

Cumberland County Forum on Local Land Conservation

- White Paper Summary -

This educational forum aimed to present successful models of local land conservation funding programs from county, municipal and land trust perspectives in Pennsylvania, seeking to inform and inspire elected officials, municipal/county staff, and nonprofit partners in Cumberland County.

Event Occurred:

October 2nd, 2024

at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Event Sponsored by:



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Executive Summary

The Cumberland County Forum on Local Land Conservation (Forum) was an educational and networking forum that aimed to present successful models of local land conservation funding programs from county, municipal, and land trust perspectives in Pennsylvania (PA). The Forum sought to inform elected officials, municipal/county staff, and conservation nonprofit partners about viable funding streams and programs that could support new action in Cumberland County to conserve open space and improve quality of life.

The Forum was publicly advertised with targeted outreach to municipal and county leaders within Cumberland County. Over 40 stakeholders attended the Forum, which took place at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA on October 2nd, 2024. Attendees included representation from local government; Federal, state, and nonprofit funding partners; and nonprofit conservation partners. Six speakers presented on the importance of land preservation planning and programs in Cumberland County, benefits of open space preservation; Federal, state, and nonprofit funding opportunities; and on both county and municipal perspectives on successful open space funding programs.

Stephanie Williams (Senior Planning Manager with the Cumberland County Planning Department) presented on Cumberland County's 30-year history of conservation work and its present work on its Land Partnerships Program (LPP). Stephanie described various funding sources used in Cumberland County, to date, for open space preservation. She reviewed the process for development of the 2023-24 LPP revision and explained its present draft goals. Data was presented on stakeholder feedback work as well as the history and status of land preservation and outdoor recreation opportunities in Cumberland County.

Ryan Szuch (President of Grow Conservation LLC) presented on both the benefits of open space preservation and the range of funding opportunities available in Cumberland County for open space preservation. Ryan characterized five categories of benefits of open space as ecological, water, outdoor recreation, human health & quality of life, and economic value. His slides delved into more detail as to how open space supports each of these benefit categories, providing supporting statistics and data graphs. Then, Ryan summarized funding opportunities that would complement potential local funding sources. He reviewed Commonwealth, Federal, other government, and nongovernmental organization sources, taking time to introduce several audience members that represented these funding entities.

Sean Kenny (Executive Director of Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County) presented on open space protection efforts in York County. He first reviewed the process, members, and goals of the York County Land Protection Committee. Sean explained public engagement efforts guided by the Committee and shared results of public survey work to gauge public interest and support for a dedicated York County fund for land protection. The initiative resulted in public policy action in 2020, including a new property tax increase for a dedicated land protection fund and formalization of the Committee via County resolution. This has resulted in approximately \$2.5 million, annually, dedicated to land protection in York County, through which county partners are preserving approximately 2,500-3,000 acres per year.

David Stauffer (Director of Chester County Parks + Preservation) presented on Chester County's approach to open space preservation. David's program works across agriculture, open lands, and parks + trails domains. Rapid loss of land to development in Chester County was the driving force for creation of the County's land preservation program, which has been highly successful, preserving 65,200 acres of farmland and open space from its inception in 1989 through 2024. Through investment of \$244 million in County funds, Chester County has leveraged an additional \$478 million from other funding sources. David views the key components of Chester County's success to be consistent public policy, dedicated funding, strong partnerships, strong underlying land use planning, and unwavering public support. Robust municipal outreach has also been critical in the County's implementation of its program.

Laura Brown (Township Supervisor in Silver Spring Township of Cumberland County) also described rapid development as the impetus for the Township's initiative to create a land preservation program. Silver Spring Township passed an open space referendum in 2013 with a 60% "Yes" vote. A Land Preservation Review Board (LPRB) was then established to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on purchasing decisions. Laura provided her view on eight keys to successful referenda, which included good timing and scheduling, public and leader education, and preparation for potential opposition to the measure. Since program inception in 2014, the Township has preserved fifteen properties for over 777 acres, and it has twelve more properties in its pipeline that would preserve approximately 830 acres more. The Township has developed an incentive payment program in cooperation with the County to supplement the amount that can be paid to farmers considering agricultural land preservation. Laura closed her presentation by reviewing WeConservePA data that showed only four municipalities west of Chester County have successfully passed open space referendums, with Silver Spring Township being one of the four.

Todd Sampsell (Vice President of Conservation at Natural Lands) presented on Natural Lands' approach to assisting municipalities with open space referenda. He first explained the basis for local open space preservation programs as enabled in Pennsylvania law. Todd then explained four key tasks in working toward a successful open space referendum as being feasibility research of financial and tax implications, strong collaboration with township leadership and staff on ballot language, detailed mapping of conservation opportunities with the municipality, and an effective campaign for public outreach. Todd also reviewed some of the critical actions needed after a referendum passes. These include passing an ordinance on the financing, creating an Open Space Review Board, and creating a set of evaluation criteria to apply to potential land/easement acquisitions. Todd also touched on Natural Lands' approach to the landowner outreach to begin the actual process of land protection.

The organizing committee for the Forum created a number of online and PDF resources (i.e., this White Paper and its hyperlinks and Appendices) to disseminate the knowledge shared at the Forum. The committee hopes that this information will be shared throughout Cumberland County and beyond to stimulate initiatives for additional dedicated local open space funding.

Introduction

The Cumberland County Forum on Local Land Conservation (Forum) was an educational and networking forum that aimed to present successful models of local land conservation funding programs from county, municipal, and land trust perspectives in Pennsylvania (PA). The Forum sought to inform elected officials, municipal/county staff, and conservation nonprofit partners about viable funding streams and programs that could support new action in Cumberland County to conserve open space and improve quality of life.

The Forum was organized and sponsored by Cumberland Conservation Collaborative, Central Pennsylvania Conservancy, Cumberland County, Grow Conservation LLC, Dickinson College – Center for Sustainability Education, and South Mountain Partnership.

The organizing committee and stakeholders of Cumberland County recognize that conservation of open space brings a wide range of benefits to Cumberland County, including:

- balancing smart growth by helping the county sustain its agricultural heritage and rural character;
- providing opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation;
- sustaining crucial habitat for plants and wildlife and maintaining high water quality;
- mitigating effects of excessive heat and heightened flood risk; and
- delivering economic benefits and jobs in agriculture, wood products, and tourism.

The committee further recognized that there is an unprecedented level of private and public funding that could be leveraged within Cumberland County communities via increased local investment in land conservation. Federal agencies are offering historical levels of funding for land conservation. Often a funding match is needed to take full advantage of Federal, state, and private sources of open space preservation funding. The availability of dedicated local (county or municipal) open space preservation dollars can help local governments emphasize their own priorities for land conservation as well as help fully capitalize on Federal, state, and private funding sources.

The organizing committee coalesced around the idea to bring experts in local open space funding from around the Commonwealth to Cumberland County to educate and energize the community regarding the potential benefit of increased local open space funding.

Event Agenda

1. **Welcome** - Jason Beale, Executive Director, Central Pennsylvania Conservancy
2. **Cumberland County - Land Partnerships 3.0** - Stephanie Williams, Senior Planning Manager, Cumberland County Planning Department
3. **Benefits of Open Space Preservation and Funding Opportunities** - Ryan Szuch, President, Grow Conservation LLC
4. **County Perspective: Protecting Open Space in York County** - Sean Kenny, Executive Director, Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County
5. **County Perspective: Chester County's Approach to Open Space Preservation**- David T. Stauffer, Director of Chester County Parks and Preservation
6. **Municipal Perspective: Silver Spring Township Land Preservation Program** - Laura Brown, Township Supervisor, Silver Spring Township
7. **Municipal Open Space Referenda** - Todd Sampsell, Vice President of Conservation, Natural Lands
8. **Thank you and closing** - Anna Yelk, President, Cumberland Conservation Collaborative
9. **Networking and Refreshments**



Pictured – Left to Right (back row): Sean Kenny, David Stauffer, Todd Sampsell, Stephanie Williams, Ryan Szuch, Jason Beale, Cameron Weiser; Left to Right (front row): Laura Brown, Anna Yelk

Attendees

The Forum was publicly advertised with targeted outreach to municipal and county leaders within Cumberland County.

Over 40 stakeholders attended the Forum, which took place at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA on October 2nd, 2024. Attendees included representation from the following types of entities:

- County and municipal government;
- Federal, state, regional, and nonprofit funding partners;
- Nonprofit conservation partners; and
- Conservation stakeholders from nearby counties.

Presentation Content Summary

Cumberland County - Land Partnerships 3.0

Presented by: Stephanie Williams, Senior Planning Manager, Cumberland County Planning Department

Stephanie reviewed the timeline of key milestones in Cumberland County's 30 years of land conservation work. The county is presently engaged in a revision of its Land Partnerships Plan. Cumberland County's farmland preservation program is presently ranked seventh in PA, with approximately 24,500 acres preserved across approximately 220 farms. The county has the goal of reaching 30,000 acres by 2030.

30+ years of Conservation!

- 1995 Conservation & Open Space Task Force
- 2000 Countywide Greenway Study
- 2006 1st Open Space & Greenway Plan, Land Partnerships
- 2013 Land Partnerships 2.0
- 2024 Land Partnerships 3.0



The Land Partnerships Program was originally created with a 2006 bond issuance of \$1 million for a pilot program. The county budget also contributes Act 13 funds to the program. Thus far, total investment has been \$15.6 million. On average, each county dollar leverages \$6 in Federal, state, local, or private funds. The county also allocated \$3 million in Federal American Rescue Act funds that were consistent with the goals of the Land Partnerships Program, enabling the county to execute eight major conservation and outdoor recreation projects.

