



OPEN SPACE AND PARKLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

ACTIVITY REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2011 - 2012 JULY 1, 2011 – JUNE 30, 2012

PREPARED FOR:
THE CITY OF ANN ARBOR
GREENBELT ADVISORY COMMISSION
PARKS ADVISORY COMMISSION

PREPARED BY:
THE CONSERVATION FUND

America's Partner in Conservation

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Ann Arbor residents are fortunate enough to not only have a vibrant park system, but to also have protected open space surrounding the city that provide scenic vistas, reprieve from urban closeness, and recreational opportunities. All of these factors play a role in the quality of life for Ann Arbor residents, and as a result, Ann Arbor has received numerous awards for being one of the best small towns to live in America. The Open Space and Parkland Preservation Program, also known as the Greenbelt program, helps to ensure this quality of life is maintained for current and future generations of Ann Arbor residents.

In 2003, residents had the foresight to pass the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage. Money generated through this tax levy is used to purchase parkland within the City, as well as to protect farmland, open spaces and natural areas within portions of 8 Townships surrounding Ann Arbor, known as the Greenbelt District. The purpose of the initiative is to preserve open space, natural habitats, working lands, and the City's source waters outside the city limits, as well as add parkland and recreational opportunities within the City limits.

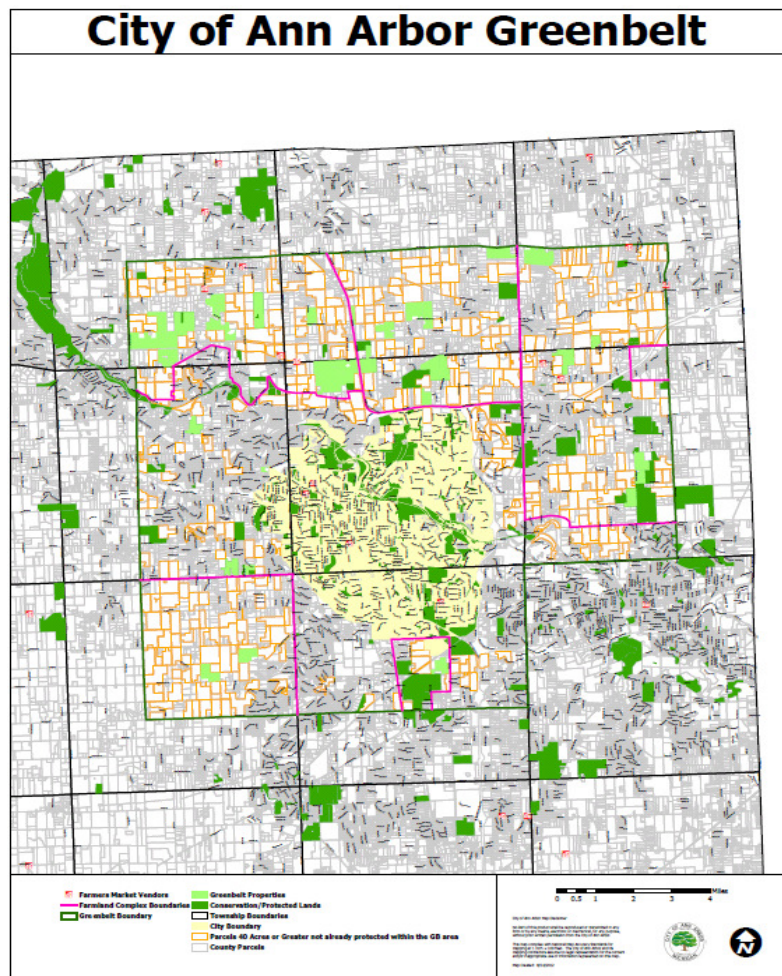
The Greenbelt program is in its sixth year of land acquisition and is making great strides in achieving the goals of the program. Within the City, the millage has provided funds to add 45 acres of additional parkland within the City limits. These additions have provided critical linkages between existing parkland, protected high quality natural features remaining in the City, and increased access to existing parks, increasing the viability of the overall park system for the Ann Arbor residents. All of these are priorities for acquisition stated in the City's PROS Plan. Outside of the City, the millage has helped to protect 3,780 acres of working farmland and open space. Protecting farmland provides many benefits to the Ann Arbor residents by protecting the rural, scenic vistas, local agricultural economy, as well as protecting land along tributaries of the Huron River. This year, the program protected an additional 522 acres of farmland and open space and added 1 property to the City's park system.

