Introduction

THIS BOOKLET HAD ITS ORIGIN IN 1996 when the Saline County Commission requested assistance from University Outreach and Extension to address the questions surrounding concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Through discussions with the Commission, University Outreach and Extension staff and other citizens, a project emerged for developing a means of addressing a broader range of land use and development issues.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into between the Saline County Commission and University Outreach and Extension and finalized in 1997. The essence of the agreement is contained in the following excerpted paragraphs:

The Saline County Commission has requested assistance in creating a community-based process, with decision-support assistance, which will help them create guidelines for future development and land use. Among the major issues are those related to animal agriculture, water quality, jobs and income, recreation and tourism, and protection of the natural resources and man-made environments in the county.

The expected outcomes of this effort will be a more complete knowledge base relative to the land use and development issues identified by the citizens of Saline County. This knowledge base, which Saline County citizens will help to create, can serve as a guide for future county development and any actions local governments and other organizations choose to initiate with respect to future development.

It is expected that this project will lead to a community-based model of addressing similar issues, which other counties may find helpful. The community-based process model suggested here is intended to ensure authentic and broad-range involvement of all the stakeholders in the county.

The project has become known as the Saline County Study. Participants in the Saline County Study include the Saline County Commission, the three University Outreach and Extension staff located in Saline County, University of Missouri research and extension faculty and a 10-person Steering Committee appointed by the County Commission.

This booklet was written to help citizens deliberate issues related to land use in Saline County. Participants will consider the values of high importance to the citizens of the county. and how different land-use policy choices could impact the use of this natural resource base. The booklet was written by the Land Use Public Issues Forum Committee of the Saline County Study. The results of the Issue Forums will be reported to the County Commissioners in late summer 2000.

Mission Statement: Promote a rational, predictable and stable investment environment that identifies and protects key resources, personal rights and property rights through a process that involves and educates the citizens of Saline County.

THE MEMBERS OF THE STEERING Committee are: Mark Belwood, Chairman, Kathy Borgman, Vince Buck, Richard Clemens, Ruthie Cramer, LeAnn Haling, Marc Harris, Roy Hunter, Wayne McReynolds and Becky Plattner. One or more of the County Commissioners (John Stouffer, Mike Dillon and Richard Pemberton) actively participate in all of the meetings.

In September 1999, the Saline County Study Steering Committee decided to use the National Issues Forum format to engage citizens in deliberation about policy options for addressing land-use concerns. A Land Use Public Issue Forum (LUPIF) committee was appointed to assist in the development of this issue booklet. Members of the LUPIF committee are: Mark Belwood, LeAnn Haling, Kathy Borgman, Richard Clemens, Ruthie Cramer, Marc Harris, Roy Hunter, Wayne McReynolds, Becky Plattner, and Commissioner Mike Dillon. University of Missouri faculty members working with the LUPIF committee include Ron Powers (managing author), Tom Johnson, Anna Cox, Kathy Miller, Chris Fulcher, and Gerry Snapp.

What is an Issue Forum?

"IN A DEMOCRACY, citizens must come together to find answers they can all live with, while acknowledging that individuals have differing opinions. By presenting each issue in a nonpartisan way, public-issue forums encourage participants to take a fresh look at the issues and at their own convictions. Public-issue forums help people find the areas where their interests and goals overlap. This allows a public voice to emerge, which can give direction to public policy."[1]

Issue forums are based on the concept of **deliberation**. Through deliberation, citizens identify what they value most about their heritage, the current situation and the desired future of the community (county) and consider the advantages and disadvantages of alternative policy choices, keeping in mind that doing nothing is also a policy choice. The deliberation process is organized to make every effort to understand the perspectives of everyone who is in the room (as well as the perspectives of others) and identifying where there may be common ground upon which to develop policy(ies).

THE PURPOSE OF THE FORUM is to work toward a decision, that is, to finding the common ground that allows a "choice" to be made. "Once people understand why some groups hold differing views, they often become more creative in seeking new solutions that everyone can live with."[3] Generally, a public voice emerges from forums, which help set the government's compass. Also, as a result of attending forums, individuals and groups may decide individually, or with others, to help remedy a public problem through citizen actions outside of government (Hinds)[4].

A FEW IMPORTANT GROUND RULES NEED TO BE FOLLOWED IN AN ISSUE FORUM:

- Everyone is encouraged to participate. "Since forums seek to increase understanding of complicated issues, participants need not start out with detailed knowledge of an issue (Hinds)[2]."
- No one person (or even two or three people) should dominate the discussion
- Participants speak to each other, not to the moderator.
- Participants listen attentively while others speak.
- The moderator remains neutral. The moderator has the task of keeping the discussion focused, but should not express his or her own views on the issue.
- Participants must consider every option fairly and examine fully the trade offs involved in each choice.