Stephanie then overviewed the process the county has employed for the 2023-2024 Land Partnerships Plan revision. The process has included data analysis, needs assessment, stakeholder engagement, and development of implementation actions and a funding strategy. The stakeholder outreach was extensive, involving a study committee, public forums, key person interviews, and surveys of municipalities, nongovernmental organizations, and the community.

The draft Land Partnerships Plan 3.0 goals are as follows:

- 1) *Preserve the agricultural lands of Cumberland County and support the long-term viability of the agricultural economy;*
- 2) *Conserve the significant natural resources of Cumberland County;*
- 3) *Provide parkland for the recreation needs of County residents;*
- 4) *Provide trails to connect citizens with destinations throughout the County;*
- 5) *Create a comprehensive greenways system throughout Cumberland County;*
- 6) *Cumberland County's developed communities actively implement the principles of Land*
- 7) *Partnerships; and*
- 8) *Cumberland County landowners, municipalities, and non-profit organizations have a clear understanding of land conservation and preservation options and opportunities.*

Potential action and strategies for the Plan include acquisitions and park development, improved planning, increased education efforts, and expanded partnerships. The county is examining financing methods and various funding scenarios to support the Plan.

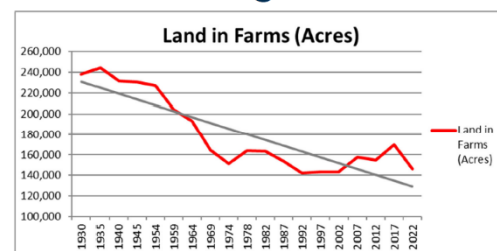
The community survey regarding funding priorities for conservation and recreation revealed the strongest support for open space preservation. Other findings from stakeholder engagement were that the farming economy is increasingly challenging while agricultural land faces high development pressure. It is recognized that land values are escalating throughout much of the county. The general public is often disconnected from the importance of agriculture in the county. Increased support for the agricultural community is needed, especially for young and beginning farmers, and more education is needed for farmers to appreciate the value of preserving farmland. Meanwhile, agriculture continues to have a significant economic impact for the county, with Cumberland County being eighth in the Commonwealth in agricultural production. Farmland preservation is an economic driver, producing \$1.62-\$2.00 in economic activity for each dollar invested in farmland preservation.

Community Survey Funding Priorities for Conservation & Recreation

Category	Weighted Score
Open Space	3.14
Farmland	2.79
Trails	2.08
Parks	1.99

Weighted Scores are an average of individual ratings on a scale of 1-4, with 5 being most important.

2022 Census of Agriculture



2017-2022 Farmland decreased 23,265 acres!!

Community feedback on open space and natural lands preservation was positive. There is a sense that preservation efforts could benefit from enhanced coordination across the county. However, additional funding is needed for land acquisition and maintenance of already preserved open space. The community would like to see more interconnected systems of open space throughout the county, and a buffering to direct future development away from existing natural lands. There is some desire for a low- or minimal-impact park system within Cumberland County.

Community feedback on parks, trails, and greenways indicated strong support for the Land Partnerships Grants Programs. Trail improvements could include better trail connections and greater leadership on regional trail initiatives. The feedback also revealed that there is a public desire for trails that serve all ages, abilities, and cultures. The community also feels that parks and trails development should be a key part of economic development strategies.

Stephanie described the land use data within Cumberland County, with 22% preserved, 20% developed, and 58% undeveloped but unprotected. The county is working on an online, public-access, geospatial (i.e., mapping) tool to show land use patterns and priority areas for preservation. Such a tool was identified as a need through the community engagement work.

Status of Land Protection

Type	Acres (% of County)
Federal	3,693
State	46,927 (13%)
County	900
Municipal/NGOs	2,737
Total Parks & Natural Areas	54,252 (15%)
Preserved Farmland (County Program)	24,016
Total Preserved Land	78,268 (22%)

Stephanie showed data that suggests that Cumberland County is not where it needs to be with regard to parkland per population compared to model conditions for a community. A study by the Trust for Public Land, commissioned by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) on recreation access indicates that Cumberland County is lagging the statewide average for having a park within a 10-minute walk of every resident (Statewide = 53%, Cumberland County = 43%), but the county is above the statewide average for a 10-minute drive to a park and for a 10-minute drive to fishing/boating access points.

Parkland Goals					
	Population	2024 Status Quo 9.3 acres/ 1,000 pop.	(Acres in Deficit)	Model Community 15 acres/ 1,000 pop.	(Acres in Deficit)
2020 Census	259,469	2,408	--	3,892	(1,484)
2030 Projection	291,441	2,704	(296)	4,371	(1,963)
2040 Projection	321,933	2,987	(579)	4,828	(2,420)

Lastly, Stephanie overviewed the next steps for the Land Partnerships Plan 3.0. These are to finalize the Plan document, begin to build support for implementation and the funding strategy, perhaps do additional community polling in 2025, and then move toward adoption of the Plan. She emphasized the need for support from the community, such as the stakeholders in the room.

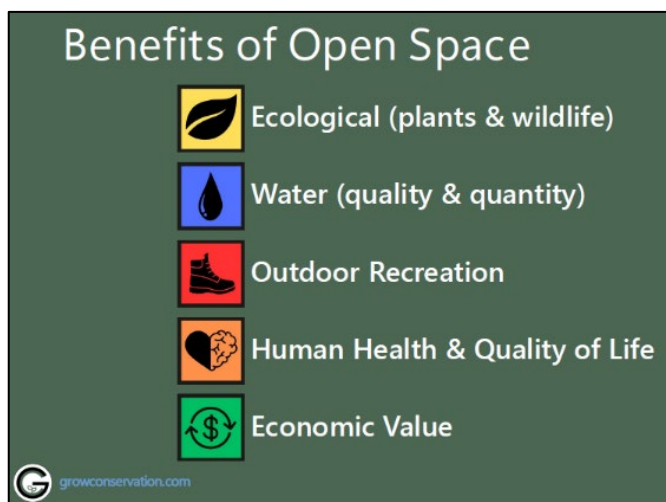
Benefits of Open Space Preservation and Funding Opportunities

Presented by: Ryan Szuch, President, Grow Conservation LLC

Ryan began by presenting five primary categories of the benefits of open space:

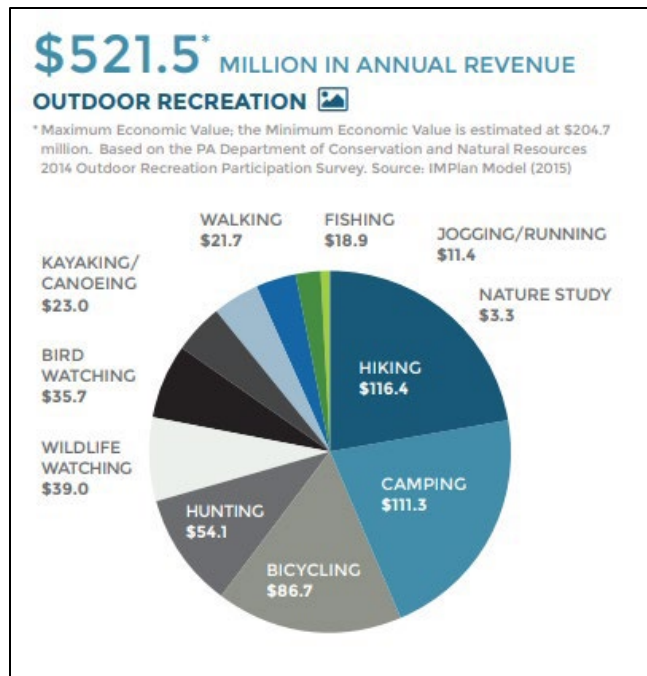
1. Ecological (plants & wildlife)
2. Water (quality & quantity)
3. Outdoor Recreation
4. Human Health & Quality of Life
5. Economic Value

He then conducted an audience poll, asking attendees to indicate their top priority among these five categories. The visual assessment of audience preference indicated that Ecological, Outdoor Recreation, and Human Health & Quality of Life were top priorities of the group. Ryan then delved deeper into each of these five benefits categories.



Ecological benefits include plant and wildlife habitat, pollination, climate change mitigation, and intrinsic or existence value. PA Bureau of Forestry research indicates that provision of plant and wildlife habitat is the top held value of public state forest land in PA. Pollinators, which are supported by natural and agricultural open space, are critical for both ecological and economic reasons. Three quarters of the world's flowering plants and about 35% of the world's food crops depend on pollinators. The 2015 Return on Environment Study for Cumberland County estimated that open space provides \$94 million of value in avoided costs through carbon storage and sequestration. Ryan explained the concept of intrinsic or existence value, which reflects the desire of some individuals to preserve and ensure the continued existence of certain plant or wildlife species and their environments. He presented PA Bureau of Forestry research that demonstrated that green space is used just a few times a year or less often by 73% of Pennsylvanians, yet forests were rated as "very important" by 70% of Pennsylvanians – suggesting that people do not need to visit natural spaces to recognize their importance.

