

# ACTIVITY REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2007 - 2008

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ANN ARBOR OPEN SPACE AND PARKLAND  
PRESERVATION PROGRAM

PREPARED FOR:

THE CITY OF ANN ARBOR  
GREENBELT ADVISORY COMMISSION  
PARKLAND ADVISORY COMMISSION

PREPARED BY:  
THE CONSERVATION FUND

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# ACTIVITY REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2007 - 2008

ANN ARBOR OPEN SPACE AND PARKLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

### GREENBELT

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#### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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The City of Ann Arbor residents are fortunate enough to not only have a vibrant park system, but to also have open space surrounding the city that provides scenic vistas and attracts folks to this area. In 2003 residents had the insight to pass the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage, commonly referred to the Parks and Greenbelt program. Money is generated through a tax levy 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 provide funds to preserve and protect open space, natural habitats, farmland, and the City's source waters inside and outside the city limits.

Since the passage of the millage, the City has purchased an additional 30.05 acres of parkland. These parcels have added on to existing parkland, protected critical natural areas remaining in the City, and provided linkages between parks, increasing the viability of the overall park system. Furthermore, the City has helped to protect over 894 acres of working farmland and open space outside of the City. Protecting farmland provides many benefits to the Ann Arbor residents by protecting the rural, scenic vistas, local agricultural economy, as well as providing habitat for wildlife.

Furthermore, since 2003, Ann Arbor, Webster and Scio Townships located within the Greenbelt District have also passed similar millages, providing opportunities for the Greenbelt to leverage city funds and collaborate with other jurisdictions on land preservation.

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#### LAND PROTECTION

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#### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

As outlined in the Greenbelt's Strategic Plan, which was adopted in 2005, the program has focused on forming large blocks of protected farmland and open space through the acquisition of easements, as well as protecting land along the Huron River. The Greenbelt identified 5 areas to concentrate acquisitions within the Greenbelt District to form these large blocks of protected land. The Commission continues to use the Strategic Plan to guide recommendations to Council on land acquisition.

Over the last 2 years, however, the City of Ann Arbor has witnessed several changes within the local economy and real estate market, which has had an effect on the Greenbelt Program. For one, there has been a notable downturn in the local residential real estate market. In addition, Pfizer has announced the closing of their Ann Arbor facility. This has all resulted in fewer developers buying land in the area and an increase in properties on the market and properties remaining on the market for a longer period of time. The Greenbelt Advisory Commission strategically responded to the changing real estate market to maximize the impact on land preservation by examining new partnership opportunities, leveraging funds and explored the expansion of the Greenbelt District boundary.

This year, the Greenbelt Commission recommended to City Council to expand the Greenbelt boundary, in order to provide more opportunities in those townships where there are significant public and or private dollars (through local land trusts) for land preservation. City Council approved the Commission's recommendation and expanded the Greenbelt District by one mile to the west in Webster and Scio Townships, one mile to the south in Pittsfield Township and one mile to the east in Superior Township.

This downturn in the housing market has also sparked on-going discussions amongst the Commission on appraisal practices, land values and the ever-changing real estate market. The Commission invited an appraiser, Mike Williams of the Gerald Alcock company in to speak to them on appraisal practices and recent land sales in the area. Julie Frost from Greenstone Farm Credit Services also came to speak to the Commission on agricultural land values and sales in the Ann Arbor area.

## LAND ACQUISITIONS

To date, the Greenbelt Program has helped to protect 894 acres on working farms and natural areas. These properties have a total fair market value of \$13,474,254, with a cost to the Ann Arbor taxpayers at \$8,123,705. Thus, the City has contributed 60% of the purchase price.

During the 2007-2008 fiscal year, the Greenbelt completed 3 acquisitions. In July 2007, the City completed the purchase of development rights (PDR) deal on the John and Beverly Alexander Farm. The City received a grant from the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) for a portion of the Purchase of Development Rights.

In late 2007, the City partnered with Scio Township and Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation to purchase the 49-acre Fox property, now referred to as the Fox Science Preserve. The site is an old gravel pit and has long been a field trip site for local students to learn about geology and botany. Washtenaw County contributed 50% towards the purchase price and owns and manages the site as a County Park. Both the City and Scio Township each contributed 25% of the funds toward the purchase price.

