

Appendix C

Funding Mechanisms and Programs

Property Acquisition

1) Program/Method:	Municipal purchase
Sponsoring Agency:	Town of Westminster
Approximate Funding Maximum:	Dependent on Town Meeting.
Program Description:	This tool is probably the most direct and effective way for a town to achieve the acquisition objectives of its open space plan. Towns may either issue bonds to cover purchases or in some cases include a purchase item in the general budget. Bond issues are quite common and provide communities with the flexibility to negotiate with property owners, knowing that money has already been authorized to complete the acquisition.
Priority for pursuing:	High.
Chances of success:	Moderate - will depend on a vigorous public outreach campaign prior to town meeting and the general referendum.
2) Program/Method:	Land & PARC Program
Sponsoring Agency:	Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services (DCS)
Approximate Funding Maximum:	\$250,000.
Program Description:	The Program provides a percentage (typically over 50%) of reimbursement for the purchase of land for conservation and passive recreation purposes. This program can provide funding for “regional” projects, whereby several communities can combine their funding to cover a larger land purchase.
Priority for pursuing:	High.

Chances of success: Moderate - will depend on quality of town's application and level of competition.

3) Program/Method: **Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund**

Sponsoring Agency: National Park Service

Approximate Funding Maximum: Unknown.

Program Description: The first iteration of this Program provided up to 50% reimbursement towards the cost of acquisition or improvement of recreation land, including the development of active recreation facilities.

Priority for pursuing: Moderate.

Chances of success: Moderate depending on the funds to be made available upon the Program's reauthorization.

Studies and Construction/Maintenance

1) Program/Method: **The National Recreational Trails Act (NRTA)**

Sponsoring Agency: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

Approximate Funding Maximum: \$30,000.

Program Description: Part of the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Act, NRTA provides funds for trail projects. Eligible projects include: trail construction, land/easement acquisition, handicapped accessibility, interpretative areas/facilities, and education. Trails must be recreational, e.g. intra-city, on-road bikeways would probably not be eligible. There is no limit on grant funds, but a 50% local match is required (matching funds can be "non-cash"). Motorized and non-motorized trail use must be included in the grant with at least thirty percent of funds going to each activity.

Priority for pursuing: Moderate.

Chances of success: High with a good proposal.

2) Program/Method:

Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grant Program

Sponsoring Agency: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

Approximate Funding Maximum: \$5,000.

Program Description: Greenways and trail projects are at the center of this program. Funding categories include: planning, research, mapping, public education and community outreach, ecological assessment, and trail construction, maintenance and expansion. In recent years focus has been placed on projects that either educate the public or work on river greenways. However, all greenway/trail projects are eligible with the exception of those confined to a single parcel of land.

Priority for pursuing: Moderate.

Chances of success: High with a good proposal.

Non-acquisition programs

1) Program/Method:

Conservation Restrictions (CRs)

Sponsoring Agency: Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services (DCS)

Approximate Funding Maximum: Only technical support available.

Program Description: Conservation restrictions (CR's) are legal, enforceable agreements, authorized by the state, which are made between a landowner and a charitable organization, or a town. They are used primarily to keep land in a "natural or scenic open condition". Restrictions can be written so that certain uses are permitted and others prohibited, e.g. the current owner may continue to occupy an existing house on the land, but may restrict the

construction of any additional houses. Grantors of restrictions may also be able to benefit by reductions in various taxes including property, estate and income.

Priority for pursuing:

High.

Chances of success:

Depends on property owner.

2) Program/Method:

Assessment Act (M.G.L. Chapters 61, 61A and 61B)

Sponsoring Agency:

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Agricultural Resources, and Department of Revenue (respectively)

Approximate Funding Maximum:

No public funds available.

Program Description:

These programs work by making available special property tax assessments to owners who agree to restrict their land to a particular use. Chapter 61 applies to lands actively devoted to forestry use, 61A applies to active agricultural lands, and 61B applies to public recreational lands like wildlife sanctuaries and golf courses. Generally properties are assessed at their current use value rather than their highest use. This usually translates into a substantial property tax savings for owners. The program also requires a right-of-first-refusal option to the town when property owners look to sell their land.

Priority for pursuing:

Moderate.

Chances of success:

Depends on property owner.

3) Program/Method:

Agricultural Preservation Restrictions

Sponsoring Agency:

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources

Approximate Funding Maximum:

No public funds available.

Program Description:

This program insures that active farms stay in agricultural production. The state purchases a farmer's development rights. The price paid is the difference between the full market value of the property and its appraised agricultural value. A permanent restriction is then put in place prohibiting all non-agricultural uses on the parcel. The farmer is taxed at the agricultural value rather than the highest use value.

Priority for pursuing:

High.

Chances of success:

Depends on property owner.