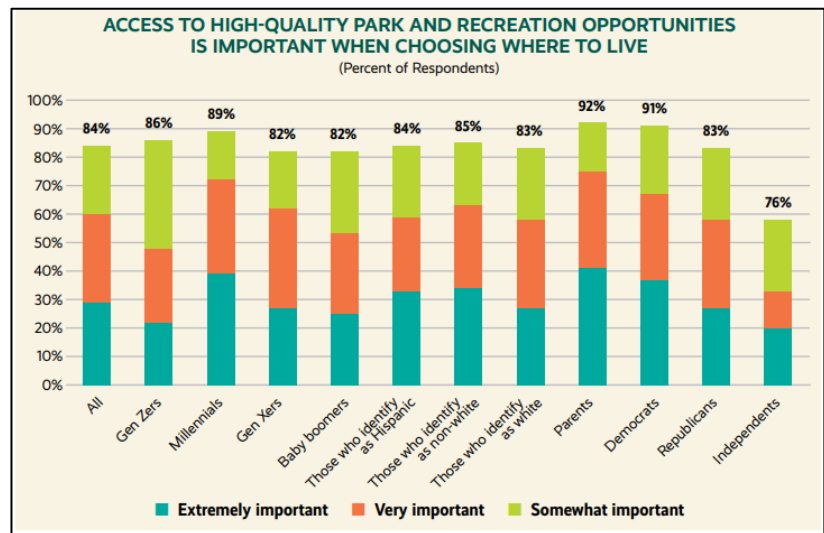
Water quality is improved by open space preservation, and water quality helps support aquatic life and other wildlife. Additionally, quality open space saves treatment costs for human drinking water supply. Open space also positively affects water quantity in two ways. First, open space helps sustain groundwater recharge and support sufficient stream flows. Second, the open space helps infiltrate water and thereby minimize flood volumes and damage from flooding. Ryan described several data points from the PA Department of Environmental Protection that indicate challenges persist with water quality in Cumberland County.



Ryan then described the diverse array of outdoor recreational pursuits that are popular in Cumberland County, as supported by research in the Return on Environment Study. That study indicates that 39% of southcentral PA residents recreate outdoors two or more times per week. He also related an anecdote of PA DCNR Secretary, Cindy Adams Dunn, suggesting that outdoor recreation acts as a gateway for people to care about conservation. Ryan showed maps and data from a Trust for Public Land study that demonstrates present shortcomings in outdoor recreation asset availability to residents of Cumberland County.

*Graphic Source: Kittatinny Ridge – 2015 – Return on Environment – Cumberland County

Ryan identified four key human health and quality of life benefits of open space as being: avoidance of healthcare costs, physical health benefits, mental health benefits, and attraction and retention of residents. Relying on graphics shared by Firefly Outdoor + Economics Consultancy (Firefly), Ryan showed that access to high-quality park and recreation opportunities is a driving force behind where people choose to live as well as talent and business attraction.



*Graphic Source: National Recreation and Park Association

Ryan then focused on multiple types of economic benefits from open space: agricultural and forest products, the outdoor recreation economy, increased economic development, the values of ecosystem services, and reinvestment of conservation dollars into the economy. Again relying on data shared by Firefly, Ryan showed income and jobs impacts of the outdoor recreation economy, such as \$16.9

billion statewide in total direct and indirect economic impact. He also shared a graph from Firefly, showing that quality of life (including outdoor recreation opportunities) correlates more strongly with population and business growth than does quality of business environment (e.g., low taxes, favorable regulatory environment).

Factor	Recent State-wide Data	Cumberland County 2015 ROE Study
PA's Core Outdoor Economy (total direct and indirect economic impact)	\$16.9 billion or 1.8% of GDP (40% increase since 2017)	\$521.5 million
Business Creation (businesses directly supporting outdoor economy)	7,730	not available
Employment (jobs)	251,000	6,656
Employment (salary and wages generated)	\$8.6 billion	not available
Tax Revenue Derived (state and local)	\$1.9 billion	\$38.9 million

*Data Source for Recent State-wide Data: Firefly Outdoor + Economics Consultancy

The presentation then transitioned to open space funding opportunities. Ryan provided a brief overview of the following funding sources that could be applied in Cumberland County, in most instances introducing an audience member from the funding organization that was present at the Forum. The organizing committee also provided a hand-out that summarized key characteristics of these funding sources (Appendix A).

1) Commonwealth Sources

- a) PA DCNR – Community Conservation Partnerships Program
- b) PA Department of Community and Economic Development – Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program

2) Federal Sources

- a) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Highlands Conservation Act Grant Program
- b) U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - i) Agricultural Land Easements
 - ii) Wetland Reserve Easements
 - iii) Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Kittatinny Ridge Project

3) Other Government Sources

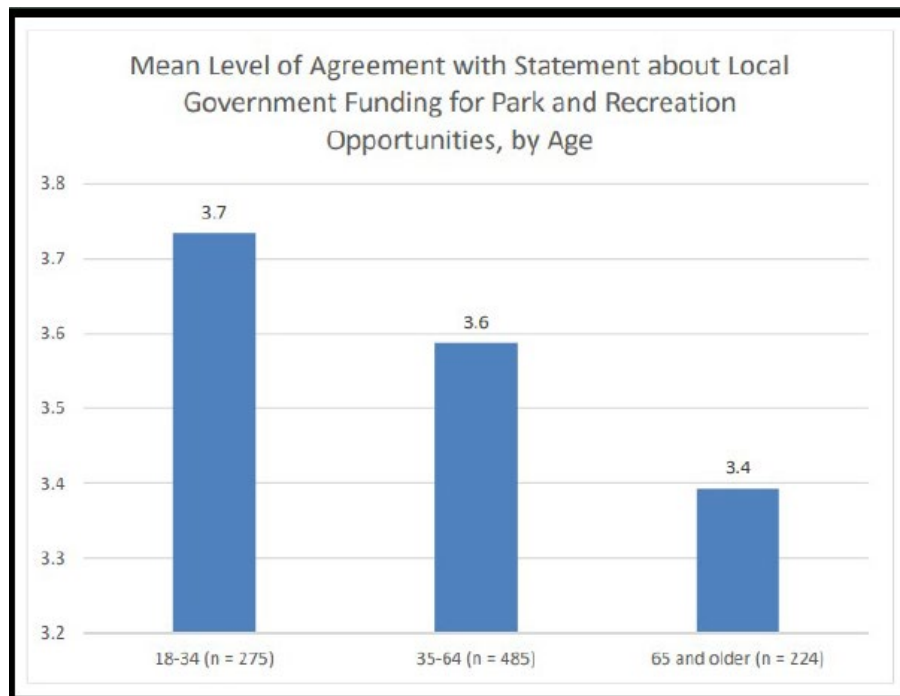
- a) Susquehanna River Basin Commission – Consumptive Use Mitigation Grant Program
- b) Cumberland County
 - i) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
 - ii) Land Partnerships Grant Program

- 4) Nongovernmental Organization Sources
- a) Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Wild East Action Fund
 - b) Open Space Institute – Appalachian Funds
 - c) National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – WILD Program

Ryan then polled the audience for other sources that attendees could suggest. Audience members suggested the following additional sources:

- South Mountain Partnership Mini-Grant Program (<https://www.southmountainpartnership.org/our-work/grants/mini-grants/>)
- Partnership for Better Health (<https://forbetterhealthpa.org/what-we-fund/>).

Ryan concluded his presentation by showing a graph from the last Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan research showing strong state-wide support for the phrase, *“My municipality should have a permanent source of funding for park and recreation paid for by local tax revenues,”* and suggested that is the reason we are all at the Forum that night.



Values represent weighted average on a scale from 0-5, with 5 indicated the strongest agreement.

Protecting Open Space in York County

Presented by: Sean Kenny, Executive Director, Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County

Sean began by presenting an overview of the York County Land Protection Committee. The Committee's original process spanned four years from 2016-2019 and involved the production of several planning and outreach materials as well as efforts to identify funding for an expanded land protection program. The members of the Committee were the following organizations:

- York County Ag Land Preserve Board
- Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County
- York County Parks
- York County Conservation District
- York County Planning Commission
- York County Administrator



Goal of the Land Protection Committee

Create a long term viable funding stream to protect and preserve land through purchase or permanent easement. A stable and predictable funding source would be used to create a coordinated and connected landscape of protected or preserved lands, as well as implement the York County Comprehensive Plan by preserving our agricultural economy, providing land for recreation, preserving natural habitat, and protecting our waterways.

