



Open Space Preservation Objectives

An open space/natural resource inventory tells us what we now have. An open space plan tells us what we need. A critical component of a plan is to develop objectives and based on these objectives, prioritize the open space parcels with respect to function, uniqueness, importance, and availability. The parcels should also be categorized as to how they will be protected either by regulation, acquisition or design.

For example, if your plan has a goal of preserving unique resources such as natural vegetative buffers, it is necessary to first delineate properties located within the proposed corridor. Some of those properties might contain fragile or unique habitat or possibly be isolated tracts of private land surrounded by state or municipal open space. These might become priority sites for acquisition. Other tracts may contain wetlands or poor soils and hence have little chance of being developed. Some form of regulation might preserve these. Finally, you might know a property owner that is interested in selling but would like to see some of the land kept open. These areas might be designated for creative development design such as clustering or lifetime use with conservation easements.

This planning exercise is particularly important if you must approach local funding sources for acquisition money. They will want to know that you have done a thorough analysis and are not asking for money for some half-baked, idealistic scheme.

One of the major elements in an open space preservation plan is a list of objectives clearly stating the intent, purpose and direction of the plan. What follows is a selected list of objectives that local land use officials might consider when formulating preservation policies.

- **Provide sites to protect surface and subsurface water resources** - should be the backbone of the open space plan. Protect the water's edge for public access as well as to protect water quality.
- **Add to existing committed open space** i.e. fill in windows of existing municipal, county, state or land trust holdings.
- **Assemble open corridors or greenbelts** as opposed to scattered parcels. May be linkages to existing open space or connecting nodes of development, trails, wildlife corridors or riparian buffers.
- **Protect critical habitats** with emphasis on those areas that may contain threatened or endangered species. Contact SC DNR to obtain a list of protected species.
- **Protect ground water within existing or potential public drinking water supply aquifers.**
- **Protect natural drainage ways.**
- **Protect lands of cultural importance** including archeological and historical sites.

- **Provide sites for active and passive recreation.** Requirements will depend upon population and recreation standards.
- **Protect unique and significant natural features** including wetlands, floodplains, prime agricultural soils, scenic vistas, trap rock ridges, shorelines, tidal marshes.
- **Preserve farmlands and productive forestland.**
- **Preserve areas that shape community design and character** i.e. plazas, buffer strips, landscaped yards, street trees and areas visible from roads, sidewalks, community gateways.
- **Combine regulatory and land acquisition measures to achieve open space objectives.**
- **Include areas identified as worthy of preservation in subdivision and zoning regulations** so applicants know up front what lands the community wishes to preserve.
- **Provide incentives including clustering, density bonuses, creative design and preferential property taxes** to preserve meaningful open space within private development.
- **Encourage site development sensitive to the areas natural characteristics.**
- **Encourage growth in areas capable of supporting it** while at the same time preserving areas unsuitable for development.
- **Development density should be based on the physical environment's ability to support it** and not on arbitrary standards such as so many dwelling units per acre, etc.
- **The open space plan should exist in harmony with the comprehensive development plan** - open space and development should compliment rather than compete with one another.

BALANCED PRESERVATION AND GROWTH

A general goal for those involved in land use decision-making should be to coordinate conservation and growth to insure that each area preserves its unique character and sense of place by providing for sustainable growth and prudent use of natural resources. To achieve this goal some basic policies should be adopted:

- New development must be designed and managed to minimize the consumption of natural resources.
- Open spaces should be accessible and utilized.
- High-density development should be built adjacent to our highways and public transportation to provide access to jobs, utilities, transportation and services.
- Lower density development should be placed on sites that are capable of supporting on-site utilities and designed in such a way as to preserve key natural resources.
- Wetlands and riparian corridors should be protected to offset the adverse impacts of development on water resources.

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