In June 2008, the City again partnered with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation to purchase 2 properties in Superior Township owned by Biltmore. These properties are prime examples of the down turn in the real estate market, as they were owned by local residential developer. Both parcels are located in close proximity to land already owned and protected by Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy (SMLC). The parcels contain a mix of high-quality mature woodland, wetland, open

water and farmland. The 55-acre parcel includes a perennial stream and the boundary between the Rouge River and Huron River Watersheds. The 84-acre parcel consists of a large body of open water that hosts a mix of bird species. A portion of both parcels is currently farmland, and will continue to be leased to a farmer and remain in agricultural production. The County owns and will manage these sites as a County Park as well. Superior township contributed \$1,000 and Superior Land Conservancy contributed \$10,000 toward the purchase. Superior Land Conservancy will also assist the County with the management of the site.

## LEVERAGING FUNDS

### FRPP FUNDS RECEIVED

For the 2007 grant cycle, the City was awarded \$750,050 toward the purchase of the Merkel – Heller – Marr farm in Webster Township. This farm is adjacent to a farm already protected by the Greenbelt, making this a priority for the Greenbelt.

In spring of 2008, FRPP contacted agencies that had received funds in the 2007 grant cycle to solicit additional funding requests. The City submitted requests for additional funding on 8 properties in total and received an additional \$1.686 million for two of those properties. The two properties are adjacent to one another and potentially protect over 300 acres of active agriculture land. Both of those properties are also located in Ann Arbor Township, who will be a partner in the purchase of the development rights on the properties.

Since 2005, the City has secured over \$4.2 million from the FRPP program. The City has also partnered with other local agencies within the Greenbelt District, which also received FRPP grant funds.

### LOCAL MONEY LEVERAGED

As discussed above, the City partnered with the Washtenaw County Parks and Scio Township on the purchase of the Fox Science Preserve. The purchase price for the 49-acre property was \$771,000 with the City contributing \$192,750, or 25% of the total purchase price.

The City also partnered with Washtenaw County Parks to purchase 2 parcels located in Superior Township for a total of 139 acres. The City contributed just under 50% of the purchase price, with the County contributing the majority of the remaining funds. The Superior Land Conservancy made a \$10,000 contribution toward the purchase and will assist the County in managing one of the parcels.

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## LANDOWNER OUTREACH

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Due to the local economic and real estate markets, the City has experienced an increase in applications over the last year. In fact, the Greenbelt received twice as many applications during this year, as compared to the previous year. As such, no landowner forums were organized this year.

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## PARTNERSHIPS

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### 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 informally been meeting for over 3 years, and this past year formed a charter to solidify communication among the groups. 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 also 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 Washtenaw Land Trust, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Natural Area Program, Raisin Valley Land Trust, Washtenaw Land Trust, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, Ann Arbor Township, Webster Township, Pittsfield Township, Scio Township, The City of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County Planning and Environment.

### STATE OF MICHIGAN

In collaboration with the Michigan Department of Agriculture's Farm and Open Space Program and Farm Bureau the Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program was highlighted in a Farmland Preservation Panel for the Michigan Association of Counties.

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## FINANCIAL SPREADSHEET

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Financials for the fiscal year 2007-2008 attached.

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### STATUS OF GOALS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006 – 2007

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- Leverage Greenbelt funds by Applying for FRPP funds on 3 properties

THE GREENBELT APPLIED FOR FUNDING ON A TOTAL OF 9 PROPERTIES DURING THIS FISCAL YEAR AND RECEIVED FUNDING ON 3 OF THE PROPERTIES.

- Leverage Greenbelt funds by Collaborating with Townships and County on applications

THE CITY PARTNERED WITH SCIO TOWNSHIP AND WASHTENAW COUNTY PARKS ON ONE PURCHASE AND PARTNERED WITH THE COUNTY ON ANOTHER PURCHASE.

- Close on 2 new properties

THE GREENBELT CLOSED ON 3 DEALS DURING THIS FISCAL YEAR.

- Provide future leverage for Greenbelt funds by Encouraging Salem Township to apply for State PDR

SALEM TOWNSHIP IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR STATE PDR GRANT FUNDS.