A critical step for the Committee was to agree upon a shared definition of open space. The Committee arrived upon this definition:

Open space is publicly or privately-owned land and water that is:

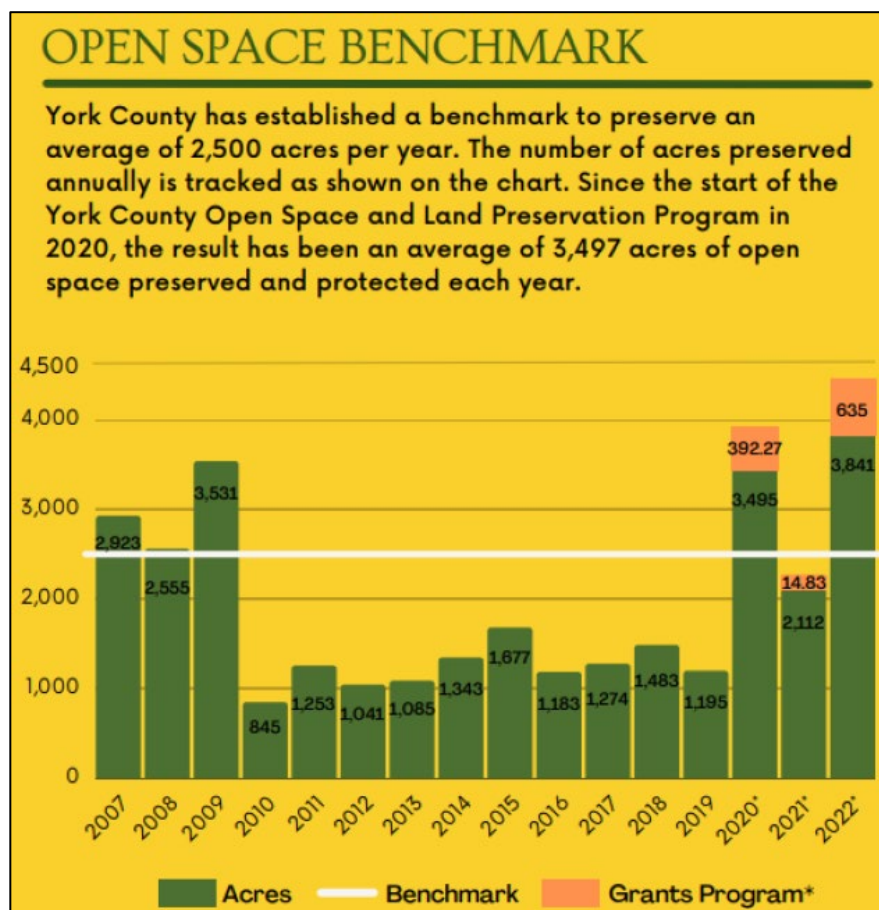
- *Predominantly in a natural state*
- *Dedicated to providing areas for passive or active recreation*
- *Agricultural lands privately owned and managed for food and fiber production*
- *Lands protecting natural (water, air, minerals, forests, wildlife) or historic resources*
- *Lands preserving scenic quality and maintaining community character*

As York County developed the idea of dedicated funds for open space preservation, it engaged the Arthur J. Gladfelter Institute for Public Policy at York College to conduct public surveys to gauge public interest and support for dedicated open space funding. The County also engaged GAVIN Advertising to assist with a public education and media campaign to increase support for the initiative. This campaign produced a wide range of outreach efforts and media, including a social media campaign, print media, a video, outreach to public officials, and local television and radio broadcasting companies. The Committee also built a custom website dedicated to the effort: www.yorkopenspace.org.

The survey work by York College included two components: a voluntary online survey and a statistically-valid public opinion poll or control survey. The voluntary survey was distributed through social media and the website and shared widely to stakeholder groups. There were 1,750 respondents to the voluntary survey. The control survey was mailed to 1,500 randomly-selected households in York County, and 450 of the surveys were returned. Below is a sampling of key findings from the survey work:

- At least 10% visited open space daily
- 86% viewed open spaces as “very important” to their families
- 74% were very concerned about losing open space to development
- 72% said a dedicated funding stream should be identified
- 85% would be willing to contribute additional tax dollars to open space protection

This initiative resulted in public policy action in 2020. The York County Commissioners included dedicated funding for open space and land protection in the 2020 County budget. The York County Land Protection Committee was formalized through a County resolution. Property taxes were increased 1/10 of a mill (0.01%) to fund the land protection program, resulting in approximately \$2.5 million, annually, dedicated to land protection. This new funding has allowed the County to typically meet its target of 2,500-3,000 acres of newly protected land, annually.



Chester County's Approach to Open Space Preservation

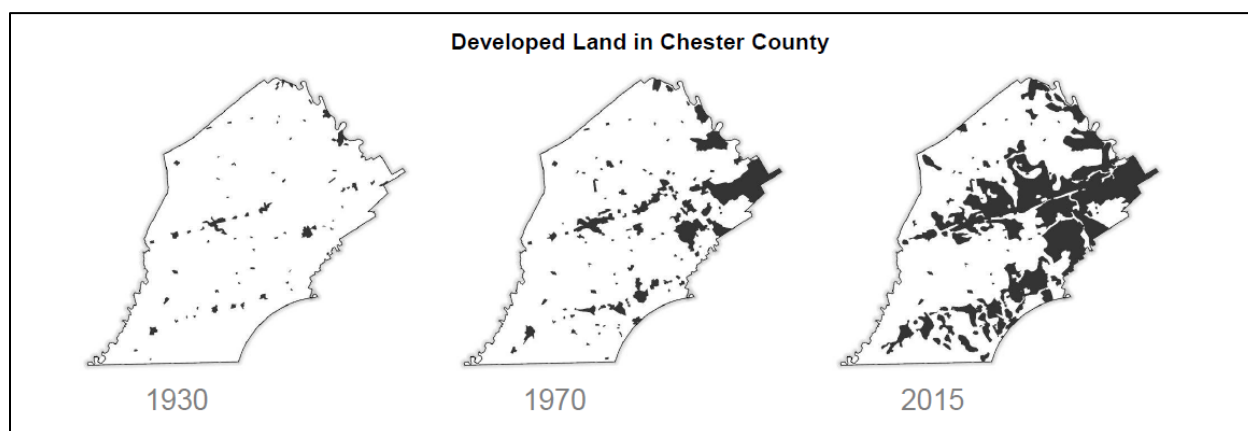
Presented by: David T. Stauffer, Director of Chester County Parks + Preservation

David began with the mission statement of Chester County's Parks + Preservation Program:

The purpose of Chester County Parks + Preservation is to provide preservation, recreation, education, and stewardship services to the residents and visitors of Chester County so they can connect with natural and cultural resources and thrive in a sustainable healthy community.

The Program works across agriculture, open lands, and parks + trails. In the agriculture domain, the County works to preserve agricultural lands to support local farmers, protect natural and historic resources through prime farmland preservation, and strengthen the agricultural economy. In the open lands domain, the County partners with land trusts and its municipalities to permanently preserve open lands, protect natural resources, and provide public access to nature. In the parks + trails domain, the County engages with the community to be out in nature through a variety of programs and events that promote health and wellness while educating and preserving natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources.

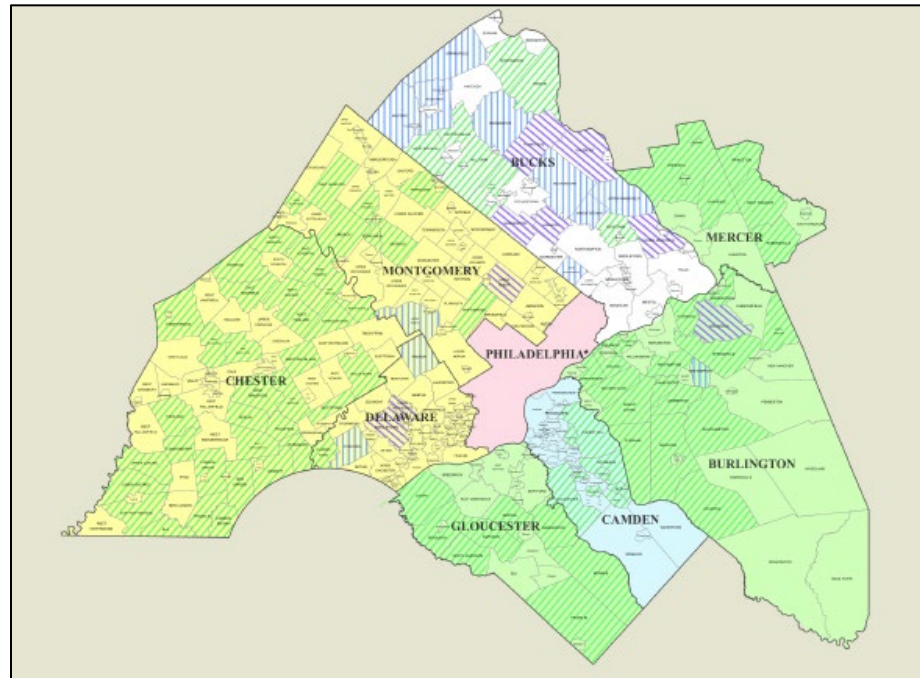
David showed a time series of maps of developed land in Chester County. The loss of open space to development was the driving force behind the creation of Chester County's land protection program. By the 1980s, Chester County was losing about one farm per week to development.



The County counts a variety of types of preserved open space towards its land protection goals, including public parks, land owned or eased by land trusts, preserved farmland, and preserved homeowners' association land. Through 2024, Chester County has invested \$116.5 million in farmland preservation, resulting in conservation easements on 581 farms for an area of 44,427 acres. The Preservation Partnership Program, geared towards land trusts and municipalities, has invested \$127.7 million and protected 20,773 acres, since 1989. In sum, \$244 million in dedicated funding resources for open space preservation by Chester County have leveraged an additional \$478 million from other funding sources.

David attributed the Chester County program's success to four main factors. First, the County has experienced good consistency in public policy and dedicated funding. Second, they have developed strong partnerships with the local land trust community, the County's municipalities, and private landowners. Third, the open space protection program is supported by very strong underlying land use planning. Lastly, the open space protection efforts have continued to experience unwavering public support. Even in their latest survey work, the County found "open space & environment" to be the number one priority for county residents, receiving 43% of respondent choices for top priority, amongst a half dozen other possible answer choices, such as vibrant economy (11%) and healthy lifestyle (9%).

