

Appendix A

Funding Mechanisms and Programs

Funding Mechanisms and Programs

A. Property Acquisition

1) Program/Method:	Municipal Purchase
Sponsoring Agency:	Town of Shrewsbury
Approximate Funding Maximum:	Dependent on Town Meeting
Program Description:	This tool is probably the most direct and effective way for a town to achieve the acquisition objectives of its open space plan. Towns may either issue bonds to cover purchases or in some cases include a purchase item in the general budget. Bond issues are quite common and provide communities with the flexibility to negotiate with property owners, knowing that money has already been authorized to complete the acquisition. In practice, towns generally ask for authorization to float a bond to cover open space acquisition, and then once a deal has been negotiated return to town meeting for the actual appropriation.
Priority for pursuing:	High.
Chances of success:	Moderate. Will depend on a vigorous public outreach campaign prior to town meeting and the general referendum.
2) Program/Method:	Massachusetts Self-Help Program
Sponsoring Agency:	Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services (DCS)
Approximate Funding Maximum:	\$500,000
Program Description:	In Shrewsbury's case the Program currently provides a 60% reimbursement for the

purchase of land for conservation and passive recreation purposes. This rate is based on demographic factors and changes every two years. This means that for any project or acquisition over \$833,333, the Town would be eligible to receive the maximum award of \$500,000. Twenty-five million dollars was authorized by the Governor and the Legislature through the Open Space Bond Bill in 1996 to pay for this program. State officials expect up to \$8M to be available annually through 2004. Project selection criteria favor poorer communities (50 out of 100 points are based on demo-graphic characteristics), so Shrewsbury's application will have to be of excellent quality to be competitive.

Priority for pursuing:

High.

Chances of success:

Moderate. Will depend on quality of town's application and level of competition. Bonus points are awarded to Towns that have passed debt overrides within two years of submitting the application.

3) Program/Method:

Massachusetts Urban Self-Help Program

Sponsoring Agency:

Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services (DCS)

Approximate Funding Maximum:

\$500,000

Program Description:

The Urban Self-Help program funds the acquisition of park and recreation land and the development or renovation of outdoor recreation facilities. While Shrewsbury is not an urban area, projects of *regional or statewide significance* are eligible. A regional facility must provide parking for at least 100 vehicles. The Donahue Rowing

Center was funded in part by this program. Lesser importance is given to a town's demographics than in the Self-Help program (40 out of 100 points are based on demographic criteria).

Priority for pursuing:

Moderate.

Chances of success:

Moderate. Shrewsbury will have to propose a project that qualifies as one of regional or statewide significance. Bonus points are awarded to Towns that have passed debt overrides within two years of submitting the application.

4) Program/Method:

Aquifer Land Acquisition Program

Sponsoring Agency:

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Approximate Funding Maximum:

\$500,000

Program Description:

The ALA program makes funds available for protection of public water supplies. Specifically funds are available for study of public water supplies and their recharge areas, and acquisition of wellhead protection areas. The program was funded previously in 1982 and 1984. The 1996 Open Space Bond Bill will likely translate into new funds for this program. State officials expect similar funding levels. Amendments to the enabling legislation in 1987 dictate that communities match state funds with 20% local dollars. A key requirement to participate in this program is state approval of a community's Zone II's. Shrewsbury's Zone II study and water supply protection plan have been completed, but have yet to be approved.

Priority for pursuing:

Moderate.

Chances of success:	Low/moderate. Will depend on quality of application, competition and total funds available statewide.
5) Program/Method:	Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) Open Space Program
Sponsoring Agency:	Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC)
Approximate Funding Maximum:	None, but program receives only \$1M/year to be spread around the state
Program Description:	This program acquires scenic areas adjacent to roadways. Funds are not available for recreation projects, though MHD has worked cooperatively with other state agencies and municipalities to assist in adjoining recreation projects. Scenic views and environmental protection are the two areas of program focus. In 1996, the program had a project backlog, but funding has been fairly dependable, coming, as it does, from the state's transportation bond bill.
Priority for pursuing:	Low.
Chances of success:	Low, unless a great scenic resource is involved.
6) Program/Method:	Land Trusts
Sponsoring Agency:	The land trusts and their donors
Approximate Funding Maximum:	None, but generally these non-profit organizations have limited funding.

Program Description: Shrewsbury is covered by at least three local land trusts: Greater Worcester Land Trust, Grafton Forest and Lands Conservation Trust and the Sudbury Valley Trustees. Though each of these organizations is somewhat unique they share a common mission: to preserve open space and protect the environment. Land trusts in general, and those covering Shrewsbury in particular, have many tools to help acquire and protect open space. Land trusts can: own land on a fee simple basis, accept easements, negotiate transactions, give technical assistance to property owners, and provide connections and resources to anybody interested in open space preservation. In some cases land trusts may even have the resources to purchase land outright. All donations are tax deductible thus adding to the attractiveness of the land trust as a preservation vehicle. Further, because land trusts are not bound by the same procedures that restrict governmental entities, they can usually move quickly to acquire land.

Priority for pursuing: High.

Chances of success: High. These organizations will be invaluable to augment other open space planning efforts.

7) Program/Method: **Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund**

Sponsoring Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Approximate Funding Maximum: None, program has not been funded in recent years

Program Description: When this program was funded it provided up to 50% reimbursement towards the cost

of acquisition or improvement of recreation land. If funding were reauthorized at some point, this would be a useful program for the town to pursue.

