



The former Boede Cement Plant ...  
site could become the home of a year-round farmers market.

## **San Juan: Deal for year-round farmers market in the works**

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**Journal of the San Juans Reporter**  
Sep 10 2008

The San Juan Islands' Agricultural Guild has searched high and low for a suitable place for a year-round farmers market.

Now, with the help and financial muscle of the San Juan County Land Bank, the guild may have found its spot.

On Tuesday, the Land Bank got approval from the County Council to contribute toward the proposed purchase of a .35-acre lot in the heart of Friday Harbor — known as the Erickson property and the current home of Friday Harbor Electric — for \$1 million.

The Land Bank would partner in purchasing the property, located at the intersection of Nichols Street and Sunshine Alley, with the guild and the Town of Friday Harbor.

According to Land Bank Director Lincoln Bormann, the town would contribute \$400,000 toward the purchase and the guild would contribute \$200,000 and they would share title. The Land Bank would help finance the deal by paying \$400,000 for a historical preservation easement and would likely front the guild its portion of the purchase, and then be reimbursed sometime in the future.

That's if all goes according to plan, Bormann cautioned. The guild, he noted, has yet to finish its feasibility study of using the property for a permanent farmers market and a potential purchase at this time is "far from certain." Still, the guild has targeted the property as its preferred location for such a market and its acquisition would assist the

Land Bank in furthering its mission of preserving local agricultural land by helping local farmers have a place to sell their produce.

The Friday Harbor Electric site is historically significant. It was originally the Boede Cement Plant and dates to the 1890s, according to the town Historical Preservation Office.

"The last industrial building still standing in Friday Harbor, this barn-like building ... is believed to have been in operation as early as the 1890s," according to [HistoricFridayHarbor.org](http://HistoricFridayHarbor.org).

"Little is known about Boede, however, the plant was later acquired by A.J. (Alvie) Paxson, an adventurer who took off for the Klondike, and recorded his Gold Rush adventures in a series of colorful letters published in the Islander newspaper. After his return, Paxson's Friday Harbor Brick and Tile Company produced the distinctive cement blocks that were used to build Friday Harbor Town Hall and other local commercial buildings still in use today. Samples of the company's product decorate the masonry portions of the front and rear facades of the building.

"A.J. Paxson went on to be mayor of Friday Harbor from 1928-1930."

The public restroom in Sunshine Alley, formerly a heritage house, was built of cement blocks made at this plant. That fact compelled the town to convert the existing building, rather than tear it down and build a new restroom building.

The Land Bank's contribution toward the purchase of the Erickson property is one of six new projects approved Tuesday by the County Council.

Included on the list:

-- The likely purchase for \$2.1 million of 200 acres in San Juan Valley, formerly owned by Wade Sundstrom, in partnership with the San Juan Preservation Trust. The property would be offered for resale under the Land Bank's conservation buyers' program, with conservation easements attached.

-- Purchase of a historical preservation easement at the San Juan Historical Museum on Price Street for \$200,000. The museum would use the funds to restore the 1894 King Farm House, the centerpiece of the museum grounds. After restoration, the museum would use the remainder of the funds to establish a maintenance fund for the building.

-- Purchase of three conservation easements: one at Heritage Farm on San Juan Island, and another two on Lopez Island.