David presented this map of locally-funded open space programs in the Philadelphia region as of 2022. The variety of cross-hatched municipalities have some form of dedicated municipal open space preservation funding, whether through bond, tax, or both, which compliment county-level dedicated funds in Chester County.



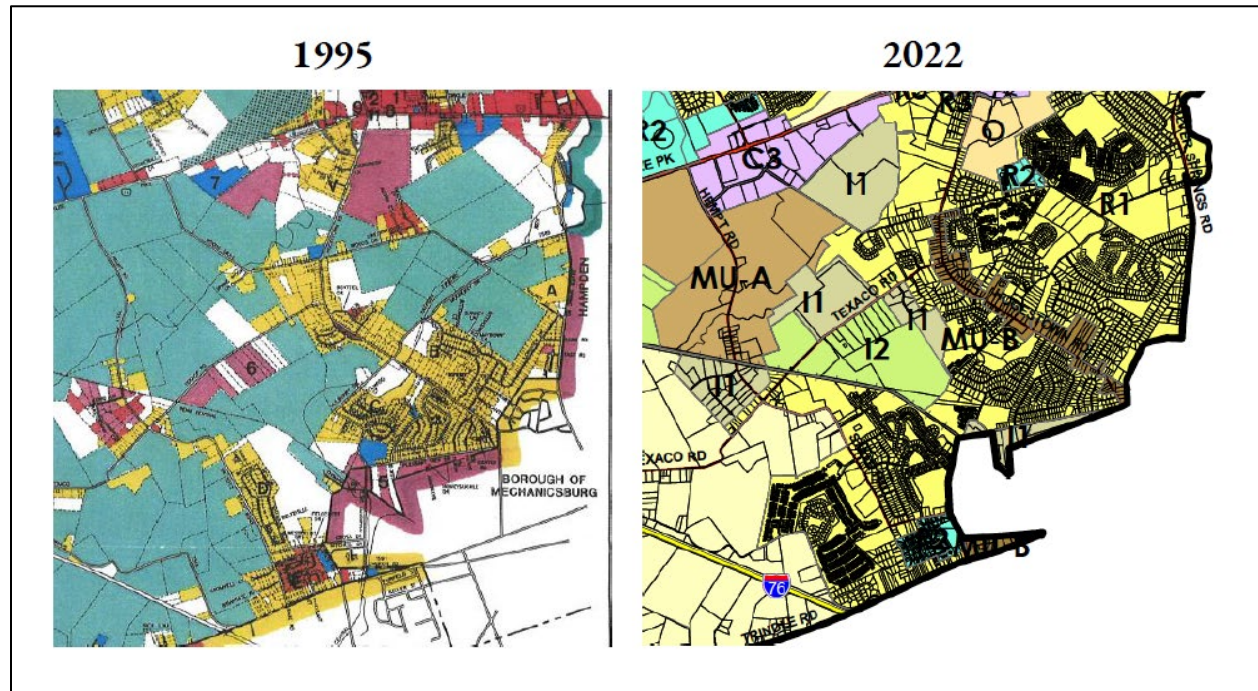
Chester County uses a variety of tools to implement its open space preservation programs. It has developed the Protected Open Space Tracking (POST) map to track progress and types of preservation. The County uses land use planning and prioritization systems to map viable farmland, conservation clusters and corridors, and access levels to parks. It also created a Return on Environment Study to assess the economic value of protected open space in Chester County.

Municipal outreach has been a key component of the County's implementation. The County Planning Commission developed a dashboard or score card that it can share with municipalities that presents municipal leaders with custom mapping, the percent of open space presently preserved, and target land use types for future preservation. The County makes recommendations as to what each municipality can do to strengthen its land preservation work, such as creating an Agricultural Security Area, passing a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance, and enacting a dedicated open space tax.

Silver Spring Township Land Preservation Program

Presented by: Laura Brown, Township Supervisor, Silver Spring Township

Laura began by describing the basis for Silver Spring Township's interest in a land preservation program by showing comparative maps of a portion of the Township. She drew comparisons between a 1995 land use map and 2022 zoning map, with the later showing significantly more building lots and subdivisions in areas that had previously been open space.



Laura then reviewed the Commonwealth statute that makes it possible for local governments to create open space preservation programs – Act 153: Open Space Lands Act. The Act states that *“The Legislature finds that it is important to preserve open space and to meet needs for recreation, amenity, and conservation of natural resources, including farmland, forests, and a pure and adequate water supply.”* The Act enables local governments to protect lands in perpetuity through either fee simple purchases or conservation easements. It further permits the creation of funding for open space preservation programs through bonds, earned income taxes, or real estate taxes. The funding can be applied to preservation of farmland, woodland, or other open space. Laura also pointed out that the statute does not set restrictions with regard to appraised easement value, giving local governments the decision authority as to what to pay for preserving lands.

Silver Spring Township had a successful open space referendum in 2013. The measure increased the earned income tax by one mil (0.1%) and established a dedicated Township fund for preserving land. The referendum passed by 60% of Silver Spring Township voters. A Land Preservation Review Board (LPRB) was created by the Board of Supervisors. The LPRB is responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on what properties to preserve and how much to pay for them, with the Board of Supervisors making the final purchase decisions.

Laura identified eight keys to success for passing referenda:

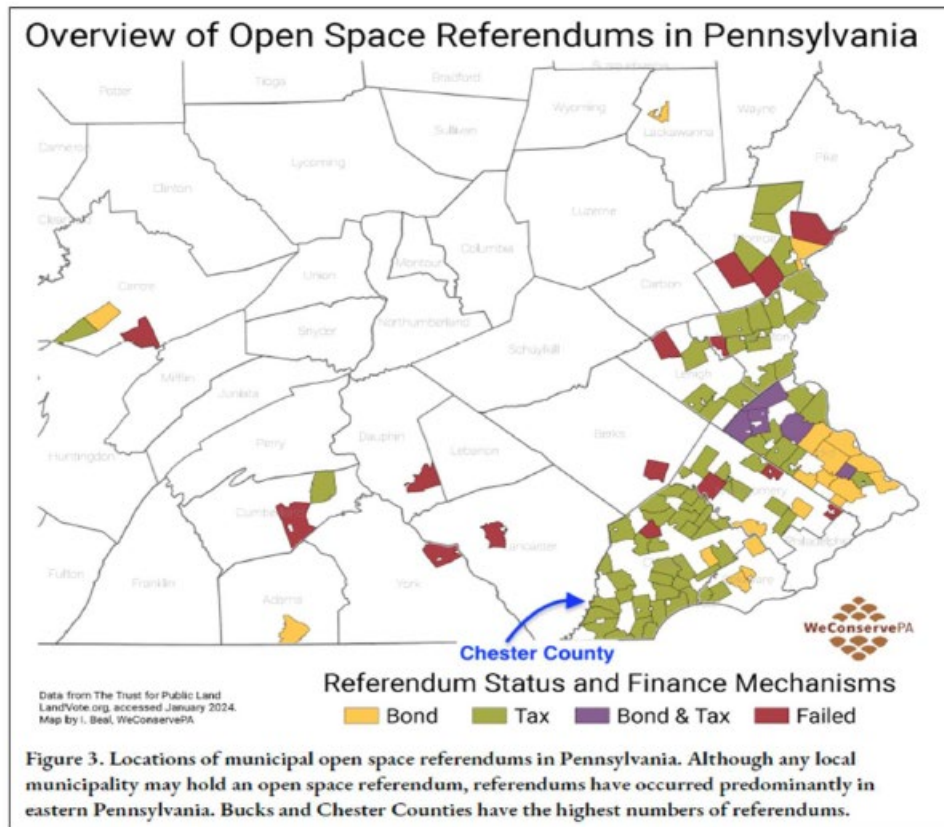
1. Allow at least 9 months time prior to targeted election to gather information, build coalitions, survey residents, and discuss with municipal officials.
2. Make sure municipal officials are on board (will need a majority vote to add referendum to the ballot).
3. Hone your message (quality of life, environmental/wildlife benefits, cost savings).
4. Organize a campaign committee, enlist volunteers, and meet regularly.
5. Prepare a timeline and schedule of tasks.
6. Educate through public meetings, newsletters, website, and articles to the press.
7. Treat the referendum like a political campaign (e.g., door-to-door interactions are critical for explaining and gaining support).
8. Be prepared for opposition from developer groups, realtor associations, and home builder associations.



Since the program began in 2014, the Township has preserved fifteen properties for over 777 acres. Through this time period, the Township has been working alongside several conservation partners: Natural Lands, Cumberland County Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program, and Lancaster Farmland Trust. At the time of the Forum, Silver Spring Township was working on preserving an additional twelve properties for approximately 830 acres.

Laura then described an incentive program that the Township has created in collaboration with Cumberland County. Recognizing that the Commonwealth's Act 43: Agricultural Security Area Law prevents County Ag Preservation Boards from paying greater than appraised easement value when using state ag land preservation funds, the Township began to consider adding an incentive payment from Township funds to supplement the County payment to farmers for agricultural conservation easements. Silver Spring Township considers this to be an efficient use of Township funds, because on these projects, County staff handle all the administrative work and costs (e.g., appraisal, deed preparation and recording), saving the Township from handling such costs on its own. At present, the Township has determined an incentive payment of \$2,500/acre to pay beyond the County's appraised value. This incentive program was initiated in October 2023 with 24 letters sent to qualified farmers, educating them on the opportunity. At present four of these farms are pursuing preservation with the County and Township.

