

## **Request for Concepts Exit 4 Farmland – Randolph, Vermont**

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### **Background and Objectives for Exit 4 Farmland**

Thank you for your interest in the 22.5 acre parcel of land in Randolph, Vermont. The Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV) acquired this land in July of 2017. Once the site of a proposed large-scale development, PTV worked in cooperation with the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF), Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) and a citizens group called Exit 4 Open Space (E4OS), to acquire the land with the goals of conveying it for agricultural use and/or maintaining open space.

This Request for Concepts is the first step in seeking an owner of the property, and will help the groups involved understand the range of ideas for the parcel. More detailed proposals will be sought in a subsequent phase.

Priority will be given to concepts that achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Use the land for agricultural purposes. Agricultural activities are a priority for the site, but concepts that keep the land as a natural area will be considered. A combination of both will also be considered. Extremely limited enterprises or educational activities that are directly related to the farm's production may be allowed occasionally, and under certain circumstances (further details are below).
- 2) Preserve the site's iconic view to the mountains. This key community value must be upheld by any concept proposals submitted.
- 3) Allow public access to certain portions of the land. The configuration of that access is not yet finalized, and will be shaped by the concept being proposed.
- 4) Protect and enhance gateway to Randolph. Consistent with (1) and (2) above, concepts should reflect the importance of this area as a gateway to Randolph. Uses and appearance should support that function.

While the purchase price proposed by the potential owner will be taken into consideration, PTV and its partners are prioritizing the objectives stated above.

Creativity in applications is encouraged. PTV and its partners are open to cooperative ownership, as well as private or public ownership. Applicants should show a commitment to stewardship and the community spirit in which this land was conserved.

PTV is seeking an owner who can demonstrate the ability to fulfill these objectives.

### **Property Description**

The Exit 4 Farmland is located off of Rt. 66 near Exit 4 of I-89, in Randolph. Across the street are a gas station and convenience store, and a fast food restaurant. The land is located one mile from Randolph Center, which is home to a store, Vermont Technical College, a retirement

community, a campground, and residences. It is located approximately 2.7 miles from Randolph Village, a downtown area.

The Exit 4 Farmland is bounded on the west and south by a conserved parcel of 61.5 acres. This acreage is owned by a local farmer who will be transitioning it from corn to grass over the next several years. Interstate 89 forms the eastern boundary, and state route 66 marks the northern boundary. Class II wetlands are present along the eastern boundary.

There are no farm structures on the parcel. (Please review the description of the easement, below, for information about the possibility of a new structure on this parcel.) Electricity is available in the northeast corner of the property, and a drilled well (capped, with no pump) is located in the southeast corner of the abutting property. There is the possibility of water availability from the abutting property.

The 22 acres (Exit 4 Farmland) and the field directly to the west were purchased as a development investment, and kept in production with hay and corn on and off throughout the years. After the owner's proposal for a large development at the interchange met with strong opposition, PTV and partners were given the opportunity to purchase the land. PTV acquired the land in July 2017.

### **Conservation Easement**

To uphold a key value for which this farm was conserved, the farm will be sold subject to a perpetual conservation easement that will allow many types of agricultural uses. The terms of the easement will include the following principles, though specific terms may be shaped by the nature of the proposal concepts received. Terms will include the following:

#### Use of the land

- The construction of agricultural structures on the site will be limited to one small structure to support agricultural uses, with the size and location to be determined based on the proposals received. Any small structure to be built should be built in a location that is not in the viewshed.
- No residential uses will be allowed on the property.
- Outside lighting will not be permitted.
- Access to the site will be via the existing parking area or via the farm road on the west side. The farm road access will likely include an easement that allows use by the neighboring property (the 61.5 acres) and use as a public trail (see below), with the exact location of that easement to be determined.
- Signage will be minimal and of a small scale and will not be lit.
- No special events (private or public parties, festivals, etc.) will be allowed on the parcel.
- Very limited activities that are related to specific agricultural use(s) of the property may be allowed. (Please see "Request for Concepts Submission Process" below if you wish to propose a concept that includes occasional on-farm activities.) To minimize impacts, any

such activities will be subject to easement terms limiting the timing and duration of events, and the numbers of people in attendance. Examples of the types of activities that may be allowed are a temporary farm stand selling products from the Exit 4 Farmland parcel, occasional farm tours with limited numbers of attendees, and pick your own operations of limited duration. Even if a portion of the proposal's concept involves occasional, limited farm visitors, the main objective of the business plan should not rely on visits to the farm operation by the public.

