013). **Incorporated Nov. 26, 2013.**
- Approach owners of the AO North LLC (39.25 acres) to see who is willing to donate, discount, or sell at market rate their shares in the LLC to AOA. **Deal closed on Nov. 4, 2014.**
- Approach owners of Price property (10 acres, house, barns) to negotiate buy-out for AO Lodge. **Deal closed on June 30, 2016.**
- Approach J.W. Peterson LLC that holds the 23 acre parcel with the buildings to negotiate transfer to AOA community land trust. **Deal closed on Nov. 30, 2016.**
- Negotiate farmer succession plan. (multiple attempts/pending)

Farms Forever Initiative – Next Steps

- Sell back buildings to AO CSA farm and AOLC on the 23 acres, and sell buildings to AOLC on the 10 acres (updated 2023)
- Adapt templates for 99-year ground leases for AOA to use with enterprises – AO CSA farm, AOLC, and any future sister-brother enterprises (updated 2023).
- Approach AOLC to transfer 70-acre parcel to the AOA community land trust in return for 99-year lease. (paused)
- Incorporate lessons learned into education and training materials and modules that will be shared with farmers and community stakeholders via CRAFT, SFB, etc. (ongoing)
- Share lessons and model via regional & national networks (ongoing).

What is worth protecting?







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Thank you.

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