Laura closed by presenting information on the scarcity of local municipal open space referendums outside of eastern Pennsylvania. She pointed out that only four municipalities west of Chester County have successfully passed open space referendums, with Silver Spring Township being one of the four. Laura presented a map from a WeConservePA 2023 Report on this topic. Laura expressed a willingness to educate and support other townships that may be considering a referendum.



Municipal Open Space Referenda

Presented by: Todd Sampsell, Vice President of Conservation, Natural Lands

After providing an overview of the mission and key programs of Natural Lands, Todd launched into a description of the process by which Natural Lands assists municipalities with open space referenda. He first reviewed three key pieces of Commonwealth legislation that make these municipal programs possible.

The Preserving Land for Open Spaces Act (P.L. 992 of 1968) – authorized local governments to preserve, acquire, or hold land for open space use.

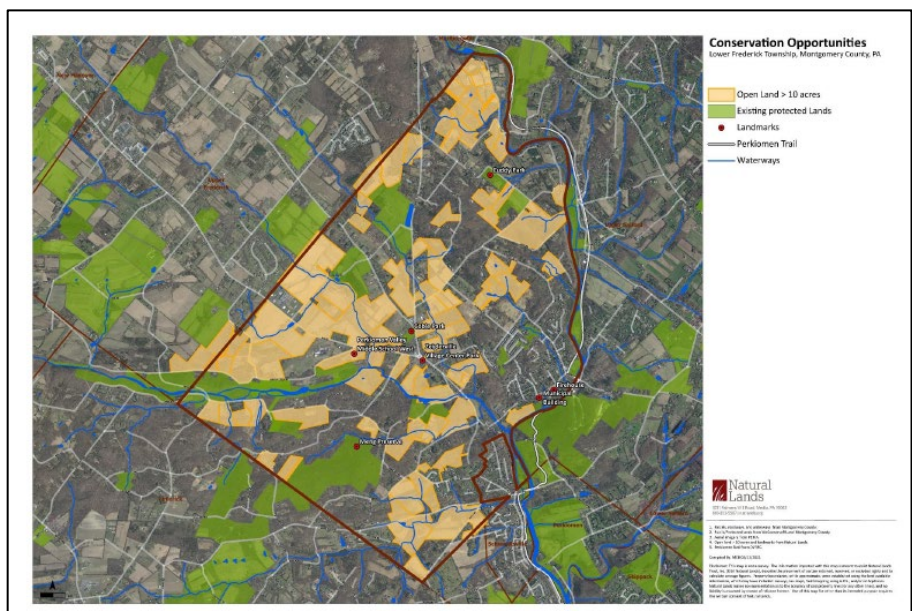
The Open Space Lands Act (Act 153 of 1996) – allowed, with a simple majority vote, all cities, boroughs, and townships to levy dedicated earned income, property, and realty transfer taxes for the purchase of open space lands.

Act 115 of 2013 – Amendment to The Preserving Land for Open Spaces Act – provides that, in addition to acquiring land and easements, dedicated open space taxes may be used to develop, design, improve, and maintain open space that has been protected under Act 153 referenda; it also clarified that a referendum is required to repeal voter-approved open space taxes.

Todd then explained four key tasks for achieving a successful open space referendum. The first task is to work with township leadership and staff on feasibility research, including tax implications, tax revenue versus bonding, and bond repayment obligations.

The second key task is to work with leadership and staff on ballot language and outreach materials. To conform with Act 153, ballot language must be phrased with very specific wording. Well-crafted ballot language is critical to set up a municipality for success. Ideally, the ballot language should be informed by public polling data, capturing what the specific municipal population feels is most compelling about preserving open space (e.g., drinking water quality, preserving rural character). A critical date is that the language must be sent to the County Board of Elections at least 13 weeks before the election, which next year will be the week of July 25th, 2025.

The third task is to give local leaders and the public a sense of the opportunities and priorities for open space preservation in the municipality by creating a conservation opportunities map (example to right). This helps the municipality recognize the real needs for open space preservation funding.



The fourth task is public outreach to ensure the ballot measure passes. It will need a simple majority vote. A public meeting is a good approach to introduce the ballot measure to the public and begin to garner support. Often, a campaign committee should be formed to work on public outreach, education, and voter persuasion. If possible, the township should include information on the referendum in a newsletter prior to the election.

If the referendum is successful, then additional tasks will be necessary to set up the open space preservation program for the municipality. The governing body (e.g., Board of Supervisors) must pass an ordinance to enact the proposed financing. An Open Space Review Board should be established to help oversee the program implementation. Typically, the Open Space Review Board will make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on what properties to protect. A set of evaluation criteria should be created to help evaluate potential land/easement acquisitions. Todd suggested that it is good to involve the public in the process of creating evaluation criteria, and Natural Lands has had positive experiences hosting criteria meetings to engage residents on conservation priorities. He presented a couple of examples of advertisements for criteria meetings (see image to right) that Natural Lands facilitated.

We need your input!

Join us to develop Lower Frederick Township Conservation Priorities.

In November 2020 residents of Lower Frederick Township approved a tax to buy, preserve, and maintain open space.

Please join the Open Space Committee for a discussion of special places in Lower Frederick Township that are important to preserve.

Wednesday, March 23, 2022
6:30-8:00PM

Lower Frederick Fire Company
Social Hall
137 Spring Mt Road
Schwenksville, PA 19473

RSVP to managen@lowerfrederick.org



Eventually, landowner outreach will need to begin. This can alternatively be accomplished by municipality staff or conservation partners, such as land trusts, like Natural Lands. When Natural Lands is assisting with landowner outreach, it will only engage with willing landowners – people with an interest to conserve their property. Natural Lands typically begins by letting a given landowner know that their property is a preservation priority and then gauges the landowner’s interest in conservation. Natural Lands typically likes to handle these interactions via one-on-one meetings with interested parties.

Closing

Anna Yelk (Cumberland Conservation Collaborative) closed the event on October 2nd and distributed a follow-up email to attendees a few weeks later. In both instances, Anna expressed the sentiment that the organizing committee hoped that the content of the forum provides inspiration and momentum toward increased action on the funding of open space preservation in Cumberland County. Based on the popularity of the event and discussions with key partner organizations that followed, there seems to be fertile ground for a successful, dedicated open space program in Cumberland County, bolstered by the already-established success of the County's farmland preservation program. A critical step is to communicate to our leaders, including Cumberland County Commissioners and municipal-level supervisors, community support for both farmland preservation efforts and the benefits of a dedicated open space protection program in the County.

Resources

The organizing committee has prepared a number of resources for the Forum, both pre- and post-event. The committee's hope is that these resources will be disseminated throughout Cumberland County and beyond to spread the knowledge shared by the Forum's speakers and stimulate initiatives for additional dedicated local open space funding.

Prior to the event, a directory of Open Space Conservation Funding Opportunities in Cumberland County was prepared as a handout at the Forum. The directory provides for each potential funding source, the purpose, funding levels, timing, eligibility information, contact information, and a URL. The handout has since been amended to include two additional funding sources that were described by audience members during Ryan Szuch's presentation. That directory is provided as Appendix A.

Audience questions from the Forum that could not be answered that evening, due to time constraints, were addressed afterwards by the speakers in writing. That Question-and-Answer document is provided as Appendix B.

This White Paper was produced as a resource for attendees and others in the conservation community to read and share within their relationship networks potentially interested parties. The organizing committee hopes that readers will take advantage of the White Paper and additional resources for outreach and education efforts that will create movement toward increased dedicated local open space funding across the Commonwealth.

Acknowledgements

The organizing committee for the Forum included:

1. Jason Beale, Executive Director, Central Pennsylvania Conservancy (now with Pennsylvania Game Commission)
<https://centralpaconservancy.org/>
2. Cameron Weiser, Land Protection Specialist, Central Pennsylvania Conservancy
3. Stephanie Williams, Senior Planning Manager, Cumberland County Planning Department
<https://cumberlandcountypa.gov/120/Planning-Department>
4. Anna Yelk, President, Cumberland Conservation Collaborative
<https://www.cumberlandconservationcollaborative.org/>
5. Ryan Szuch, President, Grow Conservation LLC
<https://growconservation.com/>

We thank our speakers, several of whom traveled a great distance to be with us at the Forum.

1. Stephanie Williams, Senior Planning Manager, Cumberland County Planning Department
<https://cumberlandcountypa.gov/120/Planning-Department>
2. Ryan Szuch, President, Grow Conservation LLC
<https://growconservation.com/>
3. Sean Kenny, Executive Director, Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County
<https://www.farmtrust.org/>
4. David T. Stauffer, Director of Chester County Parks and Preservation
<https://www.chesco.org/4498/Parks-Preservation>
5. Laura Brown, Township Supervisor, Silver Spring Township
<https://www.sstwp.org/244/Land-Preservation-Review-Board>
6. Todd Sampsell, Vice President of Conservation, Natural Lands
<https://natlands.org/>

We thank our venue host and sponsor, the Dickinson College – Center for Sustainability Education.

https://www.dickinson.edu/info/20052/sustainability/2278/center_for_sustainability_education

We especially thank our funding sponsor, the South Mountain Partnership, which supported the refreshments for the networking session and travel expenses for non-local speakers.

