

# A STEP-BY-STEP CONSERVATION MILLAGE TOOLKIT

A guide to funding land protection to improve YOUR  
community's quality of life



in consultation with Parallel Solutions



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Toolkit is a product of the Huron River Watershed Council. HRWC's mission is to protect and restore the river for healthy and vibrant communities. HRWC envisions a future of clean and plentiful water for people and nature, where citizens and government are effective and courageous champions for the Huron River and its watershed.

Parallel Solutions LLC developed the content for the Toolkit in collaboration with the Huron River Watershed Council staff. Additional advisors who provided expertise, insights and materials for the Toolkit included Nancy Hedberg, Susan Lackey, Barry Lonik, Irwin Martin, Michael Moran and John Zaloudek. The Toolkit's layout and graphic design were created by Kate Rose Communications LLC.

This project has been funded by the Healthy Watersheds Initiative, a joint project of the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Inc. (the "Endowment"), the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Inc. (the "Endowment") is a not-for-profit corporation that works collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities.

EPA funding is under assistance agreement 83590301 to the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the EPA endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document.

A Step-By-Step Conservation Millage Toolkit  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTION: WHY DO COMMUNITIES PURSUE MILLAGES?
  - 4 PHASE 1: REVIEW COMMUNITY PLANS AND ORDINANCES
  - 7 PHASE 2: GET ORGANIZED AND EXPLORE FEASIBILITY
  - 25 PHASE 3: PLAN CAMPAIGN MESSAGES AND GET ON THE BALLOT
  - 30 PHASE 4: COMMUNICATE + CONNECT WITH VOTERS
  - 37 PHASE 5: ELECTION DAY AND NEXT STEPS
  - 40 LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
  - 44 APPENDIX
- 

## Many communities in Michigan are using land conservation tools to:

- guide and manage growth
- preserve water quality
- control flooding
- conserve significant farmland
- protect open space
- create parks
- improve a community's quality of life

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To finance these tools, communities are employing ballot measures that utilize property tax millages. These ballot measures give voters the power to choose how their local government acquires and allocates land and water conservation funding.

This Conservation Millage Campaign Toolkit offers guidance and resources to citizens and local officials who are considering millages to protect land and water resources in Michigan's Huron River watershed.

Successful millage campaigns involve a combination of critical elements: vision, need, passionate and committed people, and an organized, well-executed campaign process.

This Toolkit will be useful for communities, even those beyond the Huron River watershed, that have different histories, cultures, landscape conditions, and economic considerations.

The Toolkit has five phases designed to take you step-by-step through your millage campaign.

If you anticipate organized opposition to your efforts, you may consider hiring a consultant to guide and implement your campaign.

The most intense campaign activities are conducted over the six to nine months immediately preceding the election, but it may take several years of preparation, education, and advocacy.

So let's get started!



# Why Do Communities Pursue Conservation Millages?

While some communities are able to access funding for land conservation from federal and state programs, or gifts from private foundations, businesses, and individual donors, competition for public grants and private dollars is strong. Federal and state funding may be unreliable due to shifting budgets and priorities.

Local governments may lack adequate funding to implement their community's conservation vision because their general fund dollars are allocated to other core services such as fire and emergency response and road maintenance. Local funding through property tax millages for conservation is the only source of funding that a local government and its citizens control.

Local voter-approved millages can provide a stable, dedicated source of funding to implement conservation programs and protect significant natural, scenic and farm lands, water, wildlife habitats, and recreation areas.



## WHAT IS A MILLAGE?

In Michigan, property taxes can be levied by the State, cities, villages, townships, counties, school districts, intermediate school districts, special districts, community colleges, and authorities. Property taxes are determined by applying the tax rate to the tax base, which is the value of taxable property as defined by State law. Property tax rates are expressed in mills.

1 mill = 1/1000 of a dollar (\$0.001)

A tax rate of one mill raises \$1 per \$1,000 of taxable value. Millages are one type of question that can be posed to voters through a ballot measure.

Source: Property Tax Millage Limitations in Michigan by Elizabeth Pratt, Fiscal Analyst, Spring 2016

## WHAT IS A BALLOT MEASURE?

A ballot measure is legislation to be considered by eligible voters in a regular or special election. Ballot measures are also known as "propositions" or simply "questions" on a ballot. There are two ways a measure can get on a ballot:

1. By citizen initiative. Any citizen or organization can gather a predetermined number of valid signatures to qualify a measure for the ballot in Michigan cities.
2. By legislative referral. The governing body puts proposed legislation up for a popular vote by adding it to the ballot. This governing body must approve the ballot language.

# Public Benefits of Conservation-Focused Millages

Educating members of a community about the public benefits of conservation can build support for a campaign. The List of Additional Resources at the end of this Toolkit include the names of several reports and studies that can help you determine your community's needs.

## Top 10 Reasons to Protect Natural Areas + Farmland

- [1] Protect surface water quality and drinking water
- [2] Improve stormwater management and flood control
- [3] Provide habitat for wildlife
- [4] Preserve open space and scenic views
- [5] Sustain unique natural features and rural character
- [6] Protect working farms and create a long-term environment for agriculture
- [7] Protect forests
- [8] Provide public access to nature and recreation
- [9] Increase property values
- [10] Support a healthy economy while attracting and retaining a talented workforce and tourists

## Fiscal Benefits of Natural Areas + Farmland

Protecting natural areas and farmland also makes economic sense. Natural areas and farmland require fewer public services like fire, police, schools, transportation, sewer, and water than residential and commercial properties do. Although residential properties generate higher tax revenues than farm and natural lands, they also generate significantly more public service expense than taxes collected in typical rural and suburban land use patterns.

Several “cost of community services” studies (listed in the Additional Resources section at the end of this Toolkit) support this last point. Cost of community services studies evaluate the relative costs versus revenues of different land uses. While these tools cannot predict future costs or the impacts of growth, they do provide a helpful baseline for citizens and local officials to make informed land use policy and investment decisions.

# What Could a Conservation Millage Support?

Millages can support a variety of land conservation tools and practices. Each community can assess its own needs for a millage and the tax rate that will be used to address them.

Governments can use millages to:

- acquire land for parks and preserves
- purchase development rights on private farmland
- acquire conservation easements on natural areas
- support land and water management and stewardship activities
- maintain parks and recreation lands and trails

A community may choose to pursue a millage that focuses on the acquisition of land, the purchase of conservation easements, the maintenance or management of land and water resources, the development of parks or trails, or a combination of tools and approaches.

How a community decides to use a millage should be informed by:

- an understanding of residents' and voters' visions, values and needs related to their relationship with land and water
- the pattern of land ownership and development in the community
- the unique threats or opportunities the community is facing, including economic or ecological considerations

## WHAT IS A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and another entity (such as a unit of government or a nonprofit land conservancy) that permanently limits the type and amount of development on their private property in exchange for payment.

By entering a conservation easement agreement, landowners retain the rights of ownership they currently enjoy such as living on the property, farming, hunting, fishing, timber harvesting, or selling the land. Conservation easements that restrict development rights run in perpetuity with the land and forever protect the conservation values identified in the agreement. Federal tax law mandates annual monitoring of the easement.

Development rights represent a portion of the land's total value. This value is estimated by an independent real estate appraisal. The value of development rights is the difference between the fair market value of the land without the easement and its value as restricted by the easement. For example, a 40-acre farm may be worth \$10,000 per acre if sold for home sites, but only \$2,500 if restricted by an easement to agricultural use.

This means the parcel's development value would be \$7,500 per acre, or \$300,000 for the entire 40 acres. The estimated value of the easement determined through the independent appraisal is the cost the unit of government pays the landowner when it purchases the development rights for the parcel.



# How To Implement Your Millage Campaign

## Phase 1: Review Community Plans and Ordinances

### **Millages are a financial tool for implementing a community's conservation plans.**

Most communities have a comprehensive plan, master plan, conservation plan, or other plan or program that includes goals or priorities for conservation and land protection, as well as maps and inventories of their natural areas and farmland.

Before planning a millage campaign, review and assess the status of your community's plans and ordinances. Look for plans and ordinances in the Planning and Zoning or Planning Commission section of a unit of government's website. If a unit of government has a Farmland Advisory Board or Parks and Recreation Commission or Committee, associated plans or ordinances may also be found there.

Plans outline the community's vision, goals, objectives and action steps. Ordinances are regulatory documents that govern the way policies are implemented.

