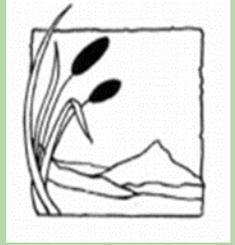


C4C: Cents for Conservation

South Burlington Land Trust

Outline of our Presentation



- History of South Burlington's Conservation/Open Space Fund
- Why conserve land?
 - Benefits of Conservation
 - Costs of Community Services
- How to Conserve Land?
 - Tools for conservation
- Costs of Conserving land identified by the Open Space IZ Committee
- C4C Proposal

History of South Burlington's Conservation/ Open Space Fund

- 1960s - 1970s Jaycee Park and Farrell Park purchased for recreational purposes
- 1970 Purchase of Red Rocks Park
- 1992 Calkins (now Wheeler) House and 20 acres purchased
- 1999 Citizen concerns raised about rate of sprawling development
 - SB searching for an identity
 - Public forums held – strong expressions of support for saving more open space
 - City moved toward purchase of 100 acres at Calkins (now Wheeler); lease agreement established with NGA
- 2000 From these discussions **voters approved a 1 cent permanent tax for a Conservation/Open Space Fund** to preserve open land and natural areas (currently raises approximately \$300K annually)

History of South Burlington's Conservation/ Open Space Fund

- 2005-7 Scott Property (40 acres) purchased (SB \$970K)
- 2008 **Alteration #1**: Voters approved use of CF money for purchase of land for recreational as well as conservation purposes
- 2009 Leduc Farm purchased and conserved by partners (SB \$500K)
- 2010 **Alteration #2**: Voters approved proposal to allow use of 5% of CF money for maintenance of open spaces
- 2011 Goodrich property (22 acres) purchased (SB \$62.5K)
- 2012 Underwood Property (60 acres) purchased over 3 years (SB \$1.66 M)
- 2016 **Alteration #3**: Voters approved proposal to borrow \$1.3 M over 10 years to fund enhancement projects on open spaces and natural areas; debt to be repaid from CF money (not to exceed 50% annually)
- 2018 Auclair Farm project, using partners for conservation and ag use objectives (SB \$606K)

Economic Benefits of Conserved Lands

- Above and beyond forest products, forest-based recreation and tourism account for the majority of the forest-based economy. They contribute an estimated \$1.9 billion dollars to Vermont's economy annually.
- Conserved and working lands provide valuable, nonmarket services to the economy and are a cost effective way of preserving the quality of life in the state, including providing clean air, water, recreation, and more.
- National studies estimate the economic return on investing in conservation range from 4:1 to 11:1. A Vermont study found that every state dollar invested in land conservation returned \$9 in natural goods and services.
- Land conservation has a positive effect on town tax bases by controlling the costs of community services.

Economic Benefits of Conserved Lands

TABLE A1. ESTIMATED ANNUAL PER-ACRE VALUE OF NATURAL GOODS AND SERVICES BY LAND COVER TYPE		
Land cover type*	Natural goods and services	Annual value per acre (2018\$)
Deciduous Forest	Air pollution removal, carbon sequestration, carbon storage, erosion control/water quality	\$180.00
Mixed Forest	Air pollution removal, carbon sequestration, carbon storage, erosion control/water quality	\$174.00
Pasture/Hay	Carbon sequestration, habitat/biodiversity, livestock/livestock products, and pollination services	\$58.80
Evergreen Forest	Air pollution removal, carbon sequestration, carbon storage, erosion control/water quality	\$168.00
Cultivated Crops	Food production, pollination services	\$63.10
Woody Wetland	Flood protection, habitat	\$590.00
Shrub/Scrub	Habitat/biodiversity, carbon sequestration	\$19.40
Emergent Herbaceous Wetland	Flood protection, habitat	\$590.00
Developed Open Space/Parks	Air pollution removal, carbon sequestration	\$91.60
Open Water	Freshwater regulation and supply, wildlife habitat	\$108.00
Developed lands**	No natural goods and services provided	N/A
Grassland/Herbaceous	Carbon sequestration, habitat/biodiversity, and pollination services	\$33.90
Barren Land	No natural goods and services provided	N/A