<https://www.southmountainpartnership.org/>

This white paper was authored by Ryan Szuch of Grow Conservation LLC with editing by the organizing committee and speakers.

Appendices

Appendix A - Open Space Conservation Funding Opportunities in Cumberland County

Open Space Conservation Funding Opportunities in Cumberland County

1. PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2)

- i. <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Communities/Grants/pages/default.aspx>
- ii. Purpose – The C2P2 program includes grants for preservation of open space, including priorities of community recreation and critical habitat and open space.
- iii. Funding Levels – awards seldom exceed \$1 million; 1:1 match required (can be cash or donated land value)
- iv. Timing – one application round per year: opens in Jan., closes in Apr., typically awarded in late fall to winter
- v. Eligible Applicants – counties, municipalities, nonprofits, institutes of higher education
- vi. Contact – Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC) – Regional Advisor, who in Cumberland County is Lindsay Baer (libaer@pa.gov; 717-858-1185)

2. PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development (DCED)

Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program (GTRP)

- i. <https://dced.pa.gov/programs/greenways-trails-and-recreation-program-gtrp/>
- ii. Purpose – Act 13 of 2012 established the Marcellus Legacy Fund and allocates funds through the GTRP for planning, acquisition, development, rehabilitation and repair of greenways, recreational trails, open space, parks, and beautification projects.
- iii. Funding Levels – grants cannot exceed \$250,000; a 15% match required (can be cash or cash equivalents)
- iv. Timing – one application round per year: opens in Feb., closes in May
- v. Eligible Applicants – for-profit businesses, municipalities, nonprofits, institutes of higher education, watershed organizations
- vi. Contact – DCED – Office of Business Finance and Workforce Development – CFA Programs Division (ra-dcedsitedvpt@pa.gov; 717-787-6245)



3. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Highlands Conservation Act Grant Program

- i. <https://www.fws.gov/program/highlands-conservation-act-grant>
- ii. Purpose – Program aims to permanently protect conservation lands (through acquisition or easement) in the Federal Highlands region, focused on key objectives around water quality, healthy forests, wildlife, productive agriculture, and recreation opportunities.
- iii. Funding Levels – projects with total project costs between \$200,000 and \$3,000,000; match requirement is 50% Non-Federal match
- iv. Timing – applications due to USFWS Dec. 2024; announcement in Feb. 2025
- v. Eligible Applicants – state agencies, counties, and municipalities
- vi. Contact – Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC) – Highlands Program Specialist, Dan Pierce (danipierce@pa.gov; 717-772-1282)

4. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

a. Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) Program

- i. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/ale-agricultural-land-easements>
- ii. Purpose – ALE component of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides funding for farmland preservation.
- iii. Contact – local NRCS office in Carlisle or State Office’s Easements Coordinator, Melissa Hanner (melissa.hanner@usda.gov, 717-237-2155)

b. Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Program

- i. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/wre-wetland-reserve-easements>
- ii. Purpose – WRE component of ACEP helps private landowners protect, restore, and enhance wetlands which have been previously degraded due to agricultural uses.
- iii. Contact – local NRCS office in Carlisle or State Office’s Easements Coordinator, Melissa Hanner (melissa.hanner@usda.gov, 717-237-2155)

c. Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Kittatinny Ridge Landscape

- i. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/rcpp-regional-conservation-partnership-program>
- ii. Purpose – Kittatinny Ridge project leverages NRCS and partner contributions to implement conservation easements along the ridge.
- iii. Contact – local NRCS office in Carlisle or RCPP Lead Partner, PA Farmland Protection Bureau Director, Stephanie Zimmerman (stzimmerma@pa.gov, 717-783-3167)

d. NRCS Funding Levels, Eligibility, and Timing (apply to ALE, WRE, and RCPP)

- i. Funding Levels – NRCS may contribute up to 50% percent of the fair market value of the easement; at least 50% match required
- ii. Eligible Applicants – farmers and private, non-industrial forest landowners (applications coordinated through an eligible state or nonprofit partner entity)
- iii. Timing – applications accepted on a rolling basis, but ranking deadlines occur several times throughout the Federal fiscal year (FY); in FY24, they were Nov., Jan., and Mar. in PA



5. Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC)

Consumptive Use Mitigation Grant Program

- i. <https://www.srbcc.gov/our-work/grants/consumptive-use-mitigation-grant.html>
- ii. Purpose – Projects that improve environmental and water quality conditions to increase watershed resilience during low flow periods can be eligible for land conservation. Priorities include restoration components that provide improved groundwater recharge or preservation of critical recharge areas (see SRBC study online for areas)
- iii. Funding Levels – Minimum funding level of \$100,000 suggested; no set maximum, but total program provides \$6-8 million per year; match requirement ranges from 10-25%, depending on award amount (SRBC not considered Federal match)
- iv. Timing – One application round per year: opens in Nov., closes in Jan., awarded in Apr.
- v. Eligible Applicants – local, state, and Federal government entities; nonprofits; institutes of higher education; SRBC Project Sponsors
- vi. Contact – SRBC, Hydrogeologist – Planning and Operations Division, Pierre MaCoy (pmacoy@srbcc.gov, 717-238-0423, ext. 1230)

6. Cumberland County

a. Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Program

- i. <https://www.cumberlandcountypa.gov/286/Agricultural-Easement-Program-Applicatio>
- ii. Purpose – ACE Program protects viable agricultural lands by acquiring agricultural conservation easements that preserve the land for agricultural production in perpetuity.
- iii. Funding Levels – payment based on appraisal with county cap of \$4,500/acre; county can acquire joint easements with townships/nonprofits through cost-share
- iv. Timing – applications received by Dec. 31 will be evaluated for following year's funding
- v. Eligible Applicants – private landowners
- vi. Contact – Planning Department, Senior Planning Manager, Stephanie Williams (sjwilliams@cumberlandcountypa.gov, 717-240-5383)

b. Land Partnership Grant Program

- i. <https://www.cumberlandcountypa.gov/4922/Land-Partnerships-Grant-Program>
- ii. Purpose – Provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofits for agriculture preservation, natural resource protection, creation of parks, and other purposes; land acquisitions can be either fee simple or conservation easements
- iii. Funding Levels – payment based on appraisal; county generally will not fund more than 50% of the total cost; maximum grant of \$100,000 for land acquisition
- iv. Timing – 2025 application cycle is to be determined
- v. Eligible Applicants – municipalities, nonprofits
- vi. Contact – Planning Department, Senior Planning Manager, Stephanie Williams (sjwilliams@cumberlandcountypa.gov, 717-240-5383)



7. Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Wild East Action Fund

- i. <https://appalachiantrail.org/our-work/conservation/landscape/wild-east-action-fund/>
- ii. Purpose – supports projects that accelerate the pace of conservation within the Appalachian Trail landscape
- iii. Funding Levels – land protection projects must be \$100,000 or less
- iv. Timing – application period typically opens in late summer/fall of each year; notifications typically occur in late Nov.
- v. Eligible Applicants – nonprofits, government entities
- vi. Contact – Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Max Olsen (molsen@appalachiantrail.org)

8. Open Space Institute

Appalachian Landscapes Protection Initiative

- i. <https://www.openspaceinstitute.org/funds/appalachian-landscapes-protection-fund>
- ii. Purpose – awards capital grants for land protection in portions of the Kittatinny landscape
- iii. Present Program no longer accepting applications in Kittatinny, but OSI is presently fundraising for a new, larger fund pool to restart program.
- iv. Contact – OSI, Bill Rawlyk (brawlyk@osiny.org)

9. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD) Grants Program

- i. <https://www.nfwf.org/programs/chesapeake-bay-stewardship-fund/chesapeake-wild>
- ii. Purpose – supports efforts to conserve, steward, and enhance fish and wildlife habitats and related conservation values in the Chesapeake Bay watershed
 - a. Implementation: direct on-the-ground conservation, stewardship, or enhancement
 - b. Planning and Technical Assistance: enhance capacity of local/regional partners into the future
- iii. Funding Levels – Implementation: \$75,000-\$750,000 request, 1:1 match (up to 50% of match can be Federal funds); Planning Technical Assistance: up to \$75,000 request, match encouraged but not required
- iv. Timing – generally Jan.-Apr. application period; announced late summer
- v. Eligible Applicants – all levels of government entities; nonprofits; educational institutions
- vi. Contact – NFWF, Chesapeake Programs, Program Director, Jake Reilly (jake.reilly@nfwf.org, 202-857-0166)

Chesapeake Small Watershed Grants (SWG) Program

- i. <https://www.nfwf.org/programs/chesapeake-bay-stewardship-fund/chesapeake-small-watershed-grants>
- ii. WILDS considered better option for land conservation, but SWG can be used for due diligence and land conservation projects with riparian benefit (same Contact as above)



10. South Mountain Partnership

Mini-Grants Program

- i. <https://www.southmountainpartnership.org/our-work/grants/mini-grants/>
- ii. Purpose – catalyze on-the-ground projects that further the goals of the Partnership and advance the capacity of partners to sustain the South Mountain landscape’s sense of place and protect and promote the region’s landscape resources
- iii. Funding Levels – \$2,500-\$15,000; 1:1 match (in-kind or cash); projects up to \$25,000 may be considered if they cover geographic majority of region and are a high funding priority
- iv. Timing – typically pre-application in April, final application by June, and formal awards in September
- v. Eligible Applicants – counties and municipalities; nonprofits; academic institutions
- vi. Contact – SMP, Program Manager, Julia Chain (jchain@appalachiantrail.org, 717-794-6071)

