

20-Year Land Conservation Vision Workshop

Summary of 4 Work Group Reports

Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference

March 27, 2010

Approximately sixty very knowledgeable land conservationists spent 90 minutes productively developing a 20-year vision that is generally summarized by the following three paragraphs. A special thanks to the four excellent group facilitators: Joselyn Forbush (TTOR), Kurt Gaertner (EEA), Ron McAdow (SVT), and Colin Novick (GWLTL).

A Land Conservation Vision Summary for Massachusetts

The Massachusetts landscape in 20 years has intact working farms and forests accessible to people with streams with good water quality and adequate flow and high value ecological areas protected and people with an emotional connection to the land living in thoughtful development in existing villages and cities with good access to open spaces.

Before we reach this future, we need to deal with development that fragments the landscape due to insensitive zoning and a public not educated about this problem and landowners under financial pressure not educated about the positive use of estate planning tools in an environment where climate change and invasive species expand, people are not connected to the land and funding for land conservation is often a challenge.

The strategies to reach the future vision need to be heavily focused on improving zoning regulations, incentives and investment based on a comprehensive, smart growth, science-based plan that has broad-based public education and involvement and focuses on connecting neighborhoods and villages to the land, especially working landscapes.

Summary of Top 3 Ideas from the 4 Work Groups (1 point for #3 ranked; 2 points for #2 ranked and 3 points for #1 ranked)

Category/Recommendation	Score
<i>Desired Future Condition</i>	
Intact protected and working farms and forests	6
Protect quality and flow of stream systems	3
Emotional connection of people to places	3
Thoughtful development is concentrated on previously developed land	3
Accessible open space to all across the landscape	2
Land of ecological significance with large biodiversity payoff protected	2
Protect and enhance urban conservation land with public access	2
Land conservation guided by a Comprehensive Inter-Disciplinary Plan	2
Citizens are well-educated about conservation issues (incl. urban)	1
<i>Threats</i>	
Zoning is insensitive to resources and aids fragmentation	9
Ignorant mindset	3
Increased development limits public access and causes parcelization	2
Financial pressure and lack of estate planning on private land	2
Build-out pressure, sprawl and population growth	2
Lack of broad consensus on actions that are necessary	2
Climate change	1
People not connected to the land	1
Invasives	1
Lack of funding	1
<i>Strategies</i>	
Zoning reform , regulation, incentives and investment based on a comprehensive, smart growth, science-based plan	12
Education and public involvement on nature/land use to all	6
Village/neighborhood cohesion with unstructured time outdoors	3
Protect more land	2
Promote productive uses of working landscape	1

Detailed Group Reports

Group #1: Working Landscapes

Numbers on left = persons choosing that as a priority

Desired Future Conditions

- 11 Intact and working farms and forests ...including also green cemeteries
- 2 Improved connectivity between protected lands
- 2 Restore natural stormwater drainage and daylight streams
- 4 Concentrate development on previously developed lands
- 8 Accessible open space – to all
 - access across landscape
- 1 Increase in people – to – land connections
 - make easy, no car access, via public transit
- 1 All commercial development includes renewable energy

Threats

- 7 - Government actions
 - Current zoning is insensitive to resources
- 3 “Tea Party” public pushback against government
- 3 Increasing population
- 3 Lack of education/training of land-based industry
 - “older” employment base need next generation
- 6 Culture of suburbs and cars – not part of family life; competing uses for open lands (recreation)
- 7 Increased development (private ownership = limited public access and parcelization)
- 2 Poor economy + real estate values
- 6 Climate change

Strategies

- 1 Monitor effects of climate change – better assessments
- 7 Promote productive use of working landscapes
- 10 Zoning reform and regulate and invest based on a plan, coherent regulation and planning and incentives for towns to adopt better zoning

- 8 Protect more land
- 5 Promote green strategies for homeowners to municipalities - incentives for green economy w/incentives and regulations
- 2 Remove externalities; incorporate all hidden costs
- 1 Carbon credit market for towns

Group #2 Theme: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Integrity

Desired Future Conditions:

- 5 Connectivity (Bio)
- 9 Emotional connection of People – Places
- 4 Reduction in sprawl /localized density/smart growth
- 8 Ecological significance: Biodiversity payoff
- 7 Thoughtful development
- 2 Working farms in the mix
- 1 Sensitivity to context/
- 3 Transportation/trails/alternative
- 6 Education: laying generational foundation of whole society
- 1 Adaptability – adjust to changes
- 1 Access
- 1 People Knowing and caring and connecting to land

Threats: (top 3 threats)

1. –Fragmentation by human infrastructure
 - Planning/Regional/state weaknesses
 - Climate change
 - Conversion of protected land
 - Inadequate water
2. –Financial pressure
 - Family non-planning
 - food supply
3. –People not hearing stories
 - Techno - entertainment keeps children and adults from connecting to the land

Strategies (top 3 strategies)

1. Community – unstructured time outdoors - village/neighborhood cohesion
2. ANR – Zoning reform issues
Tax Incentives for land conservation
3. Science – based conservation planning

Other Strategies:

- Awareness of eco-system
- Expand APR parameters
- Make farms financially viable (co-op cheese production etc.)

Group #3

Numbers = people choosing that as a priority

Desired Future Condition

- 12 Protect quality and flow of stream systems
- 6 Protect and enhance urban places and conservation land and public access
- 1 Connect towns by open spaces/corridors – with habitat and climate change in mind
- 1 Promote town forests and make them reachable
- 1 Strengthen regulations locally to demand clustering in key resource areas
- 2 Sea level rise plan for Mass.
- 2 Limit population / Limit footprint of new population

Threats

- 8 ignorant mindset
- 1 Invasives
- 0 Fragmentation
- 1 Contamination (air and water quality)
- 7 Buildout pressure/sprawl/population growth
- 0 Inconsistency of state funding
- 1 Siting in Resource areas
- 1 Loss of “Sense of Plan” and community character
- 0 Make key issues accessible to general population

0 Speed of legislative solutions at all levels

Strategies

- 12 Education (make acad. access to general public including high school ecosystem courses)
- 0 Government leadership (Bi-lateral) increase \$\$
- 5 Public involvement (direct including \$\$)
- 4 No net loss of forests/farmland/aquifers
- 1 Full funding of "P.I.L.O.T."
- 5 Local OMNIBUS initiation
- 7 Smart growth (incl. transportation)

Group #4:

(top 3 priorities for each)

Desired Future Condition

- 1 Protect farms/forests
- 2 Comprehensive Plan - cross discipline/with goals
- 3 Campaign/education (with urban issues addressed)

Threats

- Bad land use regulations and zoning
- No broad consensus on actions necessary
- Lack of funding

Strategies

- 1. Comprehensive Plan cross sector/issue
- 2. Education on env/land use issues
- 3. Incentives

Other Strategies Listed by the Group:

- Stop farm sales
- Comprehensive vision for MA
 - including identifying areas for high density development
- Balanced conservation - similar investment for each land type

- Increase access to fresh food in urban and rural areas
- Preserve forests
- Create greenways and trails
- Protect blocks of open space
- Create community gardens
- Articulate connection between land conservation and economics and health (cross sectional)
- Anticipate peak oil/fossil fuel

More Strategies:

- 1) Education Emphasis on environment/land use
- 2) Comprehensive plan – MA wide/cross section (energy/env/etc.) =
 - Priorities = \$\$
- 3) Collaboration between land trusts and urban groups like CDC's
- 4) Adequate \$\$
- 5) Provide young kids access to farms/parks
- 6) Financial incentives via public policy
- 7) Land use community agrees on agenda as a whole
- 8) Land use for alternative energy
- 9) Concentrate development
- 10) Restore degraded properties
- 11) "rewild" suburbs/urban centers "Bring Nature Home..."
 - backyards, etc. as more "natural" and habitat sensitive
- 12) More small niche farms → crops adapted to climate change
- 13) Public Educ. Awareness
- 14) Lack of broad public appeal (urban issues) to sustain agenda

Threats/Barriers to 3 Elements

- 1) Appeal to urban issues
- 2) Loss of protected land
- 3) Next generation is urban with fragmented goals
- 4) Sprawl/zoning
- 5) Cynicism
- 6) Greed
- 7) Homerule mindset
- 8) Climate change
- 9) Transition from fossil fuel based economy
- 10) Public policy – admin changes/democracy
- 11) Funding \$\$
- 12) Economy
- 13) Lack of a comprehensive plan