Per acre benefits from ecosystem services provided by various land cover types in Vermont. Source: Trust for Public Land. 2018. Vermont's Return on Investment in Land Conservation available online at <https://www.tpl.org/vermonts-return-investment-land-conservation>

Costs of Community Services Studies

- Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies are a case study approach used to determine a community's public service costs compared with the revenues raised on various land uses. COCS studies have emerged as an inexpensive and reliable tool to measure the direct fiscal relationships between existing land uses.
- A meta-analysis conducted in 2016 analyzed 151 communities from 26 states.
- The analysis showed that residential land uses do not cover the costs of community services and must be subsidized by other community land uses.

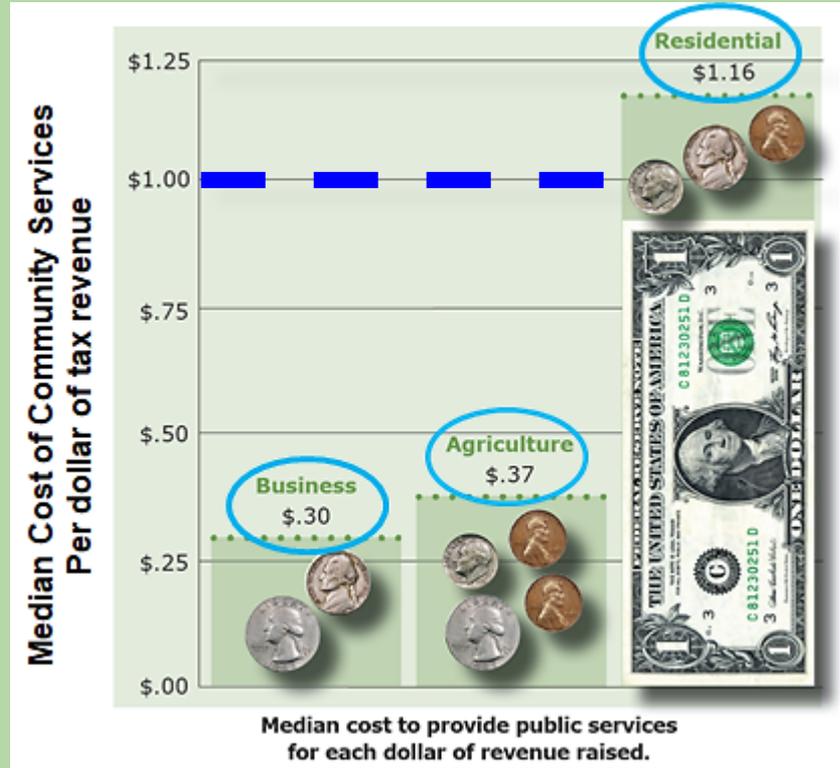
Source: American Farmland Trust. 2016. Cost of Community Services Studies. FIC Fact Sheet and Technical Memo. American Farmland Trust Northampton, MA. Available online at: http://www.farmlandinfo.org/literature?field_literature_category_tid=3236&field_topic_tid=228&field_state_tid=All&page=13

Costs of Community Services in the U.S.