Priority for pursuing: Low.

Chances of success: Low. Currently no money has been appropriated. An active town open space committee would lobby for release of funds by Congress and the President.

B. Studies and Construction/Maintenance

1) Program/Method: **Lake and Pond Grants**

Sponsoring Agency: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM)

Approximate Funding Maximum: \$10,000

Program Description: This program is the successor program to DEP's Clean Lakes Program (Chapter 628). Eligible activities include lake management analysis and planning, public education, and watershed and in-lake management techniques. A "holistic" approach to management is expected by the DEM, which would include government, lake users, watershed groups and the public in general. The program requires a 50% cash match. Applications are due in November of each year.

Priority for pursuing: Moderate.

Chances of success: Moderate.

2) Program/Method:	The National Recreational Trails Act (NRTA)
Sponsoring Agency:	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM)
Approximate Funding Maximum:	\$30,000
Program Description:	Part of the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Act, NRTA provides funds for trail projects. In 1996 approximately \$225,000 was available to grantees in Massachusetts. Eligible projects include trail construction, land/easement acquisition, handicapped accessibility, interpretative areas/facilities, and education. Trails must be recreational, e.g. intracity, on-road bikeways would probably not be eligible. There is no limit on grant funds, but a 50% local match is required (matching funds can be "non-cash"). Motorized and non-motorized trail use must be included in the grant with at least thirty percent of funds going to each activity. Applications are due in October of each year.
Priority for pursuing:	Moderate.
Chances of success:	High with a good proposal.
3) Program/Method:	Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grant Program
Sponsoring Agency:	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM)
Approximate Funding Maximum:	\$5,000
Program Description:	Greenways and trail projects are at the center of this program. Funding categories include planning, research, mapping, public education and community outreach, ecological assessment, and trail

construction, maintenance and expansion. In recent years focus has been placed on projects that either educate the public or work on river greenways. However, all greenway/trail projects are eligible with the exception of those confined to a single parcel of land. Applications are due in January/February every year and no local match is required.

Priority for pursuing: Moderate.

Chances of success: High with a good proposal.

4) Program/Method:

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), Regional Transportation Improvement Program

Sponsoring Agency: Massachusetts Highway Department, Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Approximate Funding Maximum: No maximum.

Program Description: Funds are available for transportation related open space improvements. A bike path that connects dense areas of residential development with employment or shopping centers would clearly fit the criteria. However, the state and the MPO have been relatively flexible about definitions and projects that are slightly less directly related to transportation may be eligible e.g., an open space parcel adjacent to a road programmed for repairs; the parcel provides a roadway rest area and access to walking trails.

Priority for pursuing: Moderate with an appropriate project.

Chances of success: Moderate/High.

5) Program/Method:	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), Enhancement Program
Sponsoring Agency:	Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD), Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization
Approximate Funding Maximum:	None, but a \$100,000 minimum is requested by MHD
Program Description:	Money is provided to a variety of transportation "enhancement" projects. Among those eligible are bikeways, walking paths and rail trails. This is a special dedicated fund that amounts to 10% of statewide spending from ISTEA monies. The Blackstone Valley Rail Trail is the most prominent example of an enhancement project in the central Massachusetts region currently.
Priority for pursuing:	Moderate.
Chances of success:	High.

C. Non-Acquisition Programs

1) Program/Method:	Conservation Restrictions (CRs)
Sponsoring Agency:	Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services (DCS)
Approximate Funding Maximum:	Only technical support available
Program Description:	Conservation restrictions (CRs) are legal, enforceable agreements, authorized by the state, which are made between a landowner and a charitable organization, or a town. They are used primarily to keep land in a "natural or scenic open condition".

Restrictions can be written so that certain uses are permitted and others prohibited, e.g. the current owner may continue occupying an existing house on the land, but may restrict the construction of any additional houses. Grantors of restrictions may also be able to benefit by reductions in various taxes including property, estate and income.

Priority for pursuing: Moderate.

Chances of success: Depends on property owner.

2) Program/Method: **Assessment Act (M.G.L. Chs. 61, 61A and 61B)**

Sponsoring Agency: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, Department of Food and Agriculture, and Department of Revenue (respectively)

Approximate Funding Maximum: No public funds available

Program Description: These programs work by making available special property tax assessments to owners that agree to restrict their land to a particular use. Chapter 61 applies to lands actively devoted to forestry use, 61A applies to active agricultural lands, and 61B applies to public recreational lands like wildlife sanctuaries and campgrounds. Generally properties are assessed at their current use value rather than their highest use. This usually translates into a substantial property tax savings for owners. The program also makes a right-of-first-refusal option available to sponsoring towns when property owners look to sell their land.

Priority for pursuing: Moderate.

Chances of success: Depends on property owner.

3) Program/Method:

**Agricultural Preservation
Restrictions**

Sponsoring Agency:

Massachusetts Department of Food and
Agriculture

Approximate Funding Maximum:

No public funds available

Program Description:

This program insures that active farms stay in agricultural production. The state purchases a farmer's development rights. The price paid is the difference between the full market value of the property and its appraised agricultural value. A permanent restriction is then put in place prohibiting all non-agricultural uses on the parcel. The farmer is taxed at the agricultural value rather than the highest use value.

Priority for pursuing:

Low.

Chances of success:

Depends on property owner.