11. Partnership for Better Health

- i. <https://forbetterhealthpa.org/what-we-fund/>
- ii. Purpose – provides funding opportunities to support projects that improve the health of individuals and communities by focusing on social determinants of health (structural factors and conditions that affect everyone’s health, such as neighborhood and environment) and health equity (fair and just access, opportunity, and resources)
- iii. Funding Levels – varies per grant type, but between \$5,000 and \$100,000
- iv. Timing – multiple rounds per year, with applications due in March, August, or December, and award decisions around three months later
- v. Eligible Applicants – nonprofits
- vi. Contact – Director of Grants and Public Policy, Tim Lawther (tim@forbetterhealthpa.org, 717-960-9009 x4)

Preparation Date

Sources #1-9: October 2024

Sources #10-11: March 2025



Prepared by growconservation.com

Appendix B - Question-and-Answer Document

Cumberland County Conservation Funding Forum Q&A

Forum Presenters & email contact:

1. Stephanie Williams, Senior Planner, Cumberland County Planning Department
sjwilliams@cumberlandcountypa.gov
2. Ryan Szuch, President, Grow Conservation, ryan@growconservation.com
3. Sean Kenny, Executive Director, Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County, and Chair, York County Planning Commission, skenny@farmtrust.org
4. David T. Stauffer, Director of Chester County Parks and Preservation,
dstauffer@chesco.org
5. Laura Brown, Township Supervisor, Silver Spring Township, lbrown@sstwp.org
6. Todd Sampsell, Vice President of Conservation, Natural Lands, tsampsell@natlands.org

Questions For All Presenters:

- What are the next steps to increase funding in Cumberland County and what can those of us here today do to help? Do speakers or attendees believe that York County's pathway to an open space program is viable in Cumberland County? Barriers?
 - [Ryan Szuch] At the county level, the refinement of the Land Partnerships Plan could be a good avenue for considering increased open space funding for Cumberland County. The County is considering public outreach to gauge interest and support for such a funding increase in the budget. Supporters and stakeholders in the community could help that process by contacting the County Commissioners to express their support for the additional funding. The York County model could be a good one to follow in Cumberland County.

At the municipal level, we have in Cumberland County a good model to follow with Silver Spring Township having presented at the forum and built a successful municipal open space program. We also have partners ready to assist other municipalities that may be interested, such as Cumberland Conservation Collaborative, Central PA Conservancy, Grow Conservation, and Natural Lands. If you are a municipal manager or supervisor, then a next step would be to contact one of these organizations for advice and assistance. If you are a resident or stakeholder, then a next step would be to write to your township leaders or attend a supervisor meeting and suggest your municipality consider dedicated open space funding. If you would like help with what to say in that message, then you could also contact one of the organizations listed above.

- [Sean Kenny] As someone from York County – I believe our pathway is very viable in Cumberland County. Cumberland County has already done a LOT of the legwork. Stephanie Williams' presentation covered an immense amount of information. From there, you need County Commissioner buy-in to do it via a tax increase proposal. Though increasing taxes is never popular, it appears that through surveys conducted to date, the people of Cumberland County are in favor of all the benefits of land preservation.

- [Todd Sampsell] I think both York County and Chester County are great examples to look to for building success in Cumberland County. Everyone that participated needs to engage in public forums with the County to continue to express interest in open space preservation. Same goes at the municipal level, and municipal officials can be a strong advocate for funding at the County level that leverages any local dollars. I think a key aspect to success in Cumberland County is a balanced approach to open space that includes agricultural preservation, with open space for both biodiversity and recreation (trails and parks). Recognize that Cumberland County is very different from east to west. An open space initiative has to have benefit for all parts of the County. Also, think about stressors like climate impacts, sprawl, and nature deprived communities (i.e. typically more urban and/or economically depressed) and how open space conservation can help build resiliency against these things when crafting messages and priorities around an open space funding initiative.
- [Laura Brown] I believe that the York County model could absolutely work in Cumberland County. We already had one Commissioner indicate that they would like to see a County wide referendum to establish a dedicated fund for open space preservation. While that state legislation seems to be DOA, still, if the County established a mil rate or percentage of the budget through a resolution that could be used going forward, future Commissioners would not have to politically justify the expense. It would face a fair amount of scrutiny up front, but less so for future public officials.

Questions for Stephanie Williams:

- How much do easement costs per acre vary across the county? Are they higher in the eastern part of the county than in the west? Does this influence how parcels are prioritized?
 - I can best speak to agriculture easement costs for land preserved through the County/State Farmland Preservation Program. Over the last 2 years easement values have ranged between \$3000-\$4800/acre.
 - Easement values do vary between eastern and western Cumberland County, with properties in areas with higher development pressure having higher values. A host of other factors can influence easement price, such as amount of road frontage, zoning, soil type, etc.
 - Easement cost does not factor into the prioritization of farms through the County Farmland Preservation Program.
- Does Cumberland County have a climate initiative of any kind?
 - <https://www.cumberlandcountypa.gov/4898/Climate-Action-Plan>
 - Cumberland County adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2022. Since then, the County has been pursuing a number of energy projects such as electrification of county vehicles and development of a solar project.

- Who did the 2015 Return on Environment report? How was it funded? Should a new study be done?
 - https://kittatinnyridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/KIT_ROE_cumberland_6.pdf
 - The 2015 Return on Environment report was prepared by private consultants Ken Goode, Dan Miles and John Rodgers.
 - Funding was provided through Audubon PA from PA DCNR.
 - Cumberland County is working with the Kittatinny CLI to commission an update to the study which should occur in 2025.
- Can regional stormwater facilities be incorporated into open space preservation?
 - Unclear exactly the intent of this question, particularly the regional aspect of the question as most land development is parcel/site specific.... But open space does generally provide stormwater benefits and there is a strong emphasis on provision of green infrastructure in our communities to serve both recreation/open space/stormwater management needs.

Questions for Sean Kenny:

- Is the farmland preservation program separate? How many acres are preserved per year? What is the easement value typically?
 - The 1/10th of a mil tax increase funds Farm and Natural Lands Trust, York County Parks, York County Conservation District, a grant program AND the York County Ag Land Preservation Board (YCALPB actually receives over half of the entirety of the funding)
 - A goal has been set to protect 2,500 acres protected per year through Farm and Natural Lands Trust, the York County Ag Preservation Board, and via the grant program
 - I cannot speak to easement values for YCALPB. At FNLT, we do not get into appraised easement values as there are far too many variables. However, through the tax increase, FNLT will pay \$500 per acre, which is then partially matched through local foundation funding to get us closer to \$700 per acre. Then, all closing/signing/recording/settlement costs are covered as well. We do flat fees per acre as opposed to a percentage based off appraisal values to keep the process moving along.
- York County - Historic buildings and surrounding lands? Any minimum land size?
 - FNLT minimums are currently 30 acres or more. There can always be exceptions if adjoining land is already preserved land, though we try to stick to 30 acres.
 - While we have a lot of land preserved that contains historic structures – FNLT does not protect those.

Questions for Laura Brown:

- Do you reserve a stewardship fund for each property, which would flow to the land trust?
How is it calculated?
 - The land trusts that we work with determine the stewardship contribution due for each individual parcel and that is included in the quote the land trust gives us and is part of the invoice that we pay after preservation is completed
- Did Silver Spring township consider adding some conservation practice performance goals to the incentive program? This could provide more incentive for a commitment to stewardship of their land and include practices such as cover cropping, manure management and storage, transfers and other practices to reduce nutrients and support clean water.
 - The land trusts and the Cumberland County Farmland program that we partner with on farm properties all require landowners to provide soil conservation and manure management plans as needed to verify that they are complying with Department of Agriculture regulations and the Clean Streams Act.
- Is it possible to restore open space (e.g. abandoned malls, paved lots, etc.)?
 - Certainly, we would be open to something like that in Silver Spring Township although I would have serious questions about whether or not such land could be viable agricultural land in the future since original soils and the rock geology is removed during the land development phase.

My first thought would be to clear the land of impervious and establish a park or perhaps plant some type of a woodland or meadow area. Not sure if soils would need to be brought in before something like that could be established. Surely, if we're getting rid of warehouses, I think our residents and other Supervisors would be interested.

One thing to keep in mind though, redevelopment of land that has already been built on can be an excellent way to bring in revenue for the Township and good businesses for the residents without tearing up currently farmed or wooded parcels. Another wards, keep this land in commercial/industrial use since it's probably already zoned that way and then we keep from developing other untouched land.

Questions for Todd Sampsell:

- Is Natural Lands technical assistance to the municipality something pro-bono, or should communities budget for this?
 - Natural Lands typically offers a fee for service proposal that can help a municipality with the feasibility analysis, public informational meetings, ordinance and ballot language, etc. Our fees are modest compared to other consultants and we work much more as a partner, often contributing more than a contract stipulates to help insure success. We can also, seamlessly work with a local committee (PAC) to help with fundraising, communications, and strategies to support a vote yes campaign. That work is often funded by the fundraising of the PAC and not the municipality. There again, we have a full, in-house communication team and art department that can help keep costs down, typically delivering more at our own cost than a for-profit consultant would. We also have the ability to hand off a “toolbox” that a PAC can use to run the campaign themselves.