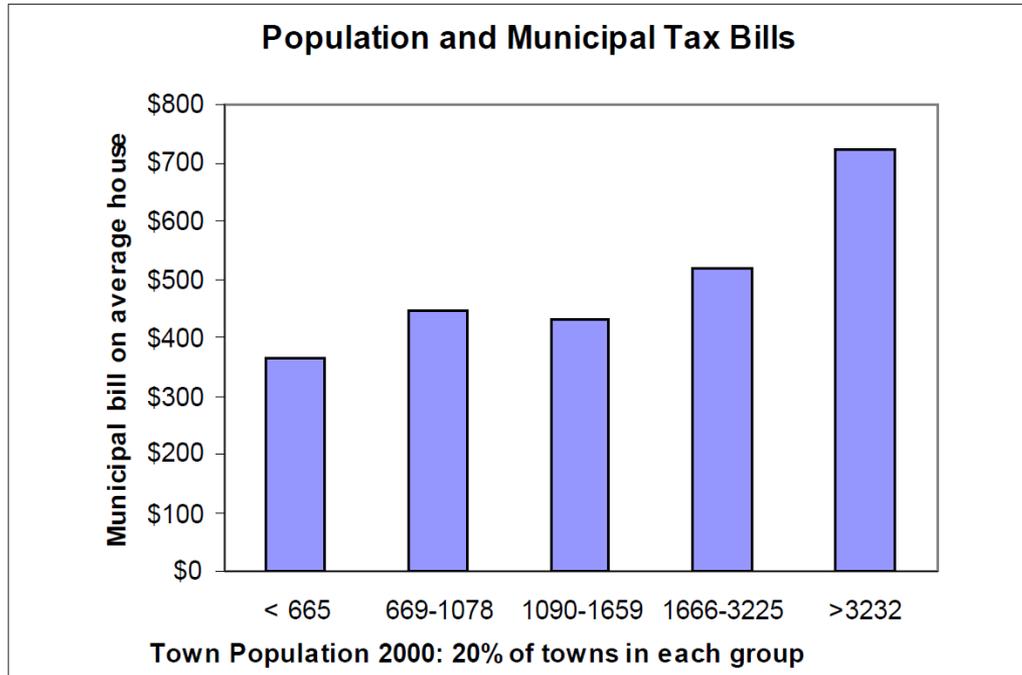
*"I've always had this dream of buying a little farm
and then selling it off piece by piece."*

Bruce Erik Kaplan



Costs of Community Services in Vermont

Figure 2



Data are from all towns in Vermont. In aggregate, these data support the previous slide: increased residential development actually increases per capita tax rates as municipal taxes are inadequate to cover services.

Source: Brighton, D. and B. Hausauer. 2002. The Land Use - Property Tax Connection: A Guide and Workbook on the Tax Implications of Development in Vermont. Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Montpelier, VT.

Community Services in South Burlington

- “Growth in budget is not sustainable. What type of city and what type of services do we want to provide to the taxpayer?”
 - Kevin Dorn, City Manager - December 2017 budget hearings
- “Growth in the budget is not sustainable. Growth in costs of benefits that the city is providing to its employees is not sustainable.”
 - Tom Hubbard, Deputy City Manager/Treasurer - December 2017 budget hearings
- The Council receives consistent messages of budget shortfalls from the Fire Department, Police Department, Public Works Department, and the Parks and Recreation Department

Tools for Land Conservation

Landowners can:

- Donate a “conservation easement”
- Donate their land to a land trust, i.e. Vermont Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy
- Sell their land to an accredited Land Trust
- Place restrictions on land deeds
- Sell to a municipality

Tools for Land Conservation

Donating an Easement:

- Allows landowners to continue to own, live on, and manage their land.
- Allows landowners the right to permit or restrict public access to their land, and to pass along their land to future generations.
- Provides possible tax benefits for the landowner.

Conservation Easement: A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values.

Tools for Land Conservation

Donating land to a Land Trust:

- Land Trust agrees to find a buyer who is interested in conserving the land and protecting its natural resources with or without a conservation easement.
- Land Trust may sell or transfer the land to a local municipality, state agency, or other non-profit organization.
- Landowners can donate their land, but retain the right to use and enjoy the property during their lifetimes—known as a gift of land with a reserved life-estate.

Conservation Easement: A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values.