AFTER A SUCCESSFUL ISSUE FORUM, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Identify several choices for public action on the issue.
- Explain how the choice(s) preferred by forum participants will affect the community (county), in terms of costs and benefits and trade-offs.
- Understand why some people like a particular choice — even though is it not the participant's personal preference.

1 Adapted from Hinds, Michael deCourcy, *A Nice Place to Live: Creating Communities, Fighting Sprawl*, p.24. National Issues Forums and Public Agenda. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, IA. 1999
2 Ibid, p. 24
3.Edelman, Mark A., Jon Roe and David B. Patton. *Land Use Conflict: When City and Country Clash*, p.11. Farm Foundation, Oak Brook, IL. 1999
4 Ibid, p. 24

Saline County

SALINE COUNTY was established in 1820. There were 1,176 people living in the county in 1821. By 1880, the population had increased to 29,938.

The county got its name from the large number of natural springs in the county that contained common salt, a fact that led to the naming of several streams of the county. The town of Sweet Springs, on the other hand, was named for a spring with water that had a pure, sweetish taste.

The county courthouse was located in three different locations prior to the decision in 1939 to locate it in the geographic center of the county on a site given to the county by an early settler, Jeremiah Odell. When the county court decided to locate the courthouse at this site they also decided to name the town Marshall, in honor of the U. S. Supreme Court Chief Justice, John Marshall. The current courthouse is the third structure in Marshall built to house the county government. The first one was built in 1841.

Saline County is located in one of the most agriculturally productive areas of Missouri. More than half of the county borders on the Missouri River with concomitant bottom lands that are agriculturally productive, habitat for both flora and fauna, and subject to periodic flooding.

In the early 1800s, the county was characterized as a "hunter's paradise" with plentiful game of several species and wide expanses of prairie and substantial woodlands.

Saline County had a high population of 33,703 in 1900 and has declined at a slow pace ever since to 22,703 in 1998. The population is expected to increase at a modest rate of about 1.3 percent per year over the next decade because of a projected increase in jobs. Services, manufacturing and government account for nearly 60 percent of the employment base in Saline County. Agriculture production and processing accounted for 44 percent of the employment and 46 percent of the Gross County Product in 1994, the most recent data available.[5]

Land Use: The Big Picture

NATIONALLY, THERE IS CONCERN about the magnitude of land-use change as urban areas expand, often in leap-frog ways, into the rural countryside. Urban land use has increased from about 14 million acres in 1945 to 56 million acres in 1992. Land in recreation and wildlife areas has increased from about 20 million acres in 1945 to 87 million acres in 1992. Cropland acres have fluctuated around 450 million acres during that same period of time. There have been significant decreases in grasslands, forest lands, land used for farmsteads and farm roads from 1945 to 1992.[6]

As noted in *Land Use Conflict: When City and Country Clash*[7]:

"In contrast [to rural areas], when areas of rapid growth are visited, a very different picture often emerges. There, the overarching land-use policy question is: How should the land resources be utilized and how should development occur in the face of population growth and expansion?" For example, "Atlantans drive an average of 36.5 miles per day roundtrip to work – the longest commute in the nation. Growth around this metropolitan area converts 500 acres per week from farmland and open space to urban uses".

But not all counties are experiencing such dramatic growth and the accompanying issues of land-use conflicts. According to the USDA, one-quarter of the nation's 3,066 counties are still losing population. Most of these are rural counties located primarily in the Midwest and Great Plains. The middle 50 percent are primarily rural counties with populations of less than 50,000.[8]

Where does Saline County fit in the land-use picture? What would be the tensions around land use in this county?

5 Hamed, Mubarak. *The Role of Agriculture and Agricultural Processing in Saline County, Missouri*. Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Missouri – Columbia. 1998
6 Source of these figures: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Krupa and Daugherty, 1995.
7 Ibid, p. 5
8 *Land Use Conflict*, p. 4.

Saline County: Land Use and . . .

THERE ARE 490,938 ACRES in Saline County (1993 Soil Survey data). Data from 1997 report that 46.4 percent of this (220,000 acres) is prime farmland[9]. Public lands owned by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the Missouri Department of Conservation make up two percent of the land area (9,872 acres) of the county. Much of this is in the Missouri River bottom. In addition, 7,561 acres has been approved for acquisition into the Big Muddy Refuge (BMR) in Saline County. Table 1 summarizes the detail of the acres owned by DNR and DOC and approved for acquisition into the BMR. Land in the BMR will be purchased only from willing sellers. Currently, no land has been purchased for the BMR, but the Refuge has an option on 468 acres.