Ann Arbor, Webster and Scio Townships located within the Greenbelt District have also passed similar land preservation millages, providing opportunities for the Greenbelt to leverage city funds and collaborate with other jurisdictions on land preservation. Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation also has funds for the purchase of high quality natural areas, and have partnered with the Greenbelt on several purchases. This year, the Salem Township Board of Trustees also approved an allocation of \$200,000 for land preservation.

GREENBELT

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

As outlined in the Greenbelt's Strategic Plan, which was originally adopted in 2005, the program has focused on forming large blocks (1,000 acres or greater) of protected farmland and open space through the acquisition of easements, protecting land within the Huron River Watershed, and capitalizing on partnership opportunities. The Greenbelt identified 5 areas to concentrate acquisitions within the Greenbelt District to form these large blocks of protected land (see map below). The Commission continues to use the Strategic Plan to guide recommendations to Council on land acquisition. As of the end of the fiscal year, the Greenbelt Commission is in the process of updating the plan.



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Strategic Plan Block	Acres Completed	Acres Approved	Total Acres
Web. / Scio / Ann Arbor	1371	113	1,484
Northfield / Ann Arbor	1415	0	1,415
Salem / Superior	610	209	819
Lodi	213	124	337
Pittsfield	89	0	89
<i>Purchases Outside</i>			
<i>St. Plan Blocks</i>	<i>171</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>171</i>
Total:	3,780	446	4,226

Note: These figures are for the Greenbelt related purchases only and do not take into consideration properties protected by other agencies which the Greenbelt was not involved.

The Greenbelt Advisory Commission modified the Strategic Plan in 2008 to also include language to acknowledge the increased interest from owners (and prospective owners) of small farms and local food producers. Prior to 2008, the Greenbelt focused on larger farms – 40 acres or great – that were eligible for Farm and Ranch Land Protection (FRPP) grant funding. The Greenbelt continues to explore ways that the program may also be a viable option for smaller farms that are producing for the direct market in the Ann Arbor area in order to protect a diversity of types of agricultural properties in the area.

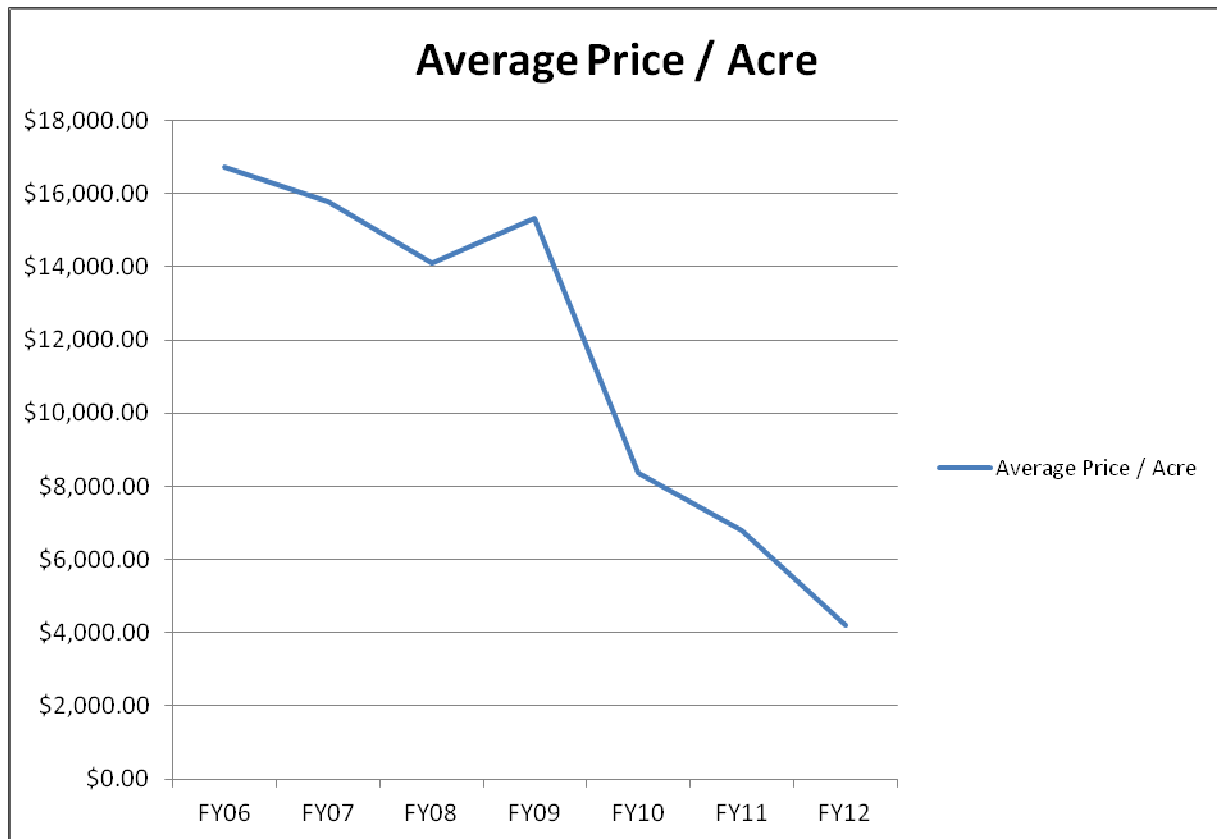
The Greenbelt Advisory Commission also continues to rank the protection of the Huron River as another top priority for land acquisitions. The Huron River is an important recreational and natural resource in the Ann Arbor area. Applications received either along the Huron River or which contain tributaries of the Huron River will be a priority for the Greenbelt, recognizing the significance of the Huron River to the Ann Arbor residents as their source of drinking water.

