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**What is a Land Trust?**

A conservation land trust or land conservancy is a community-based, nonprofit organization established to permanently conserve land.

Many land trusts acquire and hold land outright. Many also acquire conservation restrictions (also known as conservation easements) to protect the conservation values of properties that remain in private hands. Land trusts also frequently support the acquisition of conservation lands held by municipal, state or federal government partners.

Land trusts are responsible for monitoring and maintaining the lands they hold for conservation purposes in perpetuity. Many maintain trails, parking areas, community gardens and other facilities so the public can enjoy benefits of being outdoors. Many offer programs that educate community members or engage them as volunteers. Some land trusts implement ambitious management and restoration projects to improve the conservation values of land under their management, such as removing invasive species or enhancing wildlife habitat.

Land trusts can be local, state or regional in scope, but all work directly with private landowners and community partners to conserve and steward land that has natural, recreational, scenic, historical or agricultural values. Some land trusts focus their efforts on a specific priority such as protecting land in a particular watershed, while others conserve land for a variety of conservation purposes and community benefits. Each land trust is as unique as the community it serves. Today there are about 140 [land trusts active in Massachusetts](https://massland.org/land-trusts/list), serving urban, suburban and rural communities. Some are large organizations with paid employees, while many others are small, local organizations dependent on volunteers.

As nonprofits, land trusts rely primarily on charitable donations to fund their work. Sometimes the land and conservation restrictions they conserve are offered by community-minded landowners at a substantial discount, or even as an outright donation. Many government and foundation grant sources also support the work of land trusts.