Incorporated areas of Saline County contain 9,484 acres, which are distributed among the 12 incorporated areas partially or totally within Saline County.

Another view of land use can be seen through the type of "ground cover". The 1992-93 satellite imagery summarized the ground cover in several categories, but the general picture is shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Public land owned by MODNR/MODOC and Approved for Acquisition by the Big Muddy Refuge in Saline County[10]

Location in County	Owned by DOC	Owned byDNR	Approved for Acquisition by BMR
Blind Pony Lake Conservation Area	2131		
Blue Lick Conservation Area	390		
Grand Pass Conservation Area	5399		
Malta Bend Community Lake	24		
Marshall Junction Conservation Area	777		
Van Meter State Park		983	
Arrow Rock State Park		168	
Little Missouri Bend Unit			2260
Jameson Island Unit			2300
Cranberry Island Unit			3001
TOTAL ACRES	**8721**	**1151**	**7561**

Table 2. Saline County ground cover by type and amount – 1992-93

Ground cover description	Acres	Percent
Row and close grown crops	312,018	63.8
Non-native grasslands	119,328	24.4
Deciduous upland forest lands	42,790	8.7
Open water	6,683	1.4
All Other	8,124	1.7

9 Prime farmland is generally defined as, "land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is also available for other uses." For more details on the definition, see SSM, USDA Handbook No. 18, 1993.
10 DNR/DOC acreage provided by Wayne McReynods, BMR acreage provided by Barbara Moran, Assistant Refuge Manager of the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

Land-use Concerns

The land-use concerns of Saline County citizens cluster into three groupings: *economic*, *environmental*, and *planned* or *guided* land-use concerns.

Economic concerns:

■ The impact of land-use changes on the tax base of the county. Questions are asked about the impact of land-use changes that would decrease property taxes or constrain the growth of tax revenue because development opportunities might be restricted under land-use regulations.

■ The effect of changing land use on incomes and employment. This includes the potential economic impact of increased public ownership of lands – particularly on the Missouri River bottoms.

■ The economic impact through changes in production agriculture, sometimes expressed as increased vertical integration or a growth in "supply chain" agriculture, and large scale animal agriculture (Confined Animal Feeding Operations — CAFOs). Questions arise as to who benefits when firms outside the county own the product from the animal or seed from beginning to the consumer's table. Does the profit stay in the county or end up elsewhere? Who's responsible when things don't work right? Will farmers be independent businesses, or corporate employees?

Environmental concerns:

■ Soil loss and degradation, misuse of the land, pollution of water sources and the conversion of forested areas, wetlands and wildlife habitat to other uses.

■ Lands being developed without regard to native flora and fauna and unique life forms.

■ Health concerns arising from changed land uses, such as CAFOs.

■ Concern that historic and cultural resources in the county will be negatively impacted by water and/or air pollution and land-use changes.

Planned or guided land-use concerns:

Tensions exist between the several points of view:

■ Some see a lack of direction in land use and are concerned that the county has no land-use plan, nor the authority to regulate the use of agricultural lands. Missouri law prohibits counties from regulating agricultural land use under existing planning and zoning statutes.

■ Other citizens see too much outside (non-local) control and/or ownership of land in the county.

■ Some people feel that the government (in this case state and federal agencies) is buying up too much land and taking it out of production, while others see the potential need for more public lands.

■ Concern that the current situation encourages too much low-density development (typically 5-10 or more acres with one house) that leads to higher costs of providing public services and potential increased conflict between those building new residences in the open country and long established agricultural operations.

■ Tension between those who favor planned land use and those who see such prospects as needless government intervention is reflected in the concerns in this area.

Community Perspective

As noted in the *Land-use Conflict*[11] booklet,

"Although the problems may sound a little different from area to area, debates between citizens often bubble up from skepticism, distrust, and feeling that they are powerless to affect local events. Animosity may come from rural citizens who fear invading city dwellers or from new homeowners who resent the noise and odors emanating from neighboring farms. Some people express skepticism regarding government's ability to solve problems, or they are distrustful of corporations and developers.

"If development is over-regulated, will community growth eventually become strangled? If we allow farmland and open space to be developed at will, will we eventually wipe out an important natural resource?

