OPEN SPACE BOND
CONSERVATION EASEMENT CRITERIA AND PROCESS

Presented by

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Agenda

1) Open Space Bond Overview & Update

2) Conservation Project Evaluation System & Criteria
Open Space Bond Overview

$30M Open Space Bond

• Land Conservation
• Greenways
• Passive Recreation Lands

1. Selection Criteria Development & Approval
2. RFP Development & Launch
3. Application Support
4. Project Selection & Announcement
5. Ongoing: Project Support & Oversight
6. Ongoing: Community Outreach
Open Space Bond Update

Complete
✓ Selection of Advisory Boards & Oversight Committee
✓ Bond Project Manager Hired
✓ Public Input Page Launched

Next Steps
Conservation Easement
❑ First project selection expected Summer 2023
Passive Recreation
❑ Project application window open expected Fall 2023
Greenways
❑ Woodfin and Enka receiving funding for completion

All evaluation criteria expected to be complete by end of June 2023
Community Outreach

- **Status:** Public Input Page live on March 1
- **Video:** Passive Recreation – Collier Cove
- **Video:** Conservation Easements
- **Profile:** Bond Manager Hired
- **WLOS Article:** Story Maps

- **Upcoming:** Public Input Surveys for Greenways & Passive Recreation
- **Ongoing:** Regular outreach and transparency regarding meetings, process updates
Advisory Boards for Land Conservation

Two Boards oversee the Process:

• Land Conservation Advisory Board (LCAB)
  • Eligible Funding Recipients: Nonprofit land trusts
  • Focus Areas: Wildlands, viewsheds, farmland, forestland, stream/riparian, and/or public benefit

• Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
  • Eligible Funding Recipients: County-led Farmland Preservation Program
  • Focus Areas: Farm and forestland
Evaluation System

Two Tiered Evaluation:

1. Rank land using criteria

2. Determine funding source and amount the project is eligible for
   • Grant Funds, General Fund, Bond Funds,
   • Easement purchase and/or transaction costs
Flow Chart for Conservation Easement Funding

Ranking criteria

Funding source and amount
### AAB Project Evaluation Ranking System

#### A. Land Evaluation (35%)

1. Farmland Soils Assessment (50 pts)
   - Prime Soils
   - Unique Soils
   - Local and Statewide Important Soils

2. Forestland Soils Assessment (50 pts)
   - High Index Soils
   - Medium Index Soils
   - Low Index Soils

#### B. Site Assessment (65%)

1. Clustering Potential (100 pts)
   - Tract Size (50 pts)
   - Contiguous Land Preservation (40 pts)
   - Proximity to Ag Preservation District (10 pts)

2. Farmland Potential (100 pts)
   - Priority Ranking Score (30 pts)
   - % of Tract in Ag (20 pts)
   - Land Stewardship (30 pts)
   - Historic/Scenic/Env Qualities (15 pts)
   - Century Family Farm (5 pts)

3. Development Pressure (100 pts)
   - Proximity to Public Water/Sewer (50 pts)
   - Proximity to Planned Development (30 pts)
   - Ag Threat and Viability Map Score (20 pts)

**Ranking points total is a weighted sum**
AAB Board Project Approval Process

1. Board evaluates project
2. Board visits site
3. Presentation to the board by staff and landowners
4. Board votes on the project
5. If approved, transaction costs are request from BOC
6. Start easement project
LCAB Project Evaluation Ranking System

A. Land Trust Partner Evaluation – (meets criteria or does not)
   - Applicants Organization Track Record
   - Long-term Protection of County’s Investment
   - Evidence of Collaboration Among Conservation Organizations
   - Previous Project Completion
   - Value of Project
   - Integrity of Easement

B. Conservation Value of the Project – 100 points
   - Scenic Viewshed Protection - 10 pts
   - Natural Areas Protection/Biological Values – 10 pts
   - Water Quality Protection/Restoration – 10 pts
   - Farmland Preservation – 10 pts
   - Public Benefit – 10 pts
   - Historic/Cultural Resource Protection – 10 pts
   - Funding Leverage – 15 pts
   - Value Added to the Project – 15 pts
LCAB Board Project Approval Process
1. Board evaluates project
2. Board visits site
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4. Board votes on the project
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6. Start easement project

LCAB Easement Purchase Criteria

BOND FUNDS

County Easement Purchase Requirements
Must meet at least 2 of the following conditions:
• Is this in an LCAB priority region?
• Is this a project with significant environmental and/or scenic importance
• Are there significant recreational opportunities, water quality or open space benefits of the project?
• Is this a time sensitive project?
  o Elderly landowner
  o Financial hardship
  o Forced sale
  o Development pressure

Eligible for County Easement Purchase Grant
25-50% Easement Value

Start LCAB Project Approval Process
Questions?