Units of government that use millages for purchasing development rights must have a plan and ordinance in place that governs the process, including the criteria and decision-making process used in evaluating applications for use of the funding.



Photo by: John Lloyd

The Huron River Watershed Council has tools that can help you assess and plan for natural assets. For more information, visit [hrwc.org/what-is-your-green-infrastructure-vision/](http://hrwc.org/what-is-your-green-infrastructure-vision/)

# Phase 1: Review Community Plans and Ordinances (cont.)

Having these plans and ordinances in place prior to a millage campaign provides assurance to voters that their tax dollars will be carefully stewarded and managed in thoughtful, transparent, legal, and high-impact ways that serve conservation goals and the public good.

If your local government does not have a purchase of development rights ordinance in place, developing an ordinance is the place to start.

Contact the Chair of your local planning commission to request a meeting and start a conversation. At this initial meeting, ask questions about the commission's current list of priorities and activities and share information about the way a purchase of development rights ordinance aligns with the community's Master Plan. (The Appendix has an example of a PDR ordinance in Michigan.)

The values and visions presented in a community's Master Plan can catalyze a land protection ordinance and millage campaign.

## Need Help With a Campaign?

### Trust for Public Land offers paid services for:

- Feasibility research: exploring funding and ballot measure options and evaluating legal, fiscal, and political constraints.
- Public opinion surveys: managing surveys by expert polling firms to gauge voter support for alternative funding methods and measure types.
- Program recommendations: providing models and recommendations for operating conservation programs.
- Measurement + design: For ballot measures, they advise on the optimal funding method, amount of funding, election timing, and ballot language. For legislative measures, they recommend funding methods and amount, as well as advising on program design.
- Legislative support: their services include bill drafting, expert testimony, and designing legislative strategies.

### Ann Arbor Township Master Plan Example

"In 2003 the Township Board of Trustees appointed a Farmland Preservation Board, which developed a Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance that was approved later that year by the Township Board. The Farmland Preservation Board oversees applications for farmland owners who want to sell the development rights on their farmland.

In November 2003, Ann Arbor Township voters approved a 0.7 mill tax to protect farmland and open spaces in the Township permanently. In parallel with this millage, the City of Ann Arbor also passed a Greenbelt millage with similar aims as the Ann Arbor Township Purchase of Development Rights initiative. The goal of the Township program is to preserve over 2,000 acres of farmland in Ann Arbor Township, by leveraging Township funds with the City program, Federal and State Purchase of Development Rights programs and private funds. This should strengthen the agricultural policies of the Master Plan."

Source: Ann Arbor Township Master Plan, 2015

### The Huron River Watershed Council can:

- Facilitate working through this Toolkit with a municipality or interest group.
- Provide information on the economic and public benefits of natural areas and farmland.
- Provide example Conservation Plans, asset maps, and ordinances.
- Identify potential campaign committee members.
- Serve in a technical support capacity or as advisors to a campaign committee.
- Support the facilitation of focus groups or developing voter surveys.
- Assist with campaign messaging.
- Share information with voters.

***Your local land conservancy may be able to participate and provide some of these resources, as well.***

# Phase 1: Review Community Plans and Ordinances (cont.)

## EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

Comparison Table for Existing Local Farmland Protection and Conservation Ordinances in Michigan Townships

Township	Type of Land Protected	Selection Criteria	Easement Holder	Program Authority + Management	Funding Mechanism
Ann Arbor Township	Farmland and open space	All properties must be agricultural or rural residential. Ordinance has selection scoring process.	Township	Township (hire a consultant to manage)	Not stipulated in ordinance
Scio Township	Farmland and open space	Ordinance includes general standards. Scoring criteria are in separate document.	Township	Township (hire a consultant to manage)	In findings, mentions millage. Land acquisition mechanism includes purchase of development rights for farmland or land acquisition.
Acme Township	Farmland and open space	Ordinance includes a map with identified agricultural preservation zone. Scoring criteria are used to evaluate applications to the purchase of development rights program.	Township	Township with assistance from Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy	--
Peninsula Township	Farmland and open space	Scoring table in ordinance.	Township	Township with assistance from Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy	Ordinance enables use of tax dollars but does not stipulate funding source.
Webster Township	Farmland and open space	Point-based screening and scoring system identified in ordinance.	Township	Ordinance enables Township to contract with "recognized and legally established nonprofit land trusts, other experienced and qualified nonprofit groups	Millage, allocation of Township General Funds, fees earmarked for farmland preservation, and contributions and bequests



## PHASE 1 ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- Review your community's asset maps showing significant natural resources
- Review your community's plans and priorities for conservation in its Master Plan
- Update or develop Purchase of Development Rights ordinance (see the Northfield Township example in the Appendix)

# How To Implement Your Millage Campaign

## Phase 2: Get Organized + Explore Feasibility

### **Behind every great conservation millage campaign is a group of passionate, committed people.**

The composition of the group driving a campaign varies from community to community. It could include members of a local planning commission, parks and recreation committee members, elected officials, grassroots environmental advocates, farmers, natural resource managers, or individuals with any professional skills or background who share a vision to conserve land or water.

### **GET CORE LEADERS IN PLACE**

Having a diverse team with a variety of strengths, including a background in natural resources, research, legal issues, accounting, real estate, communications, social media, marketing and public relations, graphic design, and fundraising is helpful. Strengths in these areas will support the implementation of your campaign activities. Most committees start with a core group of three to five people who drive the campaign and organize the work of other volunteers.

In some cases, local non-profit organizations who share an interest in the goals and desired impacts of your millage campaign may be able to offer staff time and expertise to support your millage campaign committee's activities. Reach out to conservation groups like watershed associations and councils and land conservancies to see if they can provide assistance.

Sometimes staff from a local unit of government will be involved in a campaign. Staff members and elected and appointed officials working on a campaign will need to avoid participating in campaign activities during work time as this violates laws related to government employees' participation in political campaigns. Remember, no public funds or staff time paid with public dollars may be used to promote or advocate for a millage campaign.

Try to form a five to seven member core committee whose strengths, skills, experience, and competencies fulfill the key functions identified above. Consider the ideal criteria for committee members, including demographic diversity, the neighborhoods where they live, their networks, and their local knowledge and history within the community. Develop a list of candidates along with their email addresses, phone numbers, and mailing addresses. Once you have identified candidates, reach out with a letter or an email and then meet face-to-face to discuss the campaign's vision and the role you are inviting them to play.

**Initiate recruiting early; it may take several months to secure commitments from individuals to join the committee.**



Photo by: John Lloyd

**EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD****Recruitment Letter from Friends of Acme Farmland to a Prospective Committee Member**

**Friends of Acme Farmland  
10351 Kay Ray Road  
Williamsburg, MI 49690**

July 28, 2014

Dear Barb:

Your name was given to me by Denny Hoxsie as someone I should consider for assistance with our volunteer group —"Friends of Acme Farmland". Below is a little background information.

In 2004, Acme resident passed a ballot issue - Acme Farmland and Open Space Proposal - to implement a 1 mil 10-year levy for all Acme landowners. As a result, 840 acres of Acme Township Farmland have been preserved in perpetuity. The legal concept is known as Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). Farmland owners agree to give up residential and commercial development rights in exchange for financial remuneration, but retain all other ownership rights and agree to use the land for farming. The township becomes the owner of the development rights.

On July 1, 2014, Acme Township trustees agreed unanimously to a resolution to place the Acme Township Farmland and Open Space Renewal proposal on the November 2014 ballot for Acme resident's consideration. The next step is to develop an action plan for dissemination of support information for our fellow citizens and encourage them to vote "yes" for this renewal. Attached is our committee goal and responsibilities.

I am seeking 2-3 additional committee members. Current members are Alex Pineau, owner of Evergreen Market on US 31, Denny Hoxsie, an Acme farmer, and me. I anticipate 2-3 meetings (2 hours each at most) between now and November 4. Additional time will be for email communications and help to identify other Acme residents who could network with fellow citizens in support of the ballot issue. We have technical information support from the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land. Both are non-profits and cannot advocate for approval—that is what Friends of Acme Farmland is about. My request is for you to join our committee.

