



## MEMO

**Date:** November 9, 2022

**To:** Burlington Parks Commission & Burlington Conservation Board

**From:** Cindi Wight and Dan Cahill

**RE:** Conservation Legacy Fund Adaptations

In February 2022 the City Council passed a [nature-based climate solutions addendum](#) to the city's Open Space Plan. This plan was adopted with unanimous Council support. The addendum was created by the Conservation Board and was also enthusiastically approved by the Parks Commission. The addendum aims to showcase, support, and grow the many burgeoning nature-based climate initiatives taking root in the city—including tree planting, heat mitigation, stormwater and flood resilience, inclusive nature connection, local ecologically-sound food production, and planting and flourishing of native species within our city. We look forward to discussing how we might expand the Conservation Legacy Fund (CLF) to help fund this crucial work.

In order to have an informed discussion, in this memo we will outline the background of the fund, breakdown the history of what projects the fund has supported, and lastly share the staff recommendation on an adapted framework for the operation of the fund to support continued acquisition and nature based climate solutions.

### **Nature Based Solutions are at the Heart of Conservation Work**

Why consider an adaptation to the CLF that includes support for nature-based climate initiatives? A huge and growing body of scientific evidence makes it clear that nature protection is not just good for stabilizing the climate—it's the most [cost-effective, important](#), and inescapable requirement for successfully slowing the heating of our cities and planet. Burlington is part of a [national movement of cities](#) that is working to keep our urban areas cool, carbon rich in plants and soils, and habitable in the face of climate change. The biodiversity and conservation crisis and the climate crisis are one and the same.

Climate change exacerbates existing challenges we already face such as degraded water quality and lake health, but it also creates entirely new challenges we never expected to face here in



Vermont—like the dangers posed by increasingly frequent and severe heat waves. Burlington is the 7th fastest heating city in the country; our average temperature has already increased 4.5 degrees Fahrenheit since 1970.

So, how can and should we leverage our CLF? Now that it has been fully funded, we have an opportunity to adapt and think creatively about the fund operation. With an adapted structure, we can help support and grow inclusive community partnerships and a network of projects that have the potential to improve conservation of our rich natural areas and improve the livability of the city. US Nature 4Climate recently highlighted one of these partnership projects, [the native tree nursery at Champlain Elementary School](#), as a model of natural climate solutions.

### **Fund Background**

In 2002 the City adopted the original Open Space Protection Plan, a City plan designed to acknowledge and reflect Burlington's values and strategies related to holistic conservation efforts. One of the central recommendations of this plan was the creation of the CLF. In its original form this fund was created to support the acquisition and stewardship of conservation lands by the City and support the ongoing operation of the Burlington Conservation Legacy Program including:

- To fund **Land Acquisition** and long-term protection of significant natural areas, important open spaces, and urban greenspaces through public acquisition by the City and other interested parties.
- To support the **Long-Term Stewardship**, including the development and implementation of property-specific management plans, of significant natural areas and important open spaces permanently managed by the City of Burlington's Conservation Legacy Program as Urban Wilds.
- To develop and support **Conservation Education Programs** administered under the Burlington Conservation Legacy Program;

In 2021, the City adopted an addendum to the Open Space Protection Plan. This plan lays out the framework to incorporate nature based climate solutions in Burlington's approach to conservation work. With the advent of increased funding and the adoption of the 2021



addendum, we are recommending an adaptation to the rules that govern the disbursement of CLF monies.

**Fund Activity and Achievements**

Legacy Fund Acquisition Resources by the Numbers

Total Acres Conserved	Total Properties Conserved	Matching Funds Raised	Legacy Funds Dispersed for Acquisition	Fund Balance as of 10/26/2022
<b>230</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>\$2,940,000</b>	<b>\$1,760,000</b>	<b>\$499,937</b>

Starting in 2006, the CLF has generated approximately \$3,220,000 dollars, 30% of this has gone toward supporting administration of the city’s Conservation Program through funding the Land Steward position. Seventy percent of the fund has gone toward acquisition. To date, \$1,700,000 has been spent on acquisition, planning and adjacent acquisition related costs. The current fund balance is \$791,000, of this \$300,000 has been approved but not yet spent for two active projects. Current fund balance after approved commitments is \$499,000.

Achievements of the fund:

- Creation and funding of the Land Steward staffing position
- \$1,700,000 encumbered/spent on acquisitions with \$499,000 in fund balance
- 236 acres conserved at 10 locations
- \$2.9 million additional dollars raised as matching funds

From 2006-2022, the fund has generated approximately \$190,000 - \$201,000 annually. The new funding levels generate \$561,000 annually. From 2006-2022 the CLF was being credited at .43 cents on the dollar of the grand list, as of July 1, 2022 the CLF has been funded at the full 1.00 cents on the dollar of the grand list. This adaptation brings the funding to the intended level that was a part of the original resolution.

<b><i>Current Funding Disbursements with previous funding level</i></b>		
30% Stewardship	70% Acquisition and Planning	
<b>\$57,000</b>	<b>\$133,122</b>	
<b><i>Current Funding Disbursements with new funding</i></b>		



30% Stewardship	70% Acquisition and Planning	
<b>\$168,300</b>	<b>\$392,700</b>	
<b>Recommended Funding Disbursements with new funding</b>		
30% Stewardship	30% Acquisition and Planning	40% NBS Projects
<b>\$168,300</b>	<b>\$168,300</b>	<b>\$224,400</b>

**Recommendation**

Adjust funding disbursement percentages and create a new funding category for Nature-based Solutions. Eligibility for this new funding category will be vetted using criteria outlined in the 2021 Open Space Protection Plan NBS Addendum. We will bring a presentation forward at the December meeting, and we will have specific action related requests for the conservation of the Parks Commission and Conservation Board.