The Greenbelt scoring criteria awards points to applications that provide scenic views, and visibility from major corridors frequently traveled by Ann Arbor residents. Examples of these major corridors are along the highways that surround the city, which are often an entryway into the City, or routes that are frequented by bikers. The scenic value of each of the applications

will continue to be a part of the scoring criteria. Furthermore, the strategic blocks encompass major corridors, so an added benefit of forming large blocks of protected land will be preserving critical viewsheds within the Greenbelt District.

LAND ACQUISITIONS

Over the last 4 years, the Greenbelt has witnessed significant changes within the local economy and real estate market, which has had an effect on land acquisition transactions. The downturn in the market has resulted in fewer developers buying land in the area and an increase in properties on the market. Furthermore, the properties are remaining on the market for a longer period of time. Ultimately, this has equated to appraised values for development rights decreasing from an average of \$16,000 / acre to about \$4,200 / acre, as depicted on the graph below.



As of the end of the fiscal year, the Greenbelt Program has helped to protect 3,780 acres on working farms and natural areas (see map below of completed projects). These properties have a total fair market value of roughly \$38.76 million, with a cost to the Ann Arbor taxpayers

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of \$19.4 million. Thus, the City has contributed roughly 48% of the funds, and the remaining funds have been secured from FRPP grants, local partners, or landowner donations. In many cases, matching funds are secured through a variety of sources.

The 2011-2012 Fiscal Year was the busiest yet for the Greenbelt, completing 8 acquisitions, to protect a total of 522 acres of working farmland. These transactions have the following:

- The Lindemann farm in Lodi Township, which the City received FRPP funding to cover 49% of the purchase price.
- The Botero property in Northfield Township, which the city partnered with the Legacy Land Conservancy to protect.
- The Thomas and Lobato farm located in Scio Township, adjacent to other properties already protected. The landowners generously made a 50% donation of the purchase price to help offset the City's costs.
- Two adjacent properties owned by Joe Bloch – one located in Ann Arbor Township and one across the street in Northfield Township.
- One property in Superior Township, owned by Lakeside Development LLC, which is now part of the Superior Greenway block along Prospect Road. The city partnered with both the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy and Washtenaw County on the deal.
- The Boike farm in Northfield Township along Five Mile road.
- The Newton farm in Ann Arbor Township, which is now owned by a new farm, Green Things Farm.