- Meet with the Homebuilders and Commercial Lenders along with Preserve Washtenaw representatives for a review of properties in their inventory that might make good areas for farmland preservation, natural area and open space preservation

GREENBELT STAFF ALONG WITH WASHTENAW LAND TRUST AND WASHTENAW COUNTY PARKS MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE WASHTENAW HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION.

- Develop a pilot registry program.

THE GREENBELT STAFF DEVELOPED A REGISTRY BROCHURE, HOWEVER, DUE TO THE INCREASE APPLICATIONS THIS FISCAL YEAR, THE GREENBELT HAS NOT FOCUSED ON A REGISTRY PROGRAM.

- Obtain at least 25% matching funds on all transactions from sources including local government, state government, federal government and landowner contributions.

THE GREENBELT HAS RECEIVED AT A MINIMUM 33% MATCHING FUNDS ON ALL LAND DEALS COMPLETED DURING THIS FISCAL YEAR.

- Explore ways to tangibly connect Ann Arbor taxpayers with the Greenbelt program, including but not limited to newsletters, events, and a Small Farms Initiative with Ann Arbor Township.

An advertisement was placed in the ann arbor observer, which provided an overview of the program and accomplishments to date. A one-page summary of the program and accomplishments was also developed to provide to partners, new commissioners or new city council members. The greenbelt staff has also been involved with the food system economic partnership's leadership team to explore area of overlap with local food production.

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## GOALS FOR 2008-2009

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- Leverage Greenbelt funds by Applying for FRPP funds on 3 properties.
- As part of the Greenbelt's ongoing discussions of value and the real estate market, release a Request for Proposals to be sent to developers and bankers who own property within the Greenbelt District in order for them to submit a price / acre bid if they wish to sell their property to the City's Greenbelt.
- Leverage Greenbelt funds by Collaborating with Townships and County on applications.
- Close on 4 new properties.
- Obtain at least 25% matching funds on all transactions from sources including local government, state government, federal government and landowner contributions.
- Continue to explore ways to tangibly connect Ann Arbor taxpayers with the Greenbelt program, including but not limited to newsletters, events, and a Small Farms Initiative with Ann Arbor Township.

# PARKLAND ACQUISITIONS

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## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

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During last year, the Park Advisory Commission and staff utilized GIS to embark on a Strategic Planning process for parkland acquisitions. Through GIS, vacant parcels were identified and ranked based on their suitability for acquisition as a park. Separate ranking schema was developed for each of the four types of parks – neighborhood parks, community / active recreation parks, urban parks, and natural areas. The goal of this process is to provide a strategic approach to ensure the viability of the City's park system.

Through the strategic planning process, using GIS, staff was able to identify underserved neighborhoods. In an ideal system, every household should be within walking distance (¼ mile) of a neighborhood park (City of Ann Arbor PROS Plan F6). By using functions of GIS, the housing units not within walking distance of an existing neighborhood park were identified. This helps to ensure adequate access to the park system for all neighborhoods.

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## LAND PROTECTION

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This year the City added an additional 3 parcels for a total of 17.3 new acres to the park system. In July 2007, the City of Ann Arbor completed the purchase of 2.5 acres of land adjacent to Eberwhite Woods. The property was purchased from the Zion Lutheran Church for \$580,000 dollars from the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage. The 2.5 acres are now part of the City's park inventory and will be maintained by Natural Area Preservation Staff. The adjacent property, owned by Ann Arbor Public Schools, Eberwhite Woods, is a popular natural area in the Old West Side neighborhood, bordered by Liberty Street and Eberwhite School.

In December 2007, the City of Ann Arbor accepted the donation of the vacant parcel located at 1805 Washtenaw Avenue. Douglas Crary had been the owner of the property. He served on the Ann Arbor Planning Commission and two terms on the Ann Arbor City Council. When Douglas Crary passed away in 2006, the property was left to his daughters, Rachel L Crary and Elizabeth A. Crary. To honor their father's wishes to have the parcel continued to be used as open space, the sisters approached the City to donate the vacant parcel to be used as a park for sledding and other recreational purposes. Neighborhood children currently use the hill on the property for sledding in the winter. The site will be used only for recreational purposes, and no playground equipment will be developed on the site.

Also in December 2007, the City of Ann Arbor completed the purchase of 13.5 acres from the Narrow Gauge Holdings Inc. and Sondra Gunn. The property was purchased from the landowners for \$1.8 million dollars from the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage.

