Purchased Easements

In Baltimore County, programs like Rural Legacy and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation provide funding to land trusts and county/state agencies to pay landowners for placing a conservation easement on their property. The value of these easements is typically several thousand dollars per acre, but varies depending on the land's characteristics. These programs have specific eligibility requirements and are competitive. Purchased easements require approval by several agencies. Generally, the purchase of a conservation easement takes a year or more from the time you sign an agreement of sale. You may have to pay capital gains tax on the payment for your easement, which should be discussed with your financial advisor.

Funding Sources

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
DNR funds and administers Program Open Space Stateside.

Baltimore County Department of Planning
Baltimore County funds and administers the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) Program and the Baltimore County Agricultural Protection Program.

Local Land Trusts
The land trusts in Baltimore County administer the Rural Legacy Program in designated Rural Legacy Areas (RLAs) with funds provided by DNR & Baltimore County.

- The Piney Run RLA is administered by the Land Preservation Trust.
- The Manor RLA is administered by the Manor Conservancy.
- The Gunpowder Valley RLA is administered by the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy.
- The Long Green Valley RLA is administered by the Long Green Land Trust.
- The Coastal RLA is administered by Baltimore County & the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy.

Purchased Easements

Program Details

Program Open Space Stateside
To be eligible for Program Open Space, the majority of the land must be located in a Targeted Ecological Area. Properties that have significant ecological resources and allow public access are more competitive under this program. Compensation is established using a formula that is based on the land's characteristics. The maximum payment under this formula cannot exceed 75% of the land's fair market value. The appraisals for this are paid for by DNR. There is no deadline for applying for Program Open Space Stateside, but the availability of funding may be dependent on annual cycles.

MALPF
To be eligible for MALPF, the property must be at least 50 acres or adjacent to preserved land and meet soil requirements. Properties that have significant agricultural resources are more competitive under this program. Compensation is based on the fair market agricultural value of the land, which requires an appraisal paid for by MALPF. The maximum payment cannot exceed 75% of the land's fair market agricultural value. If a survey is required, it will be paid for by the landowner. The deadline for applying for MALPF is typically in the spring of each year.

Baltimore County Ag Protection
To be eligible for Baltimore County Ag Protection, the property must be at least 20 acres if adjacent to preserved land or at least 50 acres otherwise, be located in an Ag Preservation Protection Area, and meet soil requirements. Properties that have significant agricultural resources are more competitive under this program. Compensation is established using a formula that is based on the land's characteristics. The maximum payment under this formula is based on the average fair market agricultural value of properties in the county, based on MALPF appraisals. If a survey is required, it will be paid for by the landowner. Application periods are announced as funding is available.

Rural Legacy
To be eligible for Rural Legacy, the property must be located in a Rural Legacy Area. Properties that have significant natural features are more competitive under this program. Compensation is established using a formula that is based on the land's characteristics. The maximum payment under this formula cannot exceed 75% of the average fair market agricultural value of properties in the county, based on MALPF appraisals. If a survey is required, it will be paid for by DNR, or by the landowner for projects funded by Baltimore County. There is no deadline for applying for Rural Legacy, but the availability of funding may be dependent on annual cycles.

The information contained in this document is a simplified overview of the major funding sources and programs available in Baltimore County. It is not a comprehensive list of options or complete explanation of all requirements for participating in these programs. Confirming eligibility will require consultation with a local land trust or county/state agency.
For more information or additional resources, please email admin@bcltc.org.