I will call you in the next few days to answer any questions and understand what you have decided is possible for you. Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Zaloudek, Chair  
Friends of Acme Farmland  
Contact Info:



# Setting SMART Goals

It is important to determine the goals and define the outcomes to be achieved through the use of voter-approved millage funding. The unit of government receiving the funds is accountable to the voters and should set and approve the goals. If the millage campaign is being led by volunteers who are not serving as elected and appointed officials, the committee members should approach elected officials and/or staff to determine goals that align with existing community plans and are realistic, meaningful, attainable, and measurable. Goals should include a timeline for accomplishment. For instance:

- The township will acquire up to \_\_\_\_\_ parcels/acres of natural land that will be open to the public for recreation.
- The township will permanently preserve \_\_\_\_\_ acres of privately-owned farmland by purchasing conservation easements within the next ten years.
- The township will steward \_\_\_\_\_ acres of natural lands and waterways annually in order to manage stormwater and preserve water quality.

SMART goals are...

**S – Specific:** Write a specific goal statement(s) that relates to the problem statement. What do you want to accomplish? Why (purpose/benefit)? Who is involved? Where will it happen?

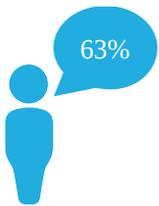
**M – Measurable:** How will you measure success? How much? How many? How will you know when you are done?

**A – Achievable:** How will the goal be accomplished? What activities will be performed? Who is responsible (name/position)? How realistic are the goal and activities given constraints (time, money, etc.)?

**R – Relevant:** Is this the right time for this goal? Does it match other efforts and needs?

**T – Time-bound:** When will this goal be achieved? What will you do in the first year, second year, in ten years?

## Millage Campaign Committee Core Roles and Tasks



### CHAIRPERSON

- Hosts and facilitates millage committee meetings
- Motivates and guides the work of other volunteer committee members
- Oversees the process for developing the campaign plan
- Recruits and selects other committee members, including a treasurer
- Guides the process of connecting with and thanking the community, win or lose



### TREASURER

- Determines the campaign budget and secure necessary funds
- Registers the campaign with the appropriate governmental clerk (county, township, village)
- Opens a millage campaign checking account and keeps financial records
- Closes the books and files necessary paperwork



### FUNDRAISING

- Responsible for raising the funds necessary to complete the campaign paperwork



### PUBLIC + STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

- Manages database of contacts and voter information
- Develops the communications and engagement plan for the campaign
- Responsible for implementing the plan and related outreach and engagement activities

# Millage Election Timeline

Once your group has coalesced, you will need to choose a name, form an official ballot campaign committee and register with the appropriate governmental clerk. Immediately after your campaign committee forms, develop a preliminary plan that includes key dates and required actions.



## IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES TO INCLUDE ON THE PRELIMINARY CALENDAR

- **Election Date:** Everything will back up from this date.
- **Committee Registration and Reporting Dates:** For information about committee registration and reporting dates, go to the Michigan Secretary of State website and select "Election Information."
- **Open a Bank Account:** The date to establish your bank account is established when you register your committee. (Note: By state statute, governmental agencies cannot pay for millage campaigns out of their own budgets.)
- **Deadline to Submit Ballot Proposal to County:** a local government must submit their millage proposal for inclusion on the ballot for the next election by a certain date. Check with the county clerk for the date.
- **Meetings With Government Board or Council:** plan for two or three meetings with your government's board to allow for enough time for potential revisions to the ballot language prior to county clerk's deadline for inclusion on the ballot.
- **Important Meetings with Individuals and Organizations:** Plan to spend three to six months to share information, make presentations, answer questions about the ballot proposal and request actions in support of your campaign of individuals and organizations in your community.
- **Preliminary Campaign Materials and Media Publications Timeline:** Consider the time it will take to develop, review, refine key messages; take photographs; develop, design and finalize materials; and print materials or work with a mailing house to get things sent to regular and absentee voters' homes. Determine absentee voting records for the past two elections to define mailing schedules. Story placement in publications will be dictated by the daily, weekly, or monthly deadlines used by different media outlets.

## PLANNING YOUR ELECTION TIMELINE

### **Building relationships and momentum in a campaign takes time.**

Starting 10-18 months before the date of an election is ideal to allow enough time for careful and thoughtful work on the campaign, although many campaigns work on a much shorter time frame. The timeline below assumes a ten month (forty week) campaign cycle. Based on local conditions and circumstances, a committee may be working on a longer or shorter timeline.

The Sample Campaign Schedule that follows lists key tasks that take place at different times within a typical campaign. The purpose of this sample is to provide a template for overall campaign planning. Advice, worksheets and tools for managing these tasks are described in greater detail in other sections of the Toolkit.

## Phase 2

# Sample Campaign Schedule

QUIET PHASE = tasks that are inward and planning-oriented, not announced publicly  
PUBLIC PHASE = activities are outward and community-focused.

Maintaining the discipline of a quiet phase is important. A campaign team will be able to focus on urgent tasks and set a pace for the way information is publicly shared to ensure a successful outcome. If the committee goes "public" with a campaign too early and there is organized opposition present, it will be more difficult to influence or counteract the messages heard by voters.

Timing—Weeks Before Election	Key Tasks
40 to 32 Weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and recruit campaign leaders and members of the campaign committee</li> <li>Assess campaign feasibility</li> <li>Develop relationships with elected and appointed officials</li> <li>Strategize how you are going to reach the electorate with key messages</li> <li>Identify resources needed to implement the campaign (photographer, graphic designer, print and mailing houses), contact each for timeline and budget purposes.</li> </ul>
32 to 28 Weeks <b>QUIET PHASE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a campaign budget</li> <li>Register committee</li> <li>Establish bank account and file paperwork</li> <li>Identify funding sources for campaign</li> <li>Contact donor prospects to raise money</li> <li>Continue to develop relationships with elected and appointed officials</li> <li>Continue to assess campaign feasibility</li> </ul>
28 to 24 Weeks <b>QUIET PHASE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to contact donor prospects to raise money</li> <li>Identify campaign volunteers for voting districts and neighborhoods</li> <li>Identify target voters and begin building database</li> <li>Develop communications plan, finalize list of communication materials and define messaging</li> <li>Connect with champions (people who will advocate for and promote your millage)</li> </ul>
24 to 20 Weeks <b>QUIET PHASE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue soliciting funds</li> <li>Continue connecting with champions; begin acquiring endorsements</li> <li>Continue building database</li> </ul>
20 to 16 Weeks <b>QUIET PHASE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue soliciting funds</li> <li>Continue building database</li> <li>Continue connecting with champions and acquiring endorsements</li> </ul>
16 to 12 Weeks <b>BRIEFLY PUBLIC PHASE*</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with election officials to get millage on the ballot</li> </ul> <p>*Getting the language on the ballot requires a vote of approval from the unit of government, other than in cities with charters that allow citizens to circulate petitions to get a matter on the ballot.</p>
11 to 10 Weeks <b>QUIET PHASE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design and develop campaign communication materials - postcard, website, yard sign, flyer, etc.</li> <li>Continue connecting with champions</li> <li>Continue building database</li> <li>Begin planning campaign support events such as presentations to civic groups, education sessions, in-home gatherings, and prepare speakers for these events</li> <li>Plan absentee voter efforts</li> </ul>
10 to 8 Weeks <b>PUBLIC PHASE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host campaign support events</li> <li>Social media outreach</li> <li>Write letters to the editor and/or place endorsements in local media</li> <li>Continue with absentee voter efforts</li> </ul>

# Sample Campaign Schedule

Timing—Weeks Before Election	Key Tasks
<b>6 to 7 Weeks</b> <b>PUBLIC PHASE</b>	Host campaign support events Continue social media outreach Write letters to the editor and/or place endorsements in local media Continue with absentee voter efforts
<b>4 to 5 Weeks</b> <b>PUBLIC PHASE</b>	Begin door-to-door visits Write letters to the editor and/or place endorsements in local media Radio interviews Advertisements Continue social media outreach Initiate phone calls Place media ads Mail literature to target voters Continue with absentee voter efforts
<b>2 to 3 Weeks</b> <b>PUBLIC PHASE</b>	Continue door-to-door visits Write letters to the editor and/or place endorsements in local media Radio interviews TV public service announcements Advertisements Continue social media outreach Continue with phone calls Continue media ads Mail literature to target voters Continue with absentee voter efforts
<b>1 Week Before Election Day</b> <b>PUBLIC PHASE</b>	Continue door-to-door visits Write letters to the editor and/or place endorsements in local media Radio interviews TV public service announcements Advertisements Continue social media outreach Phone calls to likely voters Continue with absentee voter efforts Hand out campaign literature at key locations
<b>Day Before the Election</b> <b>PUBLIC PHASE</b>	Door-to-door visits Phone calls to likely voters Continue with absentee voter efforts
<b>Election Day</b> <b>PUBLIC PHASE</b>	Arrange for transportation, child care and elder care for voters, if needed Continue phone calls Perform poll greeting and watching activities VOTE! Celebrate with a victory party
<b>Day After the Election</b>	Take down signs Begin the process of writing thank you notes to committee leaders and volunteers
<b>1 Week After the Election</b>	Thank the community for their support Close the books and register the group inactive

# Campaign Budget Template

This sample budget may be used as a template to consider some common expenses associated with a millage campaign. The cost of some communications-related activities will be motivated by what is learned during campaign feasibility processes. For example, if there is organized opposition to a campaign, a committee may choose to invest more heavily in radio or television advertisements, video production, or social media management.