"We know there are trade-offs. Are the trade-offs as black and white, now or never, all or nothing, as they are often portrayed? Facts often conflict with each other.

"Citizens of a community would like to feel as though they have an impact on what's happening. Is there a means for getting past the stalemate to examine or create solutions that diverse interests in the community can live with"?

The "Issue Forum" process briefly described on page 2 of this booklet is one way to involve the citizens of Saline County in deliberating the issues surrounding land use in the county. This booklet is designed to help you and others in the county examine your views about land use, farming and farmland, and the natural and cultural resources of Saline County. As you read the booklet you may find yourself agreeing with some ideas and disagreeing with others. Each of the ideas presented has strengths and weaknesses. They are often at odds with each other. Acceptance of any one solution may require a trade-off of something that is also held valuable by people in the county.

The Choices for Balancing Our Heritage with Our Horizons

TO PROMOTE PUBLIC deliberation about improving Saline County, this Saline County issue book presents three overall policy directions for consideration by the citizens of the county:

- **Let the Free Market Work**
- **Protecting Farming and Farmland**
- **Enhancing Our Natural and Cultural Resources**.

A set of actions that could address the stated policy direction, and represents the views of some citizens in Saline County, is included for each of the three policy choices. The arguments supporting each choice are presented as well as the arguments in opposition to each choice. The challenge is, which choices come first. Are individual rights of higher priority than collective rights? Are property rights of greater importance than overall vitality of the county? Do personal goals outrank community goals? What do you want the county to be like in the future? How will decisions we make now affect future generations living here?

As you discuss the choices you are likely to discover additional arguments in favor as well as arguments against each of the choices. You may also discover other choices that reflect common ground and the basis for recommended actions.

11 Ibid, pages 10-11

CHOICE ONE. Let the Free Market Work

THE *LAND USE CONFLICT*[12] booklet summarizes the background to the free market option quite well:

"In a free market, private property owners determine the use of the land in accord with their own beliefs and objectives. Government intervention is minimal. Those who wish to alter the use of the land must either purchase the rights to do so, or convince the owners that it is their interest to alter or maintain the desired use. In a free market, land is only sold when the owner and the buyer agree to the terms.

"The history of the United States, say proponents of the free market option, is one of expansion and development, supply and demand, and freedom to choose…Free marketers say that government should free the market from existing regulations, not restrict it. If people want more homes without sidewalks on larger lots – and if they have the ability to pay for them, then someone in the free market will have an incentive to build more homes where and how the people want them. If people want to preserve farmland and open space, and if they have the ability to pay for it, then let them buy it and preserve it as they want – the market allows for this too."

In a truly free market land will be bought, sold and traded until it reaches its "highest and best" economic (and legal) use. The shift of agricultural land to other uses, the free marketers tell us, is simply economics at work. Under this scenario a shift back to agricultural uses would occur when the value for agriculture use is higher than other uses.

Those who support "letting the market work" and those who oppose this approach to determining land use – and the related issues of other natural and cultural resources in the community – have quite different views. The views of those who would support the free market choice and of those who would oppose this view are summarized below.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO LET THE MARKET WORK?

- Review existing regulations and legislation to identify conditions that restrain the free market and develop recommendations for change.
- Enhance protection of private property rights by making public actions, such as condemnation, annexation, and "takings", more difficult.
- Enhance protection from nuisance suits and increase property owner's ability to opt out of zoning and special district designations that prescribe or limit future land use.
- Limit government's ability to regulate land use by reducing funding and authority for planning and zoning functions.
- Eliminate differential property tax incentives, transportation and housing development subsidies, and impact fees for urban development and farmland and open space protection.

12 Ibid, page 13-14

Supporters of Choice #1[13] would say:

1. "Private property rights ought to be protected. The Constitution assures our rights to liberty, ownership of property, and the pursuit of happiness. Citizens have worked hard to acquire and own their property. So, if they want to use their land for a development or to continue farming their century-old farm, no one – particularly government bureaucrats paid by taxpayers – should be able to keep them from using it for that purpose. If somebody wants to use his or her land for a different purpose, then that person should pay the owner the asking price, or go somewhere else… property rights are sacred, and no government or corporation should be able to take them away."[14]

2. Free markets are good for business, development, growth and prosperity. Proponents of this view say that government regulation of land use is detrimental to business and industry and results in increased costs to everyone. Advocates of this approach see barriers to the free market as the reason that new business and development is not occurring in their communities.