The property is commonly known to many as Narrow Gauge Woods. The site was the only site recommended in the Millers Creek Watershed Improvement plan for protection, based on the high floristic quality of the area and the high quality of Millers Creek on the site. The creek sustains sensitive macro invertebrates and has wetland flora that is unique to this type of habitat. The preservation of the property has been a high priority for the City of Ann Arbor's Natural Area Preservation program for years.

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## FINANCIAL SPREADSHEET

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See appendices for details.

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## STATUS OF GOALS FOR 2007 – 2008

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- Use the strategic plan to identify specific parcels for acquisition that provide underserved neighborhoods with neighborhood and active recreation parks.

COMPLETED THE PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN AND WAS APPROVED BY THE PARK ADVISORY COMMISSION AND GIVEN TO CITY COUNCIL . ANALYSIS COMPLETED OF POTENTIAL PARK PURCHASES AND WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE LAND ACQUISITION COMMITTEE

- Acquire 3 top priority parcels that provide natural area, neighborhood park and active recreation areas.

TWO NEW PARKS WERE PURCHASED THIS FISCAL YEAR AND ONE PARCEL DONATED TO THE CITY'S PARK SYSTEM.

- Develop financial options for landowners that allow the City to pay landowners over time as millage proceeds become available.

FINANCIAL OPTIONS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED.

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## GOALS FOR 2008 - 2009

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- Complete 1-2 land acquisitions including at least one donation.
- Complete rezoning and annexation of 30 parks that were acquired but have not been annexed into the City or rezoned to public land.

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## APPENDICES

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Appendix 1: Financial Report Appendix 2: Compilation of news articles

## Appendix 1: Fiscal Year 2006-2007 Financial Report

City of Ann Arbor  
**INCOME STATEMENT - OPEN SPACE AND PARKLAND PRESERVATION MILLAGE (FINAL)**  
For the Period Ended June 30, 2008

	FY 2003/04	FY 2004/05	FY 2005/06	FY 2006/07	FY 2007/08
<b>REVENUE</b>					
Millage Proceeds		\$ 1,939,530	\$ 2,014,851	\$ 2,130,654	\$ 2,237,489
Bond/Note Proceeds		-	20,108,066	-	-
Investment Income	1	116,040	760,529	1,177,978	920,378
Prior Year Refund of Expenses				3,918	2,643
Refund of Escrow					8,409
State Grants		659,337	-	-	-
Federal Grants		-	190,642	1,257,400	336,643
Contributions & Memorials		50,000	-	-	-
Gross Revenue		<u>\$ 2,764,907</u>	<u>\$ 23,074,088</u>	<u>\$ 4,569,950</u>	<u>\$ 3,505,562</u>
Tax Refund		(1,546)	(3,235)	(1,930)	(13,020)
Uncollectible Personal Property Taxes		(950)	-	-	-
<b>Net Revenues</b>		<u>\$ 2,762,412</u>	<u>\$ 23,070,853</u>	<u>\$ 4,568,020</u>	<u>\$ 3,492,542</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
<b>DEBT SERVICE</b>		\$ -	\$ 470,468	\$ 1,158,125	\$ 1,165,950
<b>PROJECTS</b>					
Greenbelt Projects	2	\$ 33,370	\$ 4,746,315	\$ 3,292,912	\$ 1,855,831
Park Projects	3	1,401,484	204,370	2,907,316	2,525,060
Total Project Expenditures		<u>\$ 1,434,854</u>	<u>\$ 4,950,686</u>	<u>\$ 6,200,228</u>	<u>\$ 4,380,890</u>
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES</b>					
Conservation Fund					
Non-Transaction Expenses		\$ 34,920	\$ 76,136	\$ 62,951	\$ 65,029
Transaction Expenses		24,600	68,353	42,816	88,680
General Expenses		11,629	21,857	15,991	14,950
Total Conservation Fund	4	<u>\$ 71,149</u>	<u>\$ 166,345</u>	<u>\$ 121,757</u>	<u>\$ 168,659</u>
Personnel - GIS Staff		9,318	13,901	22,729	10,293
Contractual - Appraisers		-	-	2,111	885
Contractual - Clark		28,539	19,695	-	-
Contractual - Lonik		6,245	-	-	-
Professional Services		-	-	-	200
MI Farmland Alliance		500	-	-	-
IT Fund - GIS activity		-	2,045	2,520	12,612
Insurance Fund		1,428	2,664	2,844	2,220
Advertising		769	-	36	2,752
Printing		21	-	-	-
Materials & Supplies		248	84	(2,138.0)	-
Bond Issuance Costs		-	87,865	-	-
<b>Subtotal</b>		<u>\$ 47,069</u>	<u>\$ 126,255</u>	<u>\$ 28,103</u>	<u>\$ 28,962</u>
<b>Total Administrative Expenditures</b>		<u>\$ 118,217</u>	<u>\$ 292,600</u>	<u>\$ 149,860</u>	<u>\$ 197,621</u>
<b>Total Expenditures</b>		<u>\$ 1,553,071</u>	<u>\$ 5,713,753</u>	<u>\$ 7,508,213</u>	<u>\$ 5,744,461</u>
<b>Net Change In Fund Balance</b>	5	<u>\$ 1,209,341</u>	<u>\$ 17,357,100</u>	<u>\$ (2,940,194)</u>	<u>\$ (2,251,919)</u>
<b>MEMO</b>					
Total Fund Balance		\$ 4,260,286	\$ 5,469,627	\$ 22,826,726	\$ 19,886,532
		\$ 17,634,613	\$ 17,634,613	\$ 17,634,613	\$ 17,634,613