See Acme Township's budget and expense sheet on the next page.

## Activity

## Cost

Buying voter lists (to research precinct turnout history)	
Public opinion survey/polling	
Facilitator for interviews or focus groups	
Communications/messaging development	
Postcard design (contract service or donated/in-kind labor)	
Postcard printing	
Postcard postage	
Yard sign design (contract service or donated/in-kind labor)	
Yard sign printing	
Fundraising and thank you letters and postage	
Print ad design (contract service or donated/in-kind labor)	
Paid media advertisements	
Social media administration	
Website/webpage design and maintenance (contract service or donated/in-kind labor)	
Video production (contract service or donated/in-kind labor)	
Paid TV advertisement placement	
Materials and supplies for events	
Other professional services - lawyer, accountant	

## EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

### Budget and Expenses from Acme Township's Purchase of Development Rights Millage Renewal Campaign

Expense Item	Supplier	Units	Cost/Unit	Total Cost
Checks for FoAF Committee	NW Bank	1	17.00	-17.00
Reg. Voter/Absentee Voter Info	G.T. County	1	25.00	-25.00
Postcard Design (4)	Emily Mitchell*	1	750.00	-700.00
Campaign Handout-Design	Emily Mitchell	1	200.00	-200.00
Acme Website Update (photos)	Emily Mitchell	1	50.00	-50.00
Ticker Mid-Banner Ad Design	Emily Mitchell	1	Unknown	-50.00
Postcard Mailing (4 AV; 4 RV)	Maple River Direct Mail*	8000	0.35	-1468.88
Postcard Mailing (4 AV; 4 RV)	Maple River Direct Mail			-676.00
Postcard Printing (4)	Johnson Clark Printers*	8000	0.1174	-939.00
Ambassador Handout-Print	Johnson Clark Printers	1400	0.23429	-246.00
Ambassador Handout-Print	Johnson Clark Printers	400	0.21965	-87.86
Acme Farmland Protection Maps	Copy Central	50	0.90	-47.70
Miscellaneous	TBD	1	1000.00	0.00
10 x 15 Kraft Envelopes	Staples			-17.80
Photography	Gary L. Howe*	1	600.00	-580.00
Ambassador support printing	The Copy shop	50		-41.71
Ticker Ad - Mid Banner	The Business News	5 days		-333.00
		<b>Total Expense</b>		-5479.95
	<b>Total Funds Raised: 9/1/2014 to date</b>			5501.00

# Explore Campaign Feasibility

**Understanding what people value most in their community will help you assess the feasibility of a potential millage campaign.**

To understand values and priorities, look at:

## [1] COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Is your community made up of young families? Retirees? Farmers? Second-home owners? What's the level of employment in your community? What are people's average income and education levels? People's needs and priorities can differ based on these demographic considerations. Understanding who lives in your community can help you understand the types of conservation benefits that meet the highest needs and priorities. These data can also be found in local comprehensive and master plans.

If your community does not have an updated comprehensive or master plan, the regional Council of Governments serving your community may have these data. If you are located in an urban area, the Metropolitan Planning Organization serving your community (called an MPO) will have these data. You can also access demographic information directly from the U.S. Census Bureau through their website at <https://factfinder.census.gov>.



## [2] LANDSCAPE CHANGES

Are development patterns changing in your community? Are subdivisions and shopping centers replacing farms or forests? How are people feeling about the changes? In some cases, you can informally assess some community perspectives on these changes by reading your local newspaper, reading public meeting agendas or minutes, observing social media comments related to local land use and development projects, or by learning what people in the community are talking about at the grocery, coffee shops, church, or school.

Sometimes, the most powerful catalyst for a millage campaign can be the sale (or threat of a sale) and development of a beloved farm or forest or shoreline area. This threat can serve as a call to action for a millage campaign.

# Research Voting Trends

**Understanding the voting patterns and trends in the community will help to assess feasibility and also plan an effective and targeted campaign.**

Access voting history regarding the voting history for the government in which the campaign is focused. These data can be obtained from the unit of government's clerk. To find contact information for the clerk, visit the Michigan Voter Information website's Clerk Search page: <https://webapps.sos.state.mi.us/MVIC/ClerkSearch.aspx>

Contact the clerk and request voting history data in order to track overall voter turnout for several different types of elections such as mid-term, presidential, and primary.

## Determine:

- Who is eligible to vote
- Who is registered to vote
- Who is coming out to vote on Election Day

Examine the turnout rate with consideration to different demographics and groups:

- Age
- Gender
- Neighborhood
- First-time voter
- Absentee

After reviewing the voting history data, ask these questions:

1. What happened in previous elections?
2. What are the trends?
3. How will the trends impact the conservation millage campaign?
4. Which demographic groups will be strategically important to connect with during the campaign?
5. Based on voter turnout data, establish vote goals. What will it take to pass a millage in this unit of government?
6. Based on an understanding of voter history and demographics, who are the campaign's likely:
  - a) Core supporters
  - b) Highly persuadable voters
  - c) Somewhat persuadable voters
  - d) Opposition

The answers to question #6 may be informed by the surveys, interviews and focus group sessions described in the next section.



Assessing and measuring public opinion regarding your potential millage is one of the most important steps in determining your campaign's feasibility.

## CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS THROUGH INTERVIEWS

The campaign team should consider interviewing at least eight to twelve community members representing diverse perspectives and interests. Interviews are not about selling the campaign; they are about listening for inclinations of support, concerns, questions, and/or a willingness to serve as champions of the millage. Interviews may also help to identify key messages that will resonate with potential voters. Potential interview candidates may include:

- Elected officials
- Former elected officials
- Appointed officials
- Chamber of Commerce members, local business leaders
- Conservation District staff or board members
- Farm Bureau, local farmers
- Neighborhood association members
- Lake association members
- Local and grassroots environmental non-profit groups
- Park users

Using the interview questions below, the interview may last 30-45 minutes depending on the level of detail in the answers provided by a participant.

Many communities distribute surveys when developing or updating their Master Plans. These plans can also be a source of information.

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In order to maintain consistency across interviews, use a standard list of questions so responses can be compared.

1. Share a bit about yourself...how long have you lived in the community?
2. How do you spend your time when you are working?
3. How do you spend your time when you are not working?
4. What do you appreciate most about your community?
5. What are the most urgent needs and pressing issues facing the community right now?
6. How important is land conservation to you? (very important, somewhat important, not at all important?)
  - a) How important is protecting working farms? Why?
  - b) How important is flood protection? Why?
  - c) How important is the development of new parks? Why?
  - d) How important is the protection of scenic views and open space? Why?
  - e) How important is protecting clean water? Why?
  - f) How important is protecting wildlife habitat? Why?
  - g) How much are you impacted by traffic resulting from residential development?
  - h) What other land conservation values or impacts are important to you? Why?
7. If a conservation millage of \_\_\_\_\_ (funding threshold) were proposed with a purpose to fund \_\_\_\_\_ and goal of \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your millage outcomes and impacts here), would you be likely to vote yes or no? (very likely yes/ somewhat likely yes/somewhat likely no/very likely no) Why?
8. Are you aware of any other millage issues that will be placed on the ballot soon?
9. Who in the community do you think would support or champion a proposed conservation millage?
10. Who in the community do you think would have questions and concerns?
11. What questions do you have for me?