3. Free markets eliminate the need for expensive government regulations and programs. The policy instruments used to guide or control land use cost money. They also reduce freedoms held valuable by citizens. Some feel it is very undesirable to have planned land use that tells citizens what they can and cannot do. Elimination of land-use programs reduces the cost of government and interference with free enterprise.

Critics of Choice #1 would say:

1. Government has a role in planning and protecting the rights of existing property owners. The free market does not account for "third party" effects of property exchanges between the buyer and seller. If there are no restraints on the uses of property, a land seller can impact the property values of adjacent property through sale to a buyer who uses the land to create activity that is not valued by others. The free market does not protect against incompatible land uses.

2. Individual property owners should not have the right to destroy or impair our environment. Protection of native flora and fauna is important to our future not only for aesthetic reasons, but also for maintaining biodiversity that may be needed to develop new ways to treat human diseases or to increase food production. Quality of natural resources is also a strong attraction for new businesses and services. There are areas within the county dependent on the natural and cultural resources for economic opportunity and those areas cannot be protected without some limits on the "free market".

3. Infrastructure costs (roads, bridges, sewers, water, utility lines) are subsidized when the free market operates. Where changes in land use are totally uncontrolled, the costs of development for residential areas in the countryside are not covered by the property taxes associated with the new development. This requires existing property owners to partially subsidize free enterprise in order to provide facilities and services to developments that leapfrog across the landscape.

13 *Land Use Conflict: Where City and Country Clash*?
14 Ibid, pages 14-15

CHOICE #2. Protecting Farming & Farmland

THIS CHOICE GIVES PRIORITY to protecting the business of farming in Saline County. To do so would require a commitment to protecting the land: the basic resource needed for farming. The tone of those people concerned about farming and farmland in Saline County distinguishes between those who have lived in the county and are currently engaged in farm operations versus large-scale farm businesses or corporations wanting to purchase and/or control large land areas in the county.

Saline County residents are also concerned about the changes in agriculture that impact the uses of land in rural areas, such as large-scale animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Other changes of concern are the implications of contract farming, currently happening in animal agriculture and projected to happen with increased production of GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms).

Pursuit of policies that would protect farming and farmland will necessitate choosing approaches that provide incentives for landowners to keep the land in agricultural operations (of the type presently in the county) or penalties for taking land out of farming. Incentives for protecting farming and farmland, as well as penalties for not doing so, are typically initiated by governments and/or not-for-profit organizations – sometimes in cooperation with each other. The effectiveness of either incentives or penalties is largely dependent on the support by the public at large.

As noted by the *Land Use Conflict*[15]*:*

"Some states and communities – even federal agencies – use taxpayer funds to purchase land outright. More common, however, is the use of tax money to purchase development rights or conservation easements on privately owned farmland and open-space land in environmentally fragile areas. This approach retains private ownership, but limits the owner of the property to uses that are consistent with environmental protection or conservation of farmland resources.

"Yet another approach is to require developers, wishing to develop some land in a county, to purchase development rights. The funds generated from purchasing development rights are then used to protect the most important farmland and open space areas from development in other parts of the county.

"Several states prevent urban development, not by purchasing development rights, but by exclusive zoning designations that only allow specific uses for the properties included in the designated zones.

"Finally, all states provide some tax incentives for protecting farmland and open space. Many states provide preferential use-value assessment, so farmland owners pay lower property taxes than would otherwise be paid under full market value assessment…. Property tax incentives are more effective in protecting farmland and open space if they include rollbacks and penalties for conversion for other uses, or for other contractual restrictions that prevent development. This approach often forces farmers to decide whether they want to be land speculators or farmers".

In Saline County, however, the main issue of concern is not about "urban sprawl" or widespread residential development in the rural areas. The major concern related to farming and farmland is about the potential development of large-scale animal feeding operations or other developments in the agricultural industry that would significantly change the current farming and agricultural land-use patterns.

15 Ibid, page 20

Supporters of Choice #2 would say:

1. Farming and farmland must be protected because agriculture, as we've known it, cannot compete with other uses. The free market drives land use to its highest economic use without regard to impacts on farming or the amount of farmland and open space. The farming arrangement in Saline County provides opportunity for a full range of farming operations as indicated by the following data from the 1987, 1992 and 1997 Censuses of Agriculture.

The overall number of farms was relatively stable from 1992 to 1997, but there were shifts within size categories.

The "economics" of farming in Saline County is further illustrated by the distribution of gross farm receipts in Table 4 for 1997, 1992 and 1987.

