



**HILLTOWN
LAND TRUST**

AN AFFILIATE OF
THE TRUSTEES

A SEVEN YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 – 2023

who we are

Hilltown Land Trust (HLT) is a nonprofit land conservation organization founded in 1986 by a group of dedicated volunteers. HLT works to preserve the working farms and forests, native habitats and scenic landscapes of western Massachusetts hilltowns. We serve 13 rural towns between the Connecticut River and the Berkshires: Ashfield, Chester, Chesterfield, Conway, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Windsor and Worthington. Since 1986, we have protected over 3,800 acres of land.

After 24 years as an all-volunteer organization, HLT affiliated with The Trustees of Reservations in 2010 and hired its first Executive Director. HLT and The Trustees joined forces through our affiliation pooling resources to increase efficiency and productivity. Six years later, this partnership has dramatically increased the capacity of both organizations to protect land, organize engaging and educational events, train volunteers and improve property stewardship in the hilltowns. HLT benefits from systems, support and knowledge of the oldest land conservation organization in the country while The Trustees has a stronger community connection in a vital region of Massachusetts.

Hilltown Land Trust's Strategic Plan was adopted by the Board of Directors in 2015. This plan is aligned with The Trustees' 2013-2108 strategic plan, *The Path Forward*, further strengthening our affiliation. The plan presented in the following pages will direct the work of HLT for the next seven years, through 2023. Each goal presented has internal, annual strategies to help ensure the meeting of all objectives by 2023.





STRATEGIC PLAN

2016-2023

VISION

We protect the rural landscapes of our hilltowns for future generations.

MISSION

Hilltown Land Trust protects land and promotes ecological diversity and health, respectful land stewardship, historic character, and natural beauty in our hilltowns.

VALUES

COMMUNITY We build support for land conservation within hilltown communities.

SUSTAINABILITY We protect working farms and forests for the use and enjoyment of future generations and consider the effects of climate change on the natural landscape when selecting and shaping new projects.

EXCELLENCE We hold ourselves to the highest standards of land protection and stewardship.

COLLABORATION We seek partnerships that leverage our strengths, promote efficiency, and add expertise.

FOCUS We are decisive and strategic in setting and achieving priorities

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY We employ cost effective means of land conservation and stewardship.

protect

Hilltown Land Trust has permanently protected 40 properties spanning 3,800 acres in the past 30 years. HLT's pace of conservation has increased substantially in recent years. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, generous land donations and our affiliation with The Trustees, HLT offers some of the lowest cost land protection and management in the region.

GOAL

Pursue conservation that protects the health, history, and beauty of wild and working landscapes

- OBJECTIVE 1:** Complete an average of four land protection projects per year for the next seven years with all projects being conducted to Land Trust Accreditation standards.
- OBJECTIVE 2:** Complete at least one new land protection project in each town in HLT's service area by 2023.
- OBJECTIVE 3:** Protect large blocks of land of 500 acres or more by expanding already protected areas and undertaking large projects.
- OBJECTIVE 4:** Continue to focus on projects that are donations of land or Conservation Restrictions while purchasing some land and CRs of high conservation value.
- OBJECTIVE 5:** Proactively pursue high quality, strategic conservation efforts including landscape-scale conservation and projects that connect large blocks of protected land.
- OBJECTIVE 6:** Regularly review and refine HLT's project evaluation tools to ensure consideration of the current conservation context and use of new scientific data including climate change resilience.

steward



HLT currently holds 31 Conservation Restrictions (CRs) and owns 6 properties. These permanently protected lands cover over 3,400 acres in 8 towns. Each year we visit every HLT Conservation Restriction property to ensure these protected lands are being managed in accordance with the terms of their associated CR document, and to maintain close communication with CR landowners. We also manage and monitor properties owned by HLT including three public trails. HLT relies heavily on our trained volunteer land stewards to monitor and maintain these properties.

GOAL

*Preserve and enhance land owned
and protected by HLT*

- OBJECTIVE 1:** Develop and implement standards for property monitoring and management that include visible, safe trails, appropriate signage, well-marked boundaries and management plans for all HLT owned land.
- OBJECTIVE 2:** Work with trained, local volunteers to monitor and maintain each property owned by HLT following the recommendations in each property's management plan and establish local Friends Groups for all HLT properties with amenities.
- OBJECTIVE 3:** Follow HLT monitoring protocols to monitor all HLT Conservation Restriction lands annually with the help of trained volunteers who have long term connection to the properties they visit.
- OBJECTIVE 4:** Maintain excellent communication with CR landowners to share valuable information on property management resources and minimize CR violations. When violations exist, identify and address them quickly, giving special attention to new and successor landowners.

excite

HLT offers monthly programs that connect people to nature and the outdoors. Our activities are open to all members of the community and embrace a variety of interests to provide meaningful experiences inspired by the natural world. Events include group hikes, logging and forestry demonstrations, art and local history workshops as well as volunteer training sessions and work days.