# Focus Groups

## Focus groups are similar to interviews in content but are done in a group setting.

Focus groups may have five to twelve people. A neutral facilitator poses questions to the group and guides the discussion. The purpose of a focus group is to test ideas and to listen for inclination for support as well as opposition. Focus groups can be organized thematically by inviting people who share a similar characteristic: business owners, recreation enthusiasts, environmentalists, neighbors, etc.

### SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Using these questions, the interview may last 45-90 minutes depending on the level of detail in the answers provided by participants.

1. How important is land conservation to you? (very important, somewhat important, not at all important?)
2. How important is protecting working farms? Why?
3. How important is flood protection? Why?
  - a) How important is the development of new parks? Why?
  - b) How important is the protection of scenic views and open space? Why?
  - c) How important is protecting clean water? Why?
  - d) How important is protecting wildlife habitat? Why?
4. What other land conservation values or impacts are important to you? Why?
5. If a conservation millage of \_\_\_\_\_ (funding threshold) were proposed with a purpose to fund \_\_\_\_\_ and goal of \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your millage outcomes and impacts here), would you be likely to vote yes or no? (very likely yes/ somewhat likely yes/somewhat likely no/very likely no) Why?
6. Are you aware of any other millage issues that will be placed on the ballot soon?
7. Who in the community do you think would support or champion a proposed conservation millage?
8. Who in the community do you think would have questions and concerns?
9. What questions do you have for me or about this process?

### INTERVIEW + FOCUS GROUP TIPS

- Select a facilitator who listens well, takes accurate notes, is comfortable meeting with new people and who can guide a discussion so all those present speak. (Sometimes it's possible for a campaign committee member to play this role. Other times it's helpful for a neutral third party facilitator to conduct the interviews. You may want to consider hiring someone to perform this role in order to ensure neutrality and objectivity. If you choose this approach, you may want to contact SEMCOG or a Council of Governments (COG) or MPRO in your area to request advice on potential neutral third-party interviewers. This regional government agency has experience with public engagement processes and also works with private contractors who perform this type of service.)
- Host in a neutral space: Interviews should be hosted in a space that feels unbiased to the person being interviewed. Community libraries and civic centers have rooms that may be reserved by citizens for this type of use.
- Offer refreshments: Creating a welcoming environment for the interview helps set the stage for a meaningful and respectful listening session.
- Take comprehensive notes: If the session is to be recorded, ask for permission first. Use a notebook or computer to take notes. Taking detailed notes and only writing down the words people say, as opposed to interpreting what they say, is an important part of the data and perspective-gathering process. If the campaign team's capacity and time allows for it, consider having one person conduct the interview and another person take notes, or work with a service contractor to divide responsibilities in this way.

# Focus Groups, cont.

## COMPILING INTERVIEW + FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

- Outline your methods: Describe the process you followed to conduct your interviews or focus groups. Without listing names, provide attribution to the list of represented organizations or perspectives (e.g. “a representative from the business community,” “a local farmer,” “an environmental non-profit leader,” “an elected official,” etc.) [tip: use a free online survey tool such as SurveyMonkey to enter and display results]
- Share the list of questions you used to solicit insights.
- Summarize the themes you heard shared by participants.
- Make conclusions and recommendations based on what you learned:
  - What is the pulse of the community related to the millage?
  - What is your estimation of the level of support among different audiences?
  - What did the interviews or focus groups tell you about potential timing of a ballot measure?
  - What else might be on the ballot that might conflict in terms of message, time, attention or level of priority to certain audiences?
- Share the results with the campaign committee and use this information to inform your next steps.

## PHONE SURVEYS

### Conducting random sample phone interviews is a statistically meaningful way of assessing millage support.

A campaign committee should work with a professional or institution who is experienced in designing and managing surveys. This step may be the single largest expense in your campaign.

Community colleges or universities may have the capacity to conduct these types of surveys on a fee-for-service basis. Political campaign managers can be good sources of information for contacts with professional polling experience as well.



If survey results and public opinion polls reveal a majority of voters will not support a millage, do not proceed with the campaign. The millage campaign and scope of work may need to shift to spending time building relationships with champions and key influencers in the community, and to nurturing support for the conservation values the committee is working to advance.

Through the public survey process, if the committee discovers there is paid and organized opposition, take note. That presents a special challenge and will require a well-financed campaign with significant outreach and sophisticated marketing in order to succeed.

# Encouraging Political Support

## What if there is uncertainty or opposition at the local government level to the idea of putting a millage on the ballot?

### EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

In Dexter Township, the campaign committee used postcards as a way to communicate with voters directly to request that they communicate with local officials about their support for getting a millage on the ballot.

“

Last year when we made the pitch for a proposal, the supervisor told us to prove there was support. We drafted a non-binding petition which we circulated and got 165 signatures. That got the Township Board's attention, but out of 5,000 voters that wasn't sufficient. We've shown up at Board meetings and made other contacts, but one of the advocates came up with the postcard idea. We used Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM)\*, so it went to pretty much all of the residences in the township. Printing and mailing cost \$1,000. It was a quick way of getting the word out.

- Barry Lonik

\*EDDM is a service provided by the US Postal Service

”

### Dexter Township's remaining farmland and open space could be developed – or it could be **SAVED**.

Township citizens are asking the board of trustees for a land preservation millage on the November 6 ballot.

Webster Township has had a millage since 2005 and has protected nearly 2,000 acres of farmland and natural areas from development.

### We can do the same in Dexter Township!

If you support land preservation, email the township at [supervisor@dextertownship.org](mailto:supervisor@dextertownship.org), [clerk@dextertownship.org](mailto:clerk@dextertownship.org) and say so.

BACK

POSTNET  
ECLASS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EDDM RETAIL

FRONT



# Evaluate and Select a Millage Rate

It is important to choose a reasonable funding level that voters are likely to support. When considering the millage size, it is also important to consider the cumulative mills for a taxpayer within a unit of government. It is better to choose a useful and modest amount and succeed than to overreach and be defeated the first time. Information on the tax base and taxable assessed value for properties can be obtained from the local assessor.

## RESEARCHING MICHIGAN PROPERTY TAX MILLAGES FOR PARKS AND CONSERVATION

Since 1994, dozens of conservation-related millages have been approved by voters in Michigan. The table below illustrates a few examples from the Huron River watershed. A complete table of the voter-approved property tax millages for parks and conservation in Michigan from 1994 - 2016 is in the Appendix.

ALL OF  
THESE  
MILLAGES  
PASSED!

Jurisdiction Name	Date	Description	Finance Mechanism	Total Funds at Stake	Conservation Funds Approved	% Yes	% No
Webster Township	11/4/14	10-year, .5 mill property tax renewal for open space and farmland protection	Property tax	\$1,950,000	\$1,950,000	73.07%	26.93%
Scio Township	11/6/12	10-year, .4942 mill property tax extension for the preservation of farmland, open space and other natural areas	Property tax	\$6,310,000	\$6,310,000	68.16%	31.84%
Meridian Township	11/2/10	10-year, renewal and reduction of .75 mill levy to .33 mills for land preservation	Property tax	\$5,363,950	\$5,363,950	64.54%	35.46%
Washtenaw County	11/2/10	10-year, renewal of .2409 natural areas millage for land conservation	Property tax	\$34,920,000	\$34,920,000	57.40%	42.60%
Webster Township	11/3/09	5-year, .5 mill property tax renewal for open space and farmland protection	Property tax	\$853,665	\$853,665	60.34%	39.66%
Webster Township	8/2/05	5-year, .5 millage property tax increase for the preservation of farmland, open space, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and water quality	Property tax	\$851,840	\$851,840	69.01%	30.99%
Scio Township	11/2/04	Proposal J, 10-year, .50 mill property tax for the preservation of farmland, open space and habitat	Property tax	\$5,750,000	\$5,750,000	74.61%	25.39%

Ann Arbor	11/4/03	Proposal B: Charter Amendment, 30-year, .5 mill property tax extension for parkland, open space, natural habitats, <u>sourcewater</u> , easements	Property tax	\$57,525,000	\$57,525,000	67.36%	32.64%
Ann Arbor Township	11/4/03	20-year, .7 mill property tax for farmland development rights, open space	Property tax	\$5,561,600	\$5,561,600	76.96%	23.04%
Washtenaw County	11/7/00	10-year, .25 mill, property tax increase for acquisition of environmentally valuable areas and wildlife habitat, <u>water quality</u> preservation and recreation	Property tax	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000	64.14%	35.86%
Ann Arbor	11/2/99	Ann Arbor City Charter Amendment, 5-year, .5 mill property tax increase for parks	Property tax	\$7,600,535	\$7,600,535	64.84%	35.16%

Source: Trust for Public Land, Michigan LandVote Data.  
<http://www.conservationalmaniac.org/secure/almanac/midwest/mi/lvdata.html>

The friends group leading Acme’s millage campaign tested a millage and sought feedback during their feasibility process on a millage rate of 0.73. The chart below illustrates how much money this millage rate would raise as estimated tax revenues by tax year, taking into consideration the total taxable value for each year, along with the estimated consumer price index and estimated new construction to inform all taxed properties.