The City of Ann Arbor  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Note 1 The City invests the funds balance in accordance with its investment policy. All earnings from investments are included in investment income.

Note 2 **Greenbelt Projects**  
 To maintain confidentiality, properties are assigned unique identification numbers during negotiations.

ID No.	FY 04/05	FY 05/06	FY 06/07	FY 07/08	TOTAL
Biltmore	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 630,235	\$ 630,235
Bloomer	4,490	1,923,333	-	-	1,927,823
<b>Bloomer - Endowment</b>			23,867	-	23,867
Cares	3,200	500	2,427,559	-	2,431,259
<b>Cares - Endowment</b>			23,867	-	23,867
Fishbeck-Salem	3,995	804,754	-	-	808,749
Fishbeck-Superior	4,695	1,992,708	-	-	1,997,403
<b>Fishbeck - Endowments</b>			47,793	-	47,793
Fox	-	-	-	192,750	192,750
John & Bev Alexander	3,700	1,300	3,130	1,028,001	1,036,131
Kapp	-	-	760,936	-	760,936
2005-01	4,290	-	-	-	4,290
2005-06	-	3,200	-	-	3,200
2005-08	-	4,815	-	-	4,815
2005-12	5,100	500	-	-	5,600
2005-14	3,900	690	-	-	4,590
2005-15	-	500	190	-	690
2005-16	-	500	-	-	500
2005-17	-	3,890	-	-	3,890
2005-18	-	4,925	190	-	5,115
2006-02	-	4,700	190	-	4,890
2006-03	-	-	300	-	300
2006-07	-	-	4,950	-	4,950
2006-09	-	-	-	455	455
2007-02	-	-	-	230	230
2007-06	-	-	-	230	230
2007-09	-	-	-	230	230
2007-21	-	-	-	230	230
2007-22	-	-	-	3,470	3,470
<b>Total Greenbelt</b>	<b>\$ 33,370</b>	<b>\$ 4,746,315</b>	<b>\$ 3,292,912</b>	<b>\$ 1,855,831</b>	<b>\$ 9,928,428</b>

Note 3 **Park Projects**  
 To maintain confidentiality, properties are assigned unique identification numbers during negotiations.