- Landscape features, including the existing stone wall, will be protected.

### Public access

- A site plan showing areas for public access will be developed as part of the purchase of land. The future Exit 4 Farmland owner, PTV, and partners will be involved in developing a design to meet owner and partner goals. It is anticipated that a walking path will follow the existing hedgerows, and will connect to a walking path on the adjacent parcel of land. As described above, it is also anticipated that the road where this walking path will be located will be shared for farm use with the adjacent parcel.
- The existing parking lot will be delineated for public access and may not be expanded. The parking lot will be maintained by a group to be named.
- Public access may include a simple loop trail, vantage points, benches, etc. Trails will be maintained by a group to be named.
- The site plan will reserve a spot for a possible future public art installation (such as a sculpture to replace the whale's tails) and for a commemorative installation thanking all who helped acquire the land.

### Request for Concepts Submission Process

PTV is soliciting interest in the Exit 4 Farmland through a basic, concept-style proposal. Applicants with concepts that best fit the objectives stated above will be asked to submit a full proposal with greater detail.

Interested parties are asked to submit a brief letter of interest addressing the following questions. (The letter should not exceed three pages, but applicants are welcome to submit supplemental materials, like sketches or marked up maps, in excess of the three pages). The letter can be as simple as using each question below as a header, and then writing your answer below it:

- 1) What is your concept for the Exit 4 Farmland property? If your concept involves farming and you would like to include small scale activities other than farming as part of your concept (as mentioned in the "Conservation Easement" section above), please describe what these are, how often they are likely to occur, and how they relate to the farming taking place on the property.

- 2) How will your concept align with the values and objectives, above, established by PTV and its partners (CLF, E4OS, and VNRC)? (A bulleted list addressing each of the four objectives on page one is fine.)
- 3) What qualifies you or your organization to implement the vision you have described?
- 4) What types of investments or changes to the property will your concept require in order to get up and running at the Exit 4 Farmland?
- 5) Please include a brief statement to affirm your willingness to allow public access to the property's future trail network, as well as your willingness to cooperate with the people or group(s) who will be responsible for maintaining these trails. Please also note whether any aspects of your operation would be incompatible with public access – in general, or that would create limitations at certain times of year. You may simply write a sentence affirming this, and then list any possible incompatibilities. (This does not disqualify proposals, but will help reviewers understand opportunities for site design that will be compatible with the concept ultimately selected.)

### Purchase Price of the Farm

Please include in your concept paper a proposed purchase price and terms of payment.

### Accessing the Property

Potential applicants may walk the property on their own.

### Selection Criteria and Process

Submissions are due by October 10, 2017.

PTV intends to select one or more concepts from potential landowners who best fit the project objectives described above, but reserves the right to not select from the concepts if no appropriate proposals are received. A decision making team consisting of Preservation Trust of Vermont, Conservation Law Foundation, and Vermont Natural Resources Council, in consultation with members of Exit 4 Open Space and with agriculture and land use experts, will review the concepts submitted. Potential landowners whose concepts have been selected as top candidates will then be asked to develop a full proposal for the property at a later date. At the full proposal stage we will provide additional criteria, proposal requirements, and details about the selection process.

Please send your concept paper and any supporting materials to Paul Bruhn, Preservation Trust of Vermont, 104 Church Street, Burlington, VT, 05401, or email them to [paul@ptvermont.org](mailto:paul@ptvermont.org).