

Intro to Voluntary and Incentive Tools



This series of fact sheets presents land protection and conservation **tools** that are voluntary, incentive-based, and/or regulatory. A resource listing is also provided at the end of this Tool Kit to help communities achieve their conservation goals.

The first section of the Tool Kit describes voluntary land preservation techniques. As one might expect, the public is supportive of voluntary land preservation. This support undoubtedly stems from the nature of the transaction, which depends on a landowner who is willing to sell the land or its development rights.

The second section of the Tool Kit presents regulatory approaches to land preservation. Regulatory approaches can be controversial because municipal authority enforces restrictions on land use. This section also discusses land preservation incentives. As the name implies, these approaches provide incentives to developers and landowners to make land preservation choices that they might not make without the incentive.

The traits or features of the land we value (i.e. agricultural, historic, recreational, scenic, environmental, etc.) can be protected in a variety of ways. This section describes five voluntary means of land preservation:

1. Fee Interest,
2. Lease to Purchase Contract,
3. Conservation Easements,
4. Purchase of Development Rights,
5. Voluntary Transfer of Development Rights.



Stewardship of Conserved Lands

Municipalities and land trusts take on the responsibility to enforce in perpetuity the protections called for by conservation easements and fee interest land purchases. The costs associated with this stewardship can vary widely. At a minimum, annual monitoring visits are required. Of course, when violations are discovered, they must be remediated. Additional factors affecting the cost of stewardship include issues such as:

- the size and terrain of the protected property,
- the land use of adjoining properties,
- the availability and accuracy of mapping and land surveys, etc.

In the case of fee interest properties, management plans must be prepared and implemented. Public access to the protected land is an element of the management plan that has a large variable impact on the cost of stewardship.

Stewardship of properties with a historic preservation values warrant special considerations. For example, care must be taken when providing public access to the property, so that the historic aspects of the land we seek to protect are not adversely affected in the process. Stewardship of historic properties also has to protect against other threats such as looting, vandalism, unintentional damage, and environmental hazards.



Land trusts are available to assist municipalities and property owners with the technical aspects of implementing voluntary land conservation. Land trusts can also accept land and conservation easements from municipalities. A local government would negotiate this type of transfer to take advantage of the land trust's expertise in stewardship and management of protected lands. Active land trusts in the region providing these services and protecting thousands of acres, include:

- Saratoga PLAN (Preserving Land and Nature), in Saratoga County,
- Open Space Institute, based in New York City,
- Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park, in the sandplains of the Town of Wilton.



Saratoga P.L.A.N. (preserving land and nature) is a nonprofit conservation organization working to protect our environment, economy and way of life for present and future generations in Saratoga County. As a land trust, Saratoga P.L.A.N. protects farmland, forestland, waters, natural areas, trail corridors, and historic sites. As a community partner, Saratoga P.L.A.N. provides technical assistance to municipalities to balance growth and conservation and to foster regional cooperation through community planning and implementation. This fact sheet is one of a series entitled "Tools for Community Planning and Conservation." Other titles from the series can be found on Saratoga P.L.A.N.'s website: www.saratogaplan.org.