### ESTIMATED MILLAGE REVENUE TABLE USED FOR PLANNING ACME TOWNSHIP’S CAMPAIGN

By calculating the amount of annual estimated tax revenues the millage can produce, the committee can anticipate the types of efforts and impacts that can be achieved.

This includes acreage of farmland or natural lands protected through conservation easements, the number of parks acquired, or the feet or miles of waterways restored. Communicating how millage funding will be spent will be an important campaign message.

**Total Estimated Tax Generated =  
2,865,161**

Tax Year	Taxable Value	Estimate Consumer Price Index	Estimated New Construction	Millage Rate	Estimated Tax \$
2014	298,631,669		1%	0.73	218,016
2015	309,104,457	2.5%	1%	0.73	223,646
2016	319,925,113	2.5%	1%	0.73	233,544
2017	331,120,422	2.5%	1%	0.73	243,718
2018	342,709,635	2.5%	1%	0.73	250,178
2019	354,704,474	2.5%	1%	0.73	258,934
2020	367,119,140	2.5%	1%	0.73	267,987
2021	379,968,306	2.5%	1%	0.73	277,377
2022	393,267,190	2.5%	1%	0.73	287,085
2023	407,011,542	2.5%	1%	0.73	297,133
2024	421,217,666	2.5%	1%	0.73	307,533

# Phase 2: Activity Checklist



## PHASE 2 ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

---

- Define what success will look like and set your goals.
- Develop your campaign schedule and timeline.
- Open bank account.
- Evaluate voter history and trends.
- Conduct key informational interviews.
- Conduct focus groups.
- Conduct a public opinion survey (if funds are available)
- Develop a campaign budget.
- Reference existing cost of community services studies and identify information and trends that might be applicable to share with voters in your community.
- Assess legal parameters and financial reporting requirements.
- Organize your campaign committee. Assess your competencies and assign roles and responsibilities.
- Meet with and secure political leadership from elected and appointed officials (mayor, chair of the county board of commissioners, township supervisor, planning commission chair, etc.)
- Based on public opinion and other feasibility research, determine if a millage is the best option to pursue and what the amount should be.
- Raise funds to support campaign activities.

## Trust your Data and Feasibility Work

### Tom Nelson, Executive Director of the Leelanau Conservancy, regarding a failed conservation millage attempt in Leelanau County:

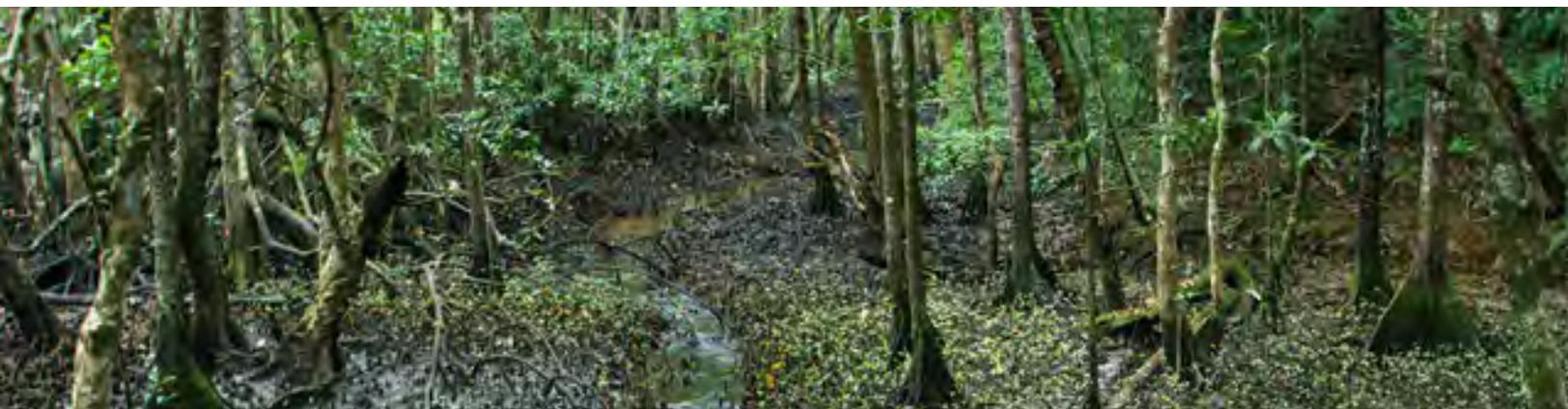


1. We polled nearly 60% favorable prior to the campaign, but were strongly advised (by Trust for Public Land) that we needed to poll above 60% to have a good shot at winning. Why? Because our message required the voters to connect some dots. If an opposition group were to form, its message was much simpler: "Higher taxes = bad." We went for it anyway, an opposition group did form and its simple message muddied the waters. If people aren't sure, they vote no. Our side lost 60%-40%.

2. Think about your community. How diverse or homogeneous is it? Are there already factions? More pointedly, which faction usually "calls the shots?" If you don't have the support of the constituency that is in power, especially if they have held the reins of power for a while, Job #1 is probably gaining their support...unless of course you can demonstrate the vast majority of the voters support your cause anyway. In divided communities, those in power may simply guard their ability to "call the shots" if a different constituency is pushing for change.

3. How do you approach the leaders of the constituency in power? Quietly. One-on-one, preferably. Come with the idea, ask for their thoughts, then listen. Do not try to interject and persuade. When you've convinced them you actually care what they think and want to find an approach that fits your goal and addresses their concerns, then ask for a follow up meeting. Then, share your approach and listen some more. This can take months. Sometimes years. If you're fortunate to already have a champion or two in the midst of that very constituency (note: not just on the edge of it), ask them to carry the ball for you with their peers.

4. People make the mistake of not building relationships with elected leaders before they need them to vote their way. It's human nature to take someone more seriously if it is someone you know, respect and like, even if you don't necessarily share all their political views. It's a lot harder to shut out a friend. If you think you want to put an issue on the ballot in a couple of years, start befriending your elected leaders now if you haven't already. Look for common ground now. Find things they are already for that you can support. This is not being disingenuous. It is simply thinking and acting beyond political labels for positive change.



# How To Implement Your Millage Campaign

## Phase 3: Plan Campaign Messages and Get on the Ballot

**A successful millage campaign will require strategic and effective communication with voters in your community.**

Several elements are important:

- Defining your core audience.
- Identifying persuasive messages.
- Communicating with community members and voters in meaningful ways that are realistic with respect to your campaign team’s budget, time commitment and capacity.

In order to define your audiences, you need to think about who likely voters are and what messages will resonate with them. You can use the insights you received from your feasibility work (focus groups and interviews) and your public opinion research to assess themes.

### DEFINE CORE AUDIENCES

Audience	How will this audience segment benefit from the millage?	What are the priority values for this audience?
Urban area voters		
Rural area voters		
Suburban area voters		
Seniors		
Adults without children		
Adults with children		
Business owners and major employers		
Farmers		
People with higher incomes		
People with lower incomes		
Other audiences:		

# Identify Persuasive Messages

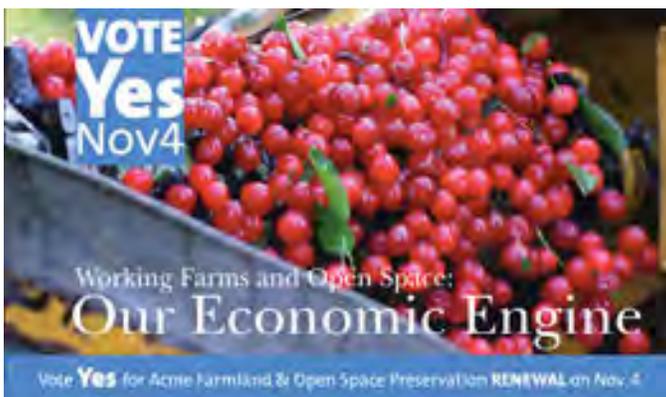
**Your understanding of the values and priorities of voters will help you craft your campaign messages.**

Select three top campaign messages that you feel accurately describe the outcomes and impacts of your millage and that are likely to resonate with voters. For each of your top three campaign messages, you can add sub-messages underneath. These messages should be used consistently in your campaign materials and voter outreach efforts.