The bottom line: In 1997, 44 percent of the farms were less than 180 acres in size and 60 out of 100 had less than $50,000 of gross farm receipts per year. It is a pattern of farming that is dependent on off-farm jobs and income to sustain the farming operations and provide family income. The number of farms changed very little from 1992 to 1997, but there were more farms with less than $2,500 in sales and with sales over $100,000.

2. Saline County has some of the richest soil in the state, which is often the most vulnerable to conversion for other uses. Saline County is characterized by nearly 50 percent of its land being classified as prime farmland. The characteristics of prime farmland also make it desirable for development because of lower land development costs. Without restrictions on the use of farmland, we will lose agricultural production capacity and forever change the character of the farming areas of the county. The County Baseline for 1998-2007[16] indicates a demand for 1,500 additional housing units by 2007, some of which will no doubt be built on land currently in agriculture.

3. Agriculture is a significant component of the county's economic base. Employment in agriculture makes up 10 percent of the labor force in the county, more than twice the average for counties in the state. Income earned from farming accounts for just less than 10 percent of the total personal income in the county. The impact of income (and employment) of farming is "multiplied" by earnings and employment in other sectors that are directly and indirectly tied to farming; estimated to account for 44 percent of the employment and 46 percent of the Gross County Product in 1994 (Hamed, Tables 6 and 7)[17]

Table 3. Number and Size of Farming Operations in Saline County – 1997, 1992, 1987

Size of Farm (Acres)	Number of Farms			Percent of Total			Cumulative Percent		
	'97	'92	'87	'97	'92	'87	'97	'92	'87
1-9	29	39	56	3.1	4.2	5.1	3.1	4.2	5.1
10-49	106	98	130	11.3	10.4	12.0	14.4	14.6	17.1
50-179	278	286	332	29.7	30.5	30.7	44.1	45.1	47.8
180-499	253	236	279	27.0	25.1	25.8	71.1	70.2	73.6
500-999	145	164	169	15.5	17.4	15.6	86.6	87.6	89.2
1,000 or more	125	239	211	13.4	12.4	10.8	100	100	100
TOTAL	**936**	**939**	**1083**	**100**	**100**	**100**			

16 Saline County Baseline, 1998-2007. Cox, Anna M. and Miller, Kathleen K. Report B-98-02. Community Policy Analysis Center, Social Sciences Unit, College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, University of Missouri-Columbia. September, 1998
17 Ibid, pages 8-9

Critics of Choice #2 would say:

1. Trying to protect farming and farmland could lead to expensive programs and governmental intervention. It is unlikely that enough money could be generated to protect enough areas of farmland in the county to prevent farmland conversion from occurring. The conversion of farmland to other uses in Saline County has been relatively slow and is not projected to significantly increase. The only "problem" foreseen is the possibility of farmland conversions in locations that would constitute incompatible uses, such as large-scale animal feeding operations upwind and upstream from cultural and historic centers or residences. The quantity of land that would be needed to "protect" those areas would likely require more resources than citizens of the county can afford or are willing to support through taxation.

2 All businesses seek ways of doing business that are profitable. In so doing, they may adopt practices that are harmful to the environment and reduce the value of other people's property in the area. No business, including farming, can be allowed to operate totally unchecked.

3 Landowners should have the right to sell their property to the highest bidder. Prohibiting landowners from selling to the highest bidder "costs" landowners the opportunity to realize economic returns on their investment. Programs that are designed to compensate landowners for these "costs" usually require a long-term, irrevocable decision by the landowner, which has to be made without being able to clearly predict the future.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROTECT FARMING & FARMLAND?

- Private sector foundations, organizations, or individual benefactors can purchase property or development rights, and provide perpetual care for designated farmland and open-space areas.
- Government can use tax revenues to purchase development rights or require developers to buy and transfer development rights to protect farmland or other land-use areas.
- Government can use exclusive zoning designations and create preservation districts to prevent encroachment into designated farmland and open-space areas.
- Government can provide tax incentives to encourage landowners to keep land in farmland and/or other open-space uses.