ID No.	FY 04/05	FY 05/06	FY 06/07	FY 07/08	TOTAL
Andres	\$ 5,586	\$ 3,000	\$ 153,203	\$ 2,232	\$ 158,435
Bandemer	-	-	-	-	5,586
Brookside	-	150,000	-	-	150,000
Columbus Homes	-	18,017	15,312	12,946	46,275
Crary Trust	-	-	1,895	8,550	10,445
Dicken Woods	-	6,900	-	-	6,900
Dolph Nature-South Addition	1,244,267	694	-	-	1,244,962
Evergreen - Lot 108	39,300	-	-	-	39,300
Evergreen - Lot 118	57,247	-	-	-	57,247
Evergreen - Lot 120	49,668	-	-	-	49,668
Girl Scouts/Camp Hilltop	-	2,400	2,236,849	-	2,239,249
Narrow Gauge Way	-	6,600	-	1,834,388	1,840,988
Norfolk Southern	3,365	-	-	7,000	10,365
Onder	-	2,400	487,585	-	489,985
Traver	-	-	-	65,237	65,237
Ward Park	50	-	-	-	50
Zion Lutheran	-	2,960	12,472	582,232	597,664
2004-07	2,000	-	-	-	2,000
2005-01	-	2,900	-	-	2,900
2005-03	-	2,000	-	-	2,000
2005-04	-	2,000	-	-	2,000
2005-05	-	4,000	-	-	4,000
2005-09	-	500	-	-	500
2007-01	-	-	-	4,450	4,450
2007-02	-	-	-	4,760	4,760
2007-03	-	-	-	1,110	1,110
2007-08	-	-	-	2,155	2,155
<b>Total Parks</b>	<b>\$ 1,401,484</b>	<b>\$ 204,370</b>	<b>\$ 2,907,316</b>	<b>\$ 2,525,060</b>	<b>\$ 7,038,230</b>

Note 4 **Conservation Fund Expenditures**

The following activities shall be considered administration expenses that may be paid for from the millage revenues. The administration expenditures are identified on the statement as "Non-Transaction" in nature: (1) Staff or consultant time, including benefits, devoted directly to the acquisition process, (2) Staff or consultant time, including but not devoted directly to program support, (3) Travel/vehicle cost incurred, (4) Administrative expenses directly attributable to program support or the acquisition process, (5) Monitor development rights and/or conservation easements, (6) Enforcement of acquired development rights and/or conservation easements, (7) Legal expenses directly related to the or leasing of property or property interests, including staff or outside counsel time.

The actual cost of property or property interests, or the actual cost of lease or leasehold interests, plus charges for the items on the list to follow, can be paid from millage revenue not considered administrative expenses and are not subject to the limits on the appropriation of administrative expenses. The expenditures listed below are identified on the statement as "Transaction" in nature: (1) Title commitments, (2) Payment of property taxes on acquired or leased property, (3) Preparation of appraisals of property, (4) Pre surveys of property, (5) Preparation of Phase 1 Environmental Assessments of property, as well as subsequent Phases/baseline environmental studies and any related due care required, (6) Baseline documentation for development rights and/or conservation easements, and (7) Costs directly related to the sale of bonds supported by this millage.

Note 5 The ending fund balance as of June 30, 2007 does not match the City's audited financial statements by \$2,223,423 due to the timing of the purchase of the Camp Hilltop (Girl Scouts) property. The audit did not allow for the recognition of these expenditures as the escrow was not settled until after June 30th.



## Appendix 2: Compilation of News Articles



Everything Michigan

## THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

### Plan on park sales delayed

Effort to expand Ann Arbor greenbelt boundaries also tabled

Tuesday, August 07, 2007

**BY TOM GANTERT**

**News Staff Reporter**

A plan that would require Ann Arbor voters to approve any sale of city parkland and an effort to expand the city's greenbelt boundaries were both tabled at the City Council meeting Monday.

Both proposals appear to have the backing of City Council after no member expressed any objections.

Council Member Bob Johnson, D-1st Ward, introduced the two proposals and agreed to the postponement until the next council meeting.

The proposal to require a voter referendum on parkland sales would first require amending the City Charter. Charter amendments must be approved by city voters and Johnson wants the issue placed on this November's election ballot.

The postponement on placing it on the ballot came after some council members said there were concerns they wanted addressed first.

Mayor John Hieftje said the council just wanted "clarifications" before voting.

"I expect it to pass," Hieftje said. "I support it."

Currently, state law requires that any sale of parkland on a city master plan must be approved by a vote of the residents. Johnson has said there is a loophole that allows city councils to take parkland off the master plan and then sell it without a vote of the residents.

The charter amendment would fix that.

The council wanted to know how many parcels of parkland currently aren't on the master plan. There were also questions in regard to what impact the proposal would have on parkland owned by the public schools and parkland owned by utilities that have easements on it.