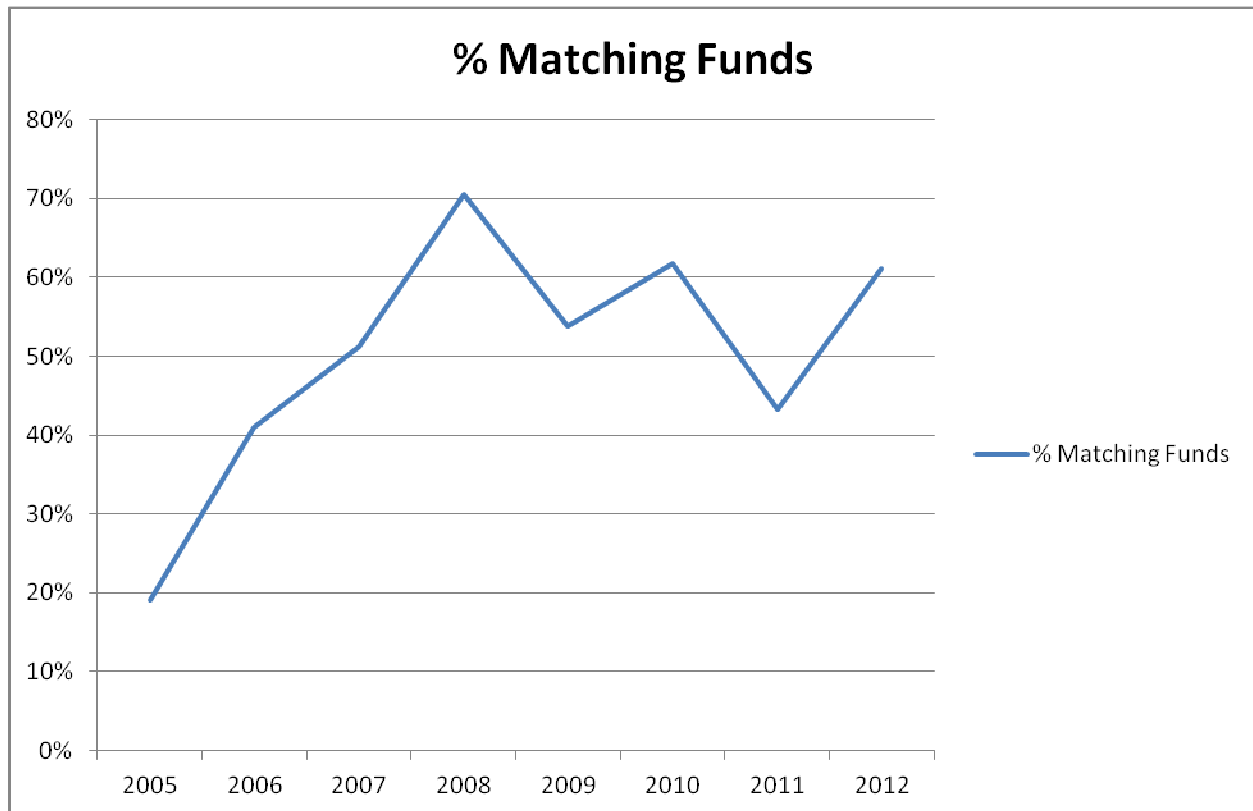
LEVERAGING FUNDS

FARM AND RANCLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM (FRPP)

For the 2012 FRPP grant cycle, the City was awarded \$396,900 toward the purchase of development rights on the Robert Schultz Farm in Superior Township and the Robbin Alexander Farm in Webster Township. Since 2005, the City has secured almost \$6.7 million from the USDA – Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. The City has also partnered with local agencies within the Greenbelt District who have received additional FRPP grant funds.

LOCAL PARTNERS

The City partnered with a number of local partners on each of the completed projects during this fiscal year including Ann Arbor Township, Legacy Land Conservancy, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy and Washtenaw County to complete the 8 transactions this year.



The chart above shows the average percent matching funds the Greenbelt has received annually, since the beginning of the millage. Matching funds include landowner donations, USDA Farm and Ranchland grants, Washtenaw County, Townships and local land conservancies.

PUBLIC AND LANDOWNER OUTREACH

In addition to outreach to landowners within the Greenbelt District, the Greenbelt Commission and staff made strides in reaching out to the public. The Greenbelt continues to work with many landowners who have protected their properties to put up signs at Greenbelt properties. In addition, this fiscal year the Greenbelt organized its second annual Bus Tour for participants to visit Greenbelt properties, meet local partners and landowners who have participated in the program. Commissioners and staff have also participated in many local events to spread the word about the Greenbelt, such as the HomeGrown Festival, and the Mayor's Green Fair.