Table 4. Number of Farms by Value of Farm Sales in Saline County – 1997,1992 and 1987

Value of Farm Sales	Number of Farms			Percent of Total			Cumulative Percent		
	'97	'92	'87	'97	'92	'87	'97	'92	'87
Less than $2,500	117	82	114	12.5	8.7	10.5	12.5	8.7	10.5
$2,500 - $4,900	77	91	96	8.2	9.7	8.9	20.7	18.4	19.4
$5,000 - $9,999	88	102	144	9.4	10.9	13.3	30.1	29.3	32.7
$10,000 - $24,999	164	173	224	17.5	18.4	20.7	47.6	47.7	53.4
$25,000 - $49,000	111	116	164	11.9	12.4	15.1	59.5	60.1	68.5
$50,000 - $99,000	125	136	130	13.4	14.5	12.0	72.9	74.6	80.5
$100,000 or more	254	239	211	27.1	25.4	19.5	100	100	100
TOTAL	**936**	**939**	**1083**	**100**	**100**	**100**			

CHOICE #3. Enhancing Our Natural & Cultural Resources

THIS CHOICE EMPHASIZES THE VALUE that some Saline County citizens place on the history and character of the county and the desire to maintain it for current and future generations. It also expresses a strong value of enhancing the quality of the natural resource base of the county, including the land, flora and fauna (especially native species), air and water. Citizens also express a strong interest in protecting and enhancing the historic and cultural resources of the county, for intrinsic as well as economic values.

This choice would require similar approaches as protecting farming and farmland, but the focus would be different. The focus would be the total land base of the county, with special attention to land cover, historic and cultural sites. Proponents of this choice are not against agriculture, but they think the county would be better off if less land were under intensive cultivation.

Supporters of Choice #3 would say:

1. **Protecting nature, wildlife, and the environment for future generations is simply the right thing to do.** We are custodians of the land and our natural resources, and we are responsible for more than short-run profits and losses, proponents of this argument say. If we squander our environment, scenic vistas, natural resources, and biodiversity, the loss we face is one from which we cannot recover.

2. **The natural and cultural resource base of the county is an important economic asset.** Current historic and cultural sites are an important source of economic activity in the county. There are opportunities to further develop these resources without negatively impacting the environment. New, "clean" businesses are seeking out rural areas that have quality natural and cultural resources and have policies in place to protect and enhance them. An emphasis on protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural resources is consistent with the desire to enhance the telecommuting capacity of the community.

3. **Protecting the natural and cultural resource base also protects the economic base for individual property owners.** Potential buyers or investors are attracted to areas where the value of their property is not subject to the unpredictable actions of other property owners. Approaches used to protect the natural and cultural resource base can be designed in ways that allow thoughtful and purposeful changes over time.

Critics of Choice #3 would say:

1. **Restrictions on how personal property can be used is an infringement of personal rights and would lead to unacceptable government regulations of individual rights.** The proposed enhancement of natural and cultural resources is seen by some as a thinly veiled attempt to take away property rights. Such an approach could also lead to potential loss of farmland by extending public ownership of river bottom lands and other areas within "smelling" distance of people's homes, businesses, or historic sites. Such a program would be very expensive for all to serve the needs of the few. Instead of promoting economic growth, restricting large land areas to enhance natural and cultural resources would stifle economic development in the county.

2. **There is already too much land "saved" by the state and federal government.** Considerable amounts of productive land

have already been purchased by government agencies in recent years and there is a feeling that there are plans by these agencies to expand the area of public lands. If significant amounts of land are taken out of production it impacts the livelihood of people in the county – particularly those who currently own those areas.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

TO PROTECT OUR HERITAGE AND ENHANCE OUR NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES?

■ Governments can impose mandatory residential density requirements, lot sizes and/or portions of acreage that must be left in farmland or open space.

■ Initiate efforts to change state statutes on regulating agriculture.

■ Conservation easements can be used to protect historic and cultural sites from damage of new agricultural or other development activities.

■ Governments at all levels and private foundations can purchase development rights on land areas as a means of providing a buffer between development and historic, cultural or fragile ecosystems

Trade-Offs

The basic trade-offs among the three policy directions are:

■ The "hands off" of the free market gives priority to the private property rights of sellers and buyers against the potential of incompatible uses of adjoining properties, economic impacts on third parties and the likelihood of increased litigation between individuals.

■ The free-market choice also increases the unpredictability of future land-use patterns and creates uncertainty among investors as well as local governments.

■ Protecting farming and farmland is costly to the public and is a tradeoff between significant public involvement (through land-use regulations and taxes to support them) and freedom to buy and sell property as the owners see fit.

■ The costs, and governmental interventions necessary to protect farming and farmland, are traded off against the reality that the future economic growth of the county is dependent on the development of other sectors, and the reality that change will continue in the agriculture sector.

■ Enhancing the natural and cultural resources involve a tradeoff between increased costs and increased involvement of government in land-use decisions among private parties in return for protection of natural and cultural resources from the effects of land uses that would decrease or destroy the natural and cultural resource base.