## KEY MESSAGES FROM OTHER CAMPAIGNS

- Protecting sources of drinking water for future generations
- Controlling flooding
- Creating parks and natural areas
- Protecting wildlife
- Stopping sprawl
- Preserving open space
- Enhancing quality of life
- Protecting working farms
- Saving open space
- Supporting our local economy
- Protecting clean air and water

## EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD



# How to Get on the Ballot

## Michigan State law governs the legal requirements for ballot and bond language and how a millage proposal gets on the ballot.

A millage proposal can be placed on the ballot through one of these processes:

- **Resolution of Governing Body**
- **Petition/Citizen Initiative**

### USING A RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BODY TO GET ON THE BALLOT

The process for getting a governing body to adopt a resolution to get a measure on the ballot involves working directly with elected officials in your unit of government. A member of the campaign committee, usually the Chair, can meet with members of the governing body one-on-one. An agenda for this meeting might include:

- Reflecting on the local government's master plan or other land use planning priorities and goals.
- Reviewing ways the proposed millage will help to achieve goals in the plan.
- Sharing information about the campaign committee's composition and goals related to the millage campaign.

At these meetings, officials can ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of the intentions and anticipated outcomes of a millage campaign. If members of the governing body are receptive, the campaign committee shares proposed ballot language with the clerk of the governing body for approval. The proposed language would then be included in the governing body's meeting packet for review, along with a resolution of support to put the issue on the ballot. This process may take three to six months, depending on the level of awareness and support of the governing body members.

Once the governing body approves the resolution, and if you are working at the township level, the township clerk sends the approved ballot language to the County Clerk. The governing body must do this by a specified deadline before the election, found on the Michigan Board of State Canvassers and Bureau of Elections websites.



### USING THE PETITION PROCESS TO GET ON THE BALLOT

In cities that allow initiated laws or referenda on current ordinances, a petition to amend the city charter must be submitted to the city clerk. It must then be signed by at least five percent of the qualified and registered voters of the municipality. Signatures must have been gathered within the last year. The city clerk has 45 days to certify the sufficiency or insufficiency of the petition. If the petition has sufficient signatures, the clerk submits the proposed amendment to the voters at the next regular municipal or general state election, no less than 90 days following the filing of the petition.

Source: "How does a ballot proposal get on the ballot?" by Eric Walcott, Michigan State University Extension. Published on June 17, 2016.

Available at: [http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/how\\_does\\_a\\_ballot\\_proposal\\_get\\_on\\_the\\_ballot](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/how_does_a_ballot_proposal_get_on_the_ballot)

# Craft Your Ballot Language

## Your ballot language should be simple, concise, address legal constraints, and incorporate your community engagement and survey findings.

Working with an attorney or bond counsel and reading ballot language from other successful millage efforts can help clarify your language. Make sure the language you use matters to voters. The ballot language will be the only thing most voters see, and it is the last thing they see before voting. To avoid potential voter confusion, be sure to Google your ballot title to find out if there are similar titles for other townships or for the State of Michigan. Michigan law governs ballot language requirements.

The ballot shall state all of the following:

- The millage rate to be authorized.
- The estimated amount of revenue that will be collected in the first year that the millage is authorized and levied.
- The duration of the millage in years.
- A clear statement of the purpose for the millage.
- A clear statement indicating whether the proposed millage is a renewal of a previously authorized millage or the authorization of a new additional millage.

### NEED ACTION FASTER THAN MILLAGE REVENUE KICKS IN? TRY A BOND

Bonds are a financing tool communities can use to borrow money to pay for infrastructure and services. Communities can pass a bond with the intention to pay the bond and interest payments back with proceeds from a millage. You might consider a bond related to your millage if priority farm or natural lands are under imminent development threat.

For example, if a community needed to use \$1,000,000 to acquire a series of easements on local farms within in years one and two of a voter-approved millage, that would only generate \$250,000 a year in tax revenue. A bond would enable them to borrow money and pay it back through the millage dollars generated in later years.

When offering municipal bonds, units of government typically retain bond counsel (an attorney or firm) to guide the bond process and manage the issuance of bonds.

### GETTING BONDS ON THE BALLOT

In addition to other legal requirements for submitting a proposal to authorize the issuance of bonds, the ballot shall state all of the following:

- The principal amount to be borrowed.
- The maximum number of years the bonds may be outstanding, exclusive of any refunding.
- A clear statement of the purpose for which the proceeds of the bonds will be used.
- For bonds that are intended to be paid from a separate revenue source or from taxes levied in less than the entire taxing unit, the primary source of the revenue that is intended to be used to retire the bonds.

# Craft Your Ballot Language

## SAMPLE BALLOT LANGUAGE

PROPOSAL J - SCIO TOWNSHIP FARMLAND AND OPEN SPACE LAND PRESERVATION MILLAGE  
PROPOSAL TO PERMANENTLY PRESERVE FARMLAND AND OPEN SPACE THROUGHOUT THE TOWNSHIP BY  
PROVIDING FUNDING FOR THE VOLUNTARY PURCHASE OF LAND.

Shall the Township of Scio permanently preserve farmland, open space, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and protect drinking water sources and the water quality of rivers and streams, and provide new parks, recreational opportunities and trails by funding the voluntary purchase of land or interests in land throughout the Township, and enable to Township to take advantage of matching funds in the City of Ann Arbor and elsewhere, by increasing the authorized millage rate for ad valorem taxes for the Township of Scio by 0.5 mils (\$.50 per \$1,000 of taxable value) for the ten fiscal years 2004 through 2014, inclusive? In the first year the estimated revenue will be \$575,000.



## PHASE 3: ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- Understand the legal requirements for a ballot measure.**
- Research other successful ballot measures from comparable communities and campaign efforts.**
- Determine your approach to getting a measure on the ballot.**
- Work with elected officials to explore feasibility of getting on the ballot.**
- Define core audiences.**
- Craft strong, clear, accurate and concise ballot language.**

# How To Implement Your Millage Campaign

## Phase 4: Communicate + Connect with Voters

Connecting with voters is critical. The campaign’s communications plan should include activities designed to share information and persuade voters. It should also realistically reflect the financial and human resources available for the campaign. The chart below illustrates the relative time commitment and cost of different communication tactics.

Communications and Voter Engagement Tactics	Time Commitment	Relative Cost
Earned media – letters to the editor, news outlets and radio interviews	High	Low
Social media	Medium	Low
Door-to-door	High	Low
Paid: direct mail, paid phone calls, digital media/video, broadcast media (for \$500,000+ campaigns)	High	High
Speaker’s bureau	Medium	Low
In-home or neighborhood informational gatherings	High	Low
Postcards	Low	Medium
Yard signs	Medium	Medium
Phone calls to likely/registered voters	High	Low

### TIPS FOR HIGH-IMPACT CAMPAIGNS

1. For campaigns with smaller budgets, focus on **high impact activities that cost less** like door-to-door visits, earned media coverage like radio interviews and letters to the editor, social media, postcard mailings, and yard signs placed at strategic locations.
2. Fully fund or support **one communications tactic** or activity before adding an additional one.
3. In addition to thinking about the messages, it is important to think about the messenger. When considering communication tactics and audiences, think about whose leadership as a champion is likely to resonate most with specific voting audiences. Look for **friendly, articulate spokespeople** who are good at responding to tough questions. Practice scenarios with them.
4. Train and give **scripts and talking points** to everyone who will be speaking with the public. Coach these ambassadors in using campaign messages and in how to answer questions and manage conflict and disagreements.
5. Create communication materials that include **clear messages and images** that resonate. Photographs with people in them may be especially effective. Think about target audiences and try to use images that reflect and connect with those audiences.
6. Tie campaign messages and impacts to the **ballot language**.
7. Regardless of the tactics, the communications activities will be fueled by the passion and commitment of volunteers. The champion’s **energy and dedication** is critical to successfully motivating voters.