PRESERVE WASHTENAW

Preserve Washtenaw is a collaborative group consisting of public agencies and private organizations in Washtenaw County, focused on land preservation. Preserve Washtenaw has

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informally been meeting for over 6 years. The City is an active member of Preserve Washtenaw. The purpose of Preserve Washtenaw is to serve as a coordinating body for ongoing public and private land protection efforts, ensuring the highest possible level of cooperation and communication, and least possible amount of duplication and overlap. The group hopes to provide a virtual single point of entry for landowners interested in land protection and/or stewardship to reduce confusion for landowners. The partners include Legacy Land Conservancy, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Natural Area Program, Raisin Valley Land Trust, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, Ann Arbor Township, Webster Township, Scio Township, and the City of Ann Arbor.

FINANCIAL SPREADSHEET

See Appendix A for detailed financial reports.

STEWARDSHIP FUNDS

For each conservation easement that is purchased, between \$23,000 and \$25,000 is set aside in a separate endowment fund. These endowment funds are to cover the annual monitoring requirements in perpetuity and enforcement obligations of any violations on the easements. To date, a total of \$445,536 is in the Greenbelt's endowment fund.

STATUS OF GOALS FOR 2011-2012

- Apply for Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) grant funds on 2 properties in 2012.
 - APPLIED FOR FUNDS ON 4 PROPERTIES, AND RECEIVED FUNDING FOR 2 PROPERTIES. APPLICATIONS INCLUDED THE ROBBIN ALEXANDER FARM, ROBERT SCHULTZ FARM, DONALD DRAKE FARM, AND CAROL SCHUMACHER FARM.
- Close on 3 properties.
 - CLOSED ON 8 PROPERTIES : 3 PROPERTY IN NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP, 1 IN SUPERIOR TOWNSHIP, 1 IN LODI TOWNSHIP, 1 IN SCIO TOWNSHIP, AND 2 IN ANN ARBOR TOWNSHIP.
- Obtain at least 20% matching funds on all transactions.
 - RECEIVED AT LEAST 20% ON ALL TRANSACTIONS.
 - AVERAGED 63% MATCH ON TRANSACTIONS FOR THIS FISCAL YEAR.
- Implement outreach strategy for the Greenbelt Program.

- THE STRATEGIC PLAN IS CURRENTLY BEING UPDATED TO INCLUDE OUTREACH STRATEGY. GREENBELT HELD 2ND ANNUAL BUS TOUR, AS WELL AS ATTENDED THE MAYOR'S GREENFAIR AND HOMEGROWN FESTIVAL.
- GREENBELT BEGAN DEVELOPING A BRANDING STRATEGY THAT WILL BE COMPLETE NEXT FISCAL YEAR.

GOALS FOR 2012-2013

BUILDING BLOCKS OF PROTECTED PROPERTIES

- Complete at least 5 transactions this year in the Greenbelt's strategic plan blocks.

LEVERAGING FUNDS

- Apply for USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program grant funds on at least 3 properties.
- Secure partners for any other transactions.
- Secure at least 20% matching funds on all transactions completed.

OUTREACH

- Organize annual Bus Tour in fall 2012 and schedule tour for next year.
- Hold public event in collaboration with the Library.
- Have table at HomeGrown Festival and Mayor's GreenFair. Identify other events, as appropriate.
- Finalize branding effort and place signs on all properties, based on landowners' willingness.

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PARK LAND ACQUISITIONS

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The PROS Plan identifies the following criteria for evaluating future parkland acquisitions. Please refer to the PROS Plan for more details on each criteria.

1. City-wide System Balance / Geographic Distribution as well as Open Space Convenient to Each Neighborhood
2. Natural Resource Protection
3. Open Space and Green Space Imagery/Aesthetics
4. Enhance Access and Linkage
5. Protection of the Huron River, Watersheds, and Water Quality
6. Recreation Value and Suitability for Intended Use
7. Method of Acquisition/Direct Costs
8. Provides for Future Needs/Anticipates Growth
9. Long-Term Development and Maintenance Costs

LAND PROTECTION

The City of Ann Arbor purchased 1 additional park property this year.

In November 2011, the city purchased the property adjacent to Bryant Community Center. The site will allow for expansion of Bryant Community Center and increase programming at the community center.



FINANCIAL SPREADSHEET

See Appendix A for details.

STATUS OF GOALS FOR 2011 – 2012

- Complete 1 – 2 transactions.

THE CITY PURCHASED AN ADDITIONAL 1 PROPERTY.

GOALS FOR 2012 – 2013

- Complete 1 – 2 transactions.
- Review land acquisition priorities once review area plans.

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Appendix A: Fiscal Year 2011-2012 Financial Report

Appendix B: Compilation of News Articles

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