The trade-offs within each choice, and among the choices, are fairly easy to identify, but difficult to reconcile.

Summarizing the Choices . . .

THE KETTERING FOUNDATION describes *public deliberation* as "a different kind of talk, another way to act." Public deliberation is intended to help the people who "own the issue" – in this case the citizens of Saline County – explore choices, examine the pros and cons of each choice, and look for those areas between agreement and disagreement. This process may provide the basis for adopting and/or modifying suggested approaches to resolving the issue. Public deliberation may also lead to the discovery of entirely new alternatives that connect to the things held valuable by most people in the county, such as freedom, fairness, respect for others, concern for future generations, and quality of life.

Saline County citizens, like citizens throughout rural America, are asking how they can maintain, and enhance, their quality of life in view of the social, economic and technological changes that are (and will be) impacting the county. This includes changes in information and agricultural technologies, the preferences that people have regarding access to goods and services, and the economic base of the county. Current and future uses of the natural resource base (land, water, and air) play an important role in determining the future quality of life for all citizens of Saline County.

This issue book has provided an overview of the land and related natural resources use issue and outlines several policy choices (directions) for deliberation and consideration by the people of Saline County. Each choice speaks for one set of priorities of some citizens in the county. There are arguments for and arguments against each choice. There are also tradeoffs, within the choices as well as between the choices.

CHOICE #1 – LET THE FREE MARKET WORK

In a free market, property changes hands among willing sellers and buyers, and uses change by the will of the owner.

What can be done?

- Review existing regulations and legislation and make recommendations for changing those that restrain the free market
- Enhance protection of private property rights
- Limit government's ability to regulate land use by reducing funding and authority for planning and zoning functions.
- Eliminate differential property tax, transportation and housing development fees and fees for urban development and farmland and open-space protection.

Arguments in support of this choice:

- Property rights ought to be protected.
- Free markets are good for business, development, growth and prosperity.
- Free markets eliminate the need for expensive government regulations and programs.

Arguments in opposition to this choice:

- Government has a role in planning and protecting the rights of existing property owners.
- Individual property owners should not have the right to destroy or impair our environment.
- Infrastructure costs (roads, bridges, sewers, water, utility lines) are subsidized when the free market operates.

Trade-offs:

- Private property rights versus incompatible uses and third party effects.
- Predictability of land use that provides guidance for investors and local government versus uncertainties of future growth and development patterns.

CHOICE #2 – PROTECT FARMING AND FARMLAND

Protecting farming and farmland in order to maintain the diversity of agriculture in the county and sustain the quality of the land base.

What can be done?

- Purchase of development rights
- Government can use tax revenues to purchase development rights and/or require developers to buy and transfer development rights
- Use zoning designations or create preservation districts to prevent encroachment into designated farmland and open-space areas.
- Provide tax incentives to encourage land owners to keep land in farming or as open space.

Arguments in support of this choice:

- Farming and farmland must be protected because agriculture, as we know it, cannot compete with other uses.
- Saline County has some of the richest soil in the state which is often the most vulnerable to conversion for other uses.
- Agriculture is a significant component of the county's economic base.

Arguments in opposition to this choice:

- Trying to protect farming and farmland could lead to expensive government programs and intervention.
- Businesses, including farming, seek ways of doing business that are profitable.
- Landowners should have the right to sell their property to the highest bidder.

Trade-offs:

- High costs of protecting farming and farmland versus against private property rights.
- Costs and government intervention to protect farming and farmland versus future economic growth in other sectors that have land needs.

CHOICE #3 – ENHANCING OUR NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Placing a high value on the history and the natural and cultural character of the county and the desire to maintain and enhance it for future generations.

What can be done?

- Governments can impose mandatory residential density requirements and lot sizes.
- Initiate efforts to change state statutes on regulating agriculture.
- Use conservation easements to protect historic and cultural sites from damage.
- Purchase development rights as a means of providing a buffer between development and historic, cultural or fragile ecosystems.

Arguments in support of this choice:

- Protecting nature, wildlife and the environment for future generations is simply the right thing to do.
- The natural and cultural resource base of the county is an important economic asset.
- Protecting the natural and cultural resource base also protects the economic base for individual property owners.

Arguments in opposition to this choice:

- Restrictions on how personal property can be used is an infringement of personal rights and would lead to unacceptable government regulations of individual rights.
- There is already too much land "saved" by the state and federal government.

Trade-offs:

- Costs and increased involvement of government versus protection of natural and cultural resources.
- Protection of natural and cultural resources versus the free exchange of property among sellers and buyers.

Notes