

ALEXANDRIA OPEN SPACE



Battery Heights easement

GUIDE TO

VOLUNTARY LAND CONSERVATION OPTIONS



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A PARTNERSHIP FOR **PROTECTION**



As one of the most densely populated cities in the nation, Alexandria faces a continuous struggle to provide enough open space for all its residents. The City must have a strategy to respond to the conflicting pressures of a growing population calling for open space options and a dwindling supply of potential open space areas.

The City adopted an Open Space Plan in 2003, providing a framework of 15 open space goals. To meet those goals, the City is partnering with two local groups experienced in the protection and preservation of property.

The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust is a non-profit organization established in 1994 which preserves open space by acquiring land and conservation easements, providing stewardship of protected lands, and building public support for conservation. For more information, call 703.354.5093 or visit www.nvct.org.



The Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission is empowered by the Virginia Assembly to acquire open space and easements in order to protect the fabric of historic structures. For more information, contact the Office of Historic Alexandria at 703.838.4554 or visit <http://oha.ci.alexandria.va.us>.



Holmes Run

WHY PROTECT YOUR LAND?



The City of Alexandria has committed to protecting and promoting open space because it is an investment in a higher quality of life for ourselves and future generations. Landowners who share the Alexandria community's goals for protection of resources can play a significant role in the City's open space strategy.

Each decision to conserve a property is a personal one, involving the landowner's financial and tax circumstances, the land resource itself and, most importantly, the owner's vision for the future of that land. Because every situation is unique, there are different options for conserving environmentally significant lands.

Each option described here can provide a means to achieve a personal dream of protecting forever an important part of the landscape.



Hiker/biker trail

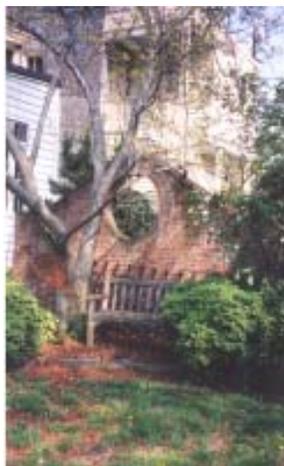
DONATION OPTIONS



Land donation. An outright gift of land for conservation is one of the most generous legacies a landowner can make to future generations. Donating land can be a simple and quick transaction with numerous benefits, such as: ensuring the permanent protection of family property; providing a charitable income tax donation for the full fair market value of the land; avoiding capital gains taxes on appreciated land, which otherwise would be due at time of sale; and removing the property from the donor's taxable estate.

Conservation easement. The conservation easement is the most widely used land protection tool, protecting the land permanently from development uses yet keeping it in private ownership. When donating a conservation easement, the landowner can identify specific permitted uses of the property for the future. The donation of a conservation easement normally qualifies as a federal tax-deductible contribution, entitling the donor to a charitable income tax deduction for the easement's value. The state of Virginia allows an income tax credit of 50% of the easement's value, which can be used by the landowner or sold to a third party. Estate and property tax reductions could also result from the donation.

Historic property easement. Through the Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission, the City accepts open space easements as well as interior and exterior architectural easements on properties of historical significance. Usually these properties are in locations listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Properties in Old and Historic Alexandria, Rosemont, Town of Potomac, and Parkfairfax are all eligible.



S. St. Asaph Street easement

OTHER CHOICES



Right of first refusal. A right of first refusal arranges for future land conservation. A property owner might consider this right when he or she cannot afford to donate and is not ready to discuss a conservation plan. This right provides the conservation entity with the opportunity to match a purchase offer received by the owner at a future time if and when the owner elects to sell the property.

Option agreement. Another tool for future land conservation is an option agreement, a contract under which the owner offers the conservation entity a fixed period of time in which to make a decision to purchase either a conservation easement or the property outright. The entity can use the option period to develop a conservation plan and seek funding sources to conserve the property.

Bequest and living trust. Landowners wishing to retain maximum flexibility during their lifetimes can choose a bequest or living trust. Both the bequest and the living trust can ensure the permanent protection of the land and may reduce the donor's taxable estate. A bequest is a provision in the landowner's will which instructs that land or a conservation easement be conveyed by the estate's executor; a living trust avoids the probate process.

Donating a remainder interest. Landowners and their beneficiaries can reserve the right to continue to live on and use the properties during their lifetimes, so that at the end of the specified life interests, full title and control of the property automatically transfers to the conservation entity. This outcome is similar to that of an outright gift of land.



Top: **Cameron Run**

Bottom: **Oronoco Bay Park trails**

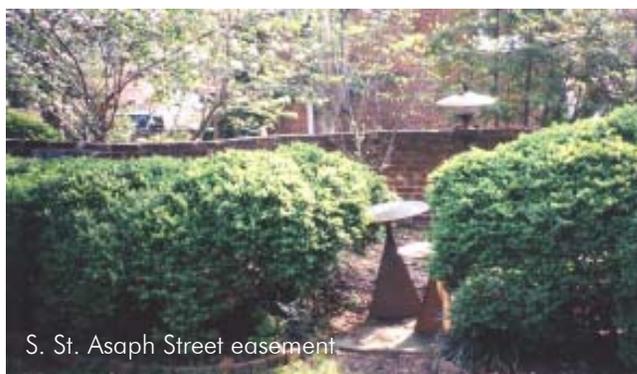
PURCHASE OPTIONS



In active support of the Open Space Plan, the City Council in 2003 allocated one cent from every \$100 of the City's real estate assessment for the purchase of open space land and conservation easements. Each year that the Council votes in favor of this bold initiative, over \$2 million will be available for City to make land purchases and meet its open space goals.

Purchase of land. In rare cases for exceptional lands, the City will consider using open space funds for the purchase of a property or a conservation easement. Typically, the land will become part of the City's open space and park system.

Bargain-purchase. In a bargain-purchase of land or an easement, the owner sells property at less than full market value and donates the remaining value. The difference between the appraised fair market value and the sale price is treated as a charitable contribution, and can significantly reduce capital gains taxes payable upon the sale. For the landowner, a bargain purchase combines the income-producing aspects of land sale with the tax benefits of a donation. For the City, bargain purchases make buying land and easements more affordable.



S. St. Asaph Street easement

For assistance or further information on land conservation options, please contact either of these City departments.

**Recreation, Parks and
Cultural Activities**

703.838.4343

www.alexandriava.gov/recreation

Planning and Zoning

703.838.4666

[www.alexandriava.gov/city/
planning_zoning](http://www.alexandriava.gov/city/planning_zoning)

To view the Open Space Plan,
visit any City library or go to

www.alexandriava.gov/recreation