



How Conserving Open Space Provides Economic Benefits to Massachusetts Communities

Land conservation has the potential to provide returns to communities by generating benefits with an economic value that outweighs the direct or perceived costs of conservation. There are many categories of value that directly benefit residents, local businesses, and the municipality.



Land conservation improves quality of life for residents by:

- Allowing for and encouraging recreational use. Local recreational access is important because most recreational activities are conducted within five miles of home.
- Providing numerous health benefits. Research indicates that people with access to the outdoors show long term health improvement.
- Improving air quality, helping to avoid the costs associated with pollution (e.g., medical expense and lost work because of asthma attacks).
- Keeping temperatures cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, avoiding a range of health problems and reducing energy bills.
- Helping to address disparities in access to nearby open space.



Land conservation generates local jobs and bolsters businesses by:

- Supporting tourism-related businesses.
- Recruiting new residents who may be business owners, entrepreneurs, or workers, supporting growth in earnings per job across a community.
- Protecting working landscapes and improving water quality and habitat that are vital to the farming, forestry, and commercial fishing industries.

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Land conservation benefits municipalities by:

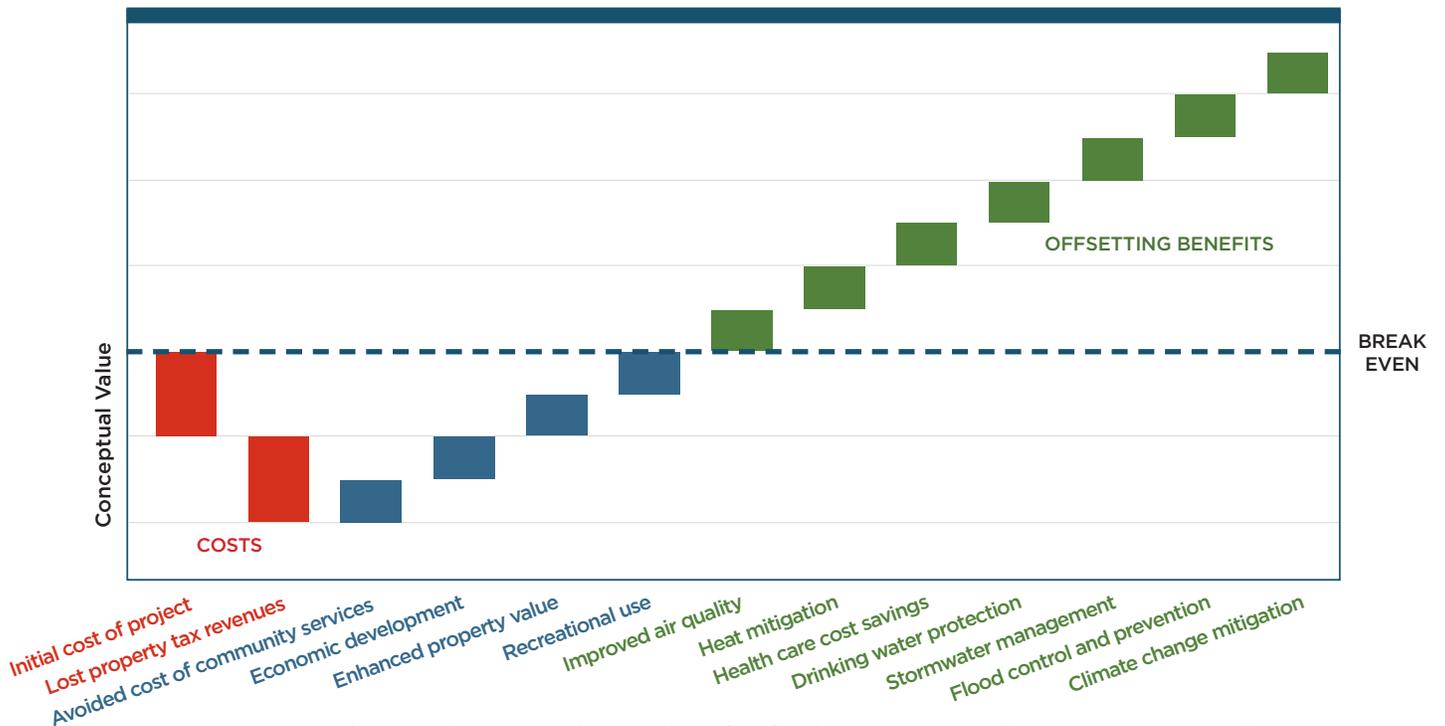
- Avoiding increased costs of public services that would have been required if the conserved property had been developed, such as increased school, public works, and public safety services.
- Positively impacting local employment outcomes and economic growth thereby improving the commercial tax base.
- Enhancing nearby property values by creating an amenity value, increasing tax revenue collected as assessments are adjusted.
- Protecting clean drinking water from contamination, filtering and cleaning drinking

water, and enhancing infiltration and replenishment of groundwater resources, reducing treatment costs.

- Naturally infiltrating and managing stormwater, lowering the levels of phosphorus, nitrogen, and total suspended solids that end up in waterbodies, and thereby lowering management costs.
- Storing and slowing runoff from storms, thereby reducing the frequency and magnitude of floods. Conserving land in floodplains helps avoid property damage and infrastructure losses by preventing development in flood-prone areas where property damage is most likely during flood events.

The specific benefits and costs of conserving a parcel of land will depend on characteristics of the land and community in question. A municipal investment is sometimes requested to acquire a specific parcel of conservation land. Sometimes conserving a piece of land will remove it from property tax rolls, but in the case of a conservation restriction or agricultural preservation restriction over land that remains in private hands, the property will still be subject to property taxation.

Economic impact of a land conservation project



This graphic represents the potential categories of costs and benefits of land conservation. Not all projects involve municipal costs. The benefits realized, as well as the magnitude of the values, will vary by project.