Tools for Land Conservation

Selling to a Land Trust or to a Municipality:

- Selling to a land trust for less than fair market value not only makes it more affordable for the land trust, but offers several benefits to the landowner
 - provides cash;
 - may avoid some capital gains tax;
 - may qualify as a charitable income tax deduction based on the difference between the land's fair market value and its sale price.
- Landowners can also sell directly to a municipality.

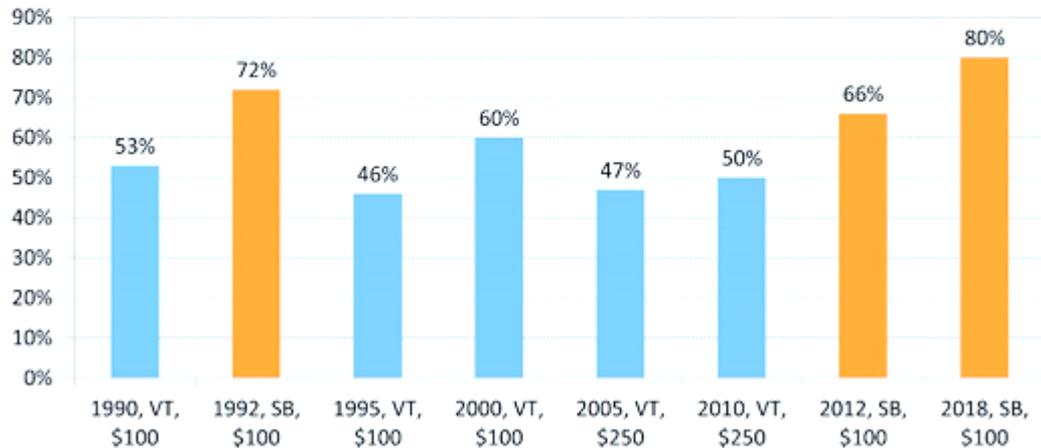
SBLT Cents for Conservation (C4C) Proposal

- At the rate that SB's rural lands are disappearing, almost all will be gone in the next decade.
- Increasing the yearly Open Space fund contribution by two cents (for a limited time period) would allow the city to purchase all identified lands in 14 years.
- Adding two additional cents to the Open Space fund would increase the average family house tax by \$22.40 per assessment (\$67.22 annually); and the average condo tax by \$16.07 per assessment (\$48.22 annually)
- Residents have consistently expressed support for land preservation.

Citizen Support for Land Conservation

Are you willing to spend an “extra \$100” (or \$250)
for “better preservation of open land?”

Comparisons to similar questions for Bolduc’s state surveys and SB surveys



Bolduc, V. 2018. South Burlington Exit Poll, Midterm Elections, November 6, 2018.

Costs of Conserving the land identified by the Open Space IZ Committee

- In addition to the previously mentioned methods of land preservation, outright land purchase is another viable option.
- Open Space IZ Committee identified about 1,000 acres of land to be conserved. Using past land purchases, \$10,000 is the average cost of an acre. Thus, it would require \$10 million dollars to purchase the land at fair market value.
- Given the current funding in the Open Space Fund, it would take about 70 years to raise the funding needed to purchase all of the identified land.

Cents For Conservation (C4C) Recommendation

1. The SB Land Trust recommends the City Council approve putting on the March 2020 ballot a proposal to add two more cents to the Open Space Fund to be used solely for land acquisition.
2. The SB Land Trust will partner with the city to inform the public of the C4C proposal in advance of the March ballot, and will advocate for voter approval.

Conclusion



- The city has gone through a year-long rigorous process under Interim Zoning to find ways to conserve open lands.
- The Open Space IZ Committee has evaluated and identified the top areas in SB that should be conserved.
- The citizens of SB overwhelmingly are in favor of preserving land, even if it costs them more in taxes.
- The SBLT suggests a simple, doable way of conserving land that is fair to all.

**IT TAKES CENTS -- AND MAKES SENSE --
TO CONSERVE**