GOAL

Tell our stories of conservation to increase community participation in our work.

- OBJECTIVE 1:** Identify the audiences we are trying to reach and the most appropriate strategies to reach them including mail, social media and personal connections.
- OBJECTIVE 2:** Pursue diverse, creative outreach strategies including semi-annual printed newsletters, themed monthly e-news, and frequent Facebook and twitter postings, and adjust these strategies as technology and social media evolve.
- OBJECTIVE 3:** Actively pursue local press coverage for HLT's work through strategic press releases and cultivating relationships with press contacts.
- OBJECTIVE 4:** Conduct monthly activities and events including outdoor excursions at least four times per year and one event in each HLT town at least every three years.
- OBJECTIVE 5:** Develop one large-scale event per year to increase HLT's membership and visibility.



grow

Hilltown Land Trust is currently supported by a modest membership base that has grown in recent years thanks to focused outreach efforts and social media. The organization also has an endowment that partially supports a part time staff position and long-term stewardship expenses.

GOAL

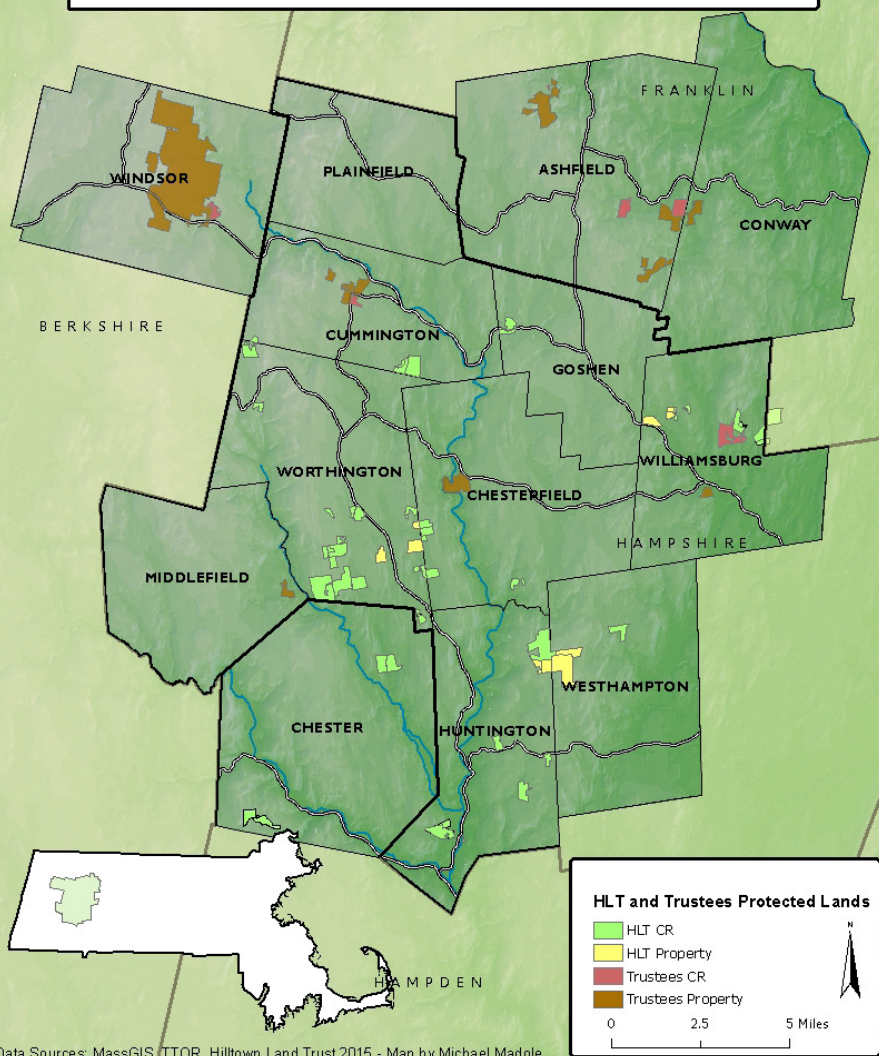
Expand our resources and capacity to better fulfill our mission.

- OBJECTIVE 1:** Raise the resources that enable HLT to grow organizational staff to 1.5 FTE while retaining 1-2 AmeriCorps Service Members.
- OBJECTIVE 2:** Grow the HLT board to at least ten people to fill areas of need for HLT.
- OBJECTIVE 3:** Double* HLT's base of active volunteers (beyond the board and AmeriCorps), focusing on identified needs.
- OBJECTIVE 4:** Double* HLT's endowment and annual operating budget.
- OBJECTIVE 5:** Double* HLT's donor base in a manner that attracts new members each year while retaining 85% of existing members.
- OBJECTIVE 6:** Work with development experts to expand HLT's fundraising strategies to include bequests, trade lands and project-specific funding.

**Double from 2015 levels*

Hilltown Land Trust Service Area

Land protected by HLT and our affiliate The Trustees



HILLTOWN LAND TRUST

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