The council is also expected to pass the expansion of the boundaries for the city's greenbelt program, which is funded by a voter-approved millage. The expansion would extend the boundaries about another mile to the east in Superior Township, to the south in Pittsfield Township and to the west in Scio and Webster townships. Webster and Scio townships have their own purchase-of-development-right millages, but Pittsfield doesn't.

Jack Smiley, president of the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, told the council that the boundaries should be made more flexible to enable the city to get more matching dollars from the surrounding townships.

Smiley said he has a project he is working on, involving several hundred acres that would be outside the

proposed expanded boundaries. He said he hoped the greenbelt program could be made flexible enough to help.

Council Member Wendy Woods, D-5th Ward, said she wanted time for the council to see if it made sense to expand the boundaries even farther than accommodating Smiley's proposal.

Council Member Chris Easthope, D-5th Ward, said the council should also consider having residents vote on the expanded boundaries.

"Why wouldn't we put this on the ballot?" Easthope asked.

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# Natural Area Preservation News

Protecting and restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas and fostering an environmental ethic among its citizens

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## Park Focus: The Onder Property

by Billy Kirst

Break out your hand saws and safety glasses – we're about to have another big restoration party! Recently, the city purchased "the Onder property," a 4.2-acre parcel of land. (This nature area hasn't yet been officially named, so for now we'll just call it "Onder.") Though currently overwhelmed by buckthorn and honeysuckle, Onder shows clear signs of natural riches waiting to flourish. The parcel consists of mesic forest, formerly dominated by ash. A few large oak trees, and many black cherry and box elder fill in the overstory. There are two small streams and many pockets of wooded wetlands. The stream at the north end has a nice diversity of mesic and wet mesic woodland wildflowers including trillium, early meadow-rue, and marsh marigolds, woven together by a ground cover of Virginia creeper.

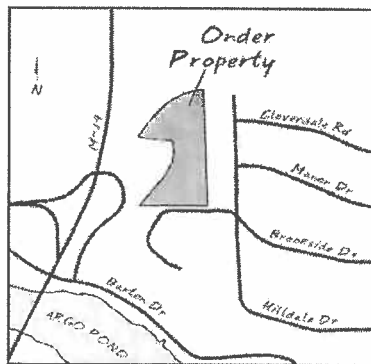
One of Onder's most important ecological features is its location. Positioned between the upland forests of Leslie Park and Black Pond Woods and the riparian complex of Argo, Bandemer, Barton, Bird Hills, and Kuebler Langford, Onder – with adjacent non-developed properties – serves as a "green corridor," providing important habitat connectivity.

Green corridors act in much the same way as those in buildings. Connecting spaces together as a cohesive unit, indoor corridors allow people to comfortably move from room to room without stepping out into the cold or rain. As a green corridor, Onder is a place where birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, and seeds can move through the urban landscape without facing assault from *the lawn*. Despite deceptive luscious greenery, most lawns lack the shade, water, and other habitat qualities needed by wildlife. Lawns can be places where native plants and animals encounter such perils as mowers, kitty cats,

and herbicides. Connections like Onder offer welcome relief.

Landscape corridors are becoming an increasingly important component of natural areas planning and management. To see for yourself, grab your "Parks Map and Recreation Facility Listing," (free if you contact us or come to a workday!), and let's check out the city from a turkey vulture's eye view. Over 25 natural areas,

parks, and green spaces line most of the Huron River as it winds through the city. This corridor provides contiguous habitat and resources for plants and animals. Rivers make especially great corridors since their connectivity not only supports species on land, but provides greater continuity of habitat for amphibians and aquatic wildlife.



Fragmentation of the natural landscape by roads, buildings, parking lots, and agriculture strains the ability of the remaining natural areas to support an

ecologically diverse and functional assemblage of plant and animal species. When a natural area is completely surrounded by development, wildlife become isolated from potential mates, and diversity and survival rates suffer. This is particularly true for species with highly specific habitat requirements and limited dispersal abilities. It is also essential in regions where fire is an important historic and current feature of the landscape. Many fire-sensitive species take refuge from fires in nearby ecosystems, only to repopulate into the burned location. Habitat connectivity, therefore, can be a lifeline for many species.

Habitats in large, continuous tracts also buffer the effects of landscape change. Say, for example, that a population of Joe-pye-weed was wiped out by a marauding army of glossy buckthorn. Then some NAPpers came along

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