# Creating a Brochure or Fact Sheet

You will need a simple, attractive brochure, fact sheet, or other piece that explains the proposal and its benefits to your community. Assign this task to someone on your committee with a background in marketing.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Scio Township's campaign committee developed Frequently Asked Questions handouts to share information with voters. Scio Township's campaign committee, People for a Beautiful Scio, developed and mailed a brochure to voters. The brochure offered answers to the following questions:

- What will this program do?
- How much will it cost us?
- Why is this program needed?
- Will this program be effective?
- Is this program well planned?
- Doesn't the township need to encourage development to keep our taxes low?
- Will any land be preserved in my area of the township?
- Will this undermine efforts to create affordable housing?
- Can't we curb sprawl through zoning?
- How will this program affect the Dexter and Ann Arbor Public School systems?
- Why bother with land preservation in these tough economic times?
- In 1998, a similar program was rejected at the county level. What's different about this proposal?
- This sounds like the right thing to do. Who is opposed to it?

The brochure included contact information for campaign leaders and it also educated voters by including a copy of the official ballot, highlighting millage proposal language.

For their campaign to renew their millage, Acme Township's campaign committee drafted several versions of their postcard mailing before settling on final language for two separate postcards:

### 1) Vote YES to Continue Farmland Preservation Success!

In 2004, Acme Township voters approved the first Farmland and Open Space Proposal. Success followed!

- The Township secured \$2.5 million of outside grant funds to match township tax dollars and 5 working farms totaling 810 acres have been permanently preserved. But our program is out of funds.
- More farmers want to preserve their lands, but we must renew the program. Right now, 13 working farms have signed up for permanent preservation. That's over 1,200 acres.
- The 2014 Farm Bill and other programs offer matching funds for farmland preservation. Without renewal of our millage these matching funds will be practically impossible to secure. This is not a new tax or tax increase. It simply renews the successful open space and farmland preservation program.
- The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy will help Acme Township secure matching funds and help administer the program.
- To insure that all funds are spent properly, state law requires an annual independent audit of the Township and these funds.

### 2) Vote YES for Acme Farmland and Open Space Preservation Renewal on November 4.

Working farmland, open space, scenic views, wildlife habitat and water quality play an important role in our quality of life in Acme Township. We live in one of the fastest growing regions in Michigan. To balance this growth, it is essential that we set aside working farmland and open space that maintain and enhance our quality of life.

Right now, 13 working farms are in line for permanent preservation. That's over 1,200 acres of Acme farmland. The Open Space and Farmland Preservation millage costs the owner of a home assessed at \$100,000 less than \$7 per month. That's a small price to protect our quality of life. To insure that all funds are spent properly, state law requires an annual independent audit of the Township and these funds.

# Door-to-Door Campaigning

Door-to-door campaigning is one of the highest impact communication activities for the campaign. Organize this activity by recruiting and training ambassadors, designing and supplying them with well-crafted brochures or flyers, and training them and preparing them with a script or talking points. Use the voter assessment work from the feasibility phase to prioritize areas to visit door-to-door, focusing on core supporters and highly persuadable supporters first. Mark these on a map and give ambassadors the map and lists of voters by street address and have them record the outcomes of the conversations they have, including their assessment of whether the voter is a core supporter, highly persuadable, somewhat persuadable, or in opposition to the millage.

## SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR DOOR-TO-DOOR AMBASSADORS

To: Acme Farmland Preservation Ambassadors

10/12/2014

From: Friends of Acme Farmland Committee: Denny Hoxsie, Barbara Maitland, Alex Pineau, and John Zaloudek

Thanks for your support of the Acme farmland preservation program. There are many opportunities to engage Acme voters that you know – at the grocery store or on a walk to name a couple. Making fellow residents aware of the opportunity to permanently preserve an additional 1200 acres of Acme farmland and requesting support may be all it takes. This can be done anytime starting now and all the way to Nov. 4, election day.

Campaign actions that are scheduled or have occurred:

- Series of 4 super-sized post cards to absentee voters and regular voters (schedule in support document)
- GTRLC farmland preservation information mailing to all Acme Township residents (in-home 10/9/14)
- Ads on *The Ticker*: (10/23, 10/25-26, and 11/1-2)
- WTCM - Ron Jolly show (8:30 a.m. - Tuesday, 10/28/14),
- Record-Eagle support letters to the editor (10/21 thru 11/3)
- Record-Eagle Forum from business point of view (to be scheduled)

Absentee voter history and the actions above make the ideal timing for door-to-door engagement using campaign materials Tuesday, Oct 21 thru Wednesday, October 29.

Below are a few pointers for door-to-door engagement. The important thing – be yourself.

1. Introduce yourself.
  - a. "Hi, I'm Barbara"
  - b. "I'm a neighbor of yours, I live over on Kay Ray Road" **OR**
  - c. "I'm an Acme Township resident, too."
2. State reason for your engagement
  - a. "I have some information about the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Renewal that will be on the ballot on November 4th".
  - b. Hand them the card. "It's the program that is preserving our farmland in Acme Township."
3. Ask question to get an indication of support:
  - a. "Do you know about the renewal being on the ballot?"
    - i. If negative: "Okay, thanks for your time". Do not try to persuade a change of mind. Walk to next house.
    - ii. If positive: "Great! Thanks for your support". Walk to next house
    - iii. Uninformed or neutral: (THESE ARE YOUR TARGETS!!!)
  - b. "I'm voting Yes for the renewal because \_\_\_\_\_".
    - i. Pick a message or messages that you personally feel you can communicate with conviction and/or that might appeal to the person that answers the door - think demographically. For example, older retired white collar male - use the economic message; young mom talk about quality of life, etc.
  - c. "Do you have any questions?"
    - i. Do your best to answer the question.
      1. "Look in the mail for "our postcards". Hold one up, "They've got good information, as does the Acme Township website".
4. If they're busy or seem irritated, just say...
  - a. "I see you're busy, I'll just leave you with this (the card) I hope you vote Yes to renew the farmland and open space program".
5. In hilly neighborhoods (Holiday Hills). Start at the top of the hill and end at the bottom..

# Media Engagement

## ASSIGNING A MEDIA SPOKESPERSON

Assign a media spokesperson from the campaign committee for media engagement. This person should have experience and skills working with members of the media and be comfortable acting as a spokesperson.

They will be responsible for proactive media outreach, including phone calls or emails to local media contacts, as well as respond to inquiries from the media. Other committee members can simply refer the inquiries to the designated media contact.

The media spokesperson can recruit committee members to write a letter to the local news. In your outreach to these individuals, first request their willingness. Provide them sample letters, talking points, contact information for local media, deadlines, word limits, and other information. Individuals should personalize their letter.



TRaverse CITY  
**RECORD EAGLE**  
**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Supporting conservation millage

Please consider voting yes for 0.1 mills for the Grand Traverse Conservation District Aug. 7. The county-owned Boardman River Nature Center building and grounds receive only \$27,500 each year in county appropriations funding. All programming — which includes trail maintenance, school year and summer camps for children, invasive species management, Boardman River Watershed care and MAEAP — must come from competitive grants, resource management contracts, earned income and private donations.

We appreciate the passion the staff carries for this work and how they are uncertain from year to year if they will be able to continue.

Please vote yes Aug. 7.

Rebecca Mang and Rev. Homer Nye

Traverse City

# Media Engagement, cont.

## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

[Your Committee's Logo]

Contact: [Contact Name], [Land Preservation Committee/Group Name] [Phone Number], [Email]  
(Make sure this person is available for questions from reporters)

[Date the Release is goes out]

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### [Local Government Name] Launches Land Preservation Program to preserve farmland and natural areas

[This first paragraph must contain the who, what, where, when and why of your release.] [City, State] – Residents, businesses, and organizations of [Local Government Name] have launched an initiative to preserve the community’s woodlands, wetlands, waterways and farmlands.

The [name of initiative, e.g. “Open Space for All”] measure will create a dedicated source of funding to allow [Local Government Name] to invest in and preserve the water quality of rivers and streams, as well as natural areas, parks and trails [and farmland – or whatever your group has decided to focus on]. We have a unique opportunity to protect [Local Government Name]’s water, land, agricultural and recreational opportunities for future generations. With xxx people expected to move into [your geographical area] in the next ten years, we need to invest in protecting the lands we have now to preserve the character of our community and ensure that prices don’t become prohibitive in the future. Currently the Board of County Commissioners takes money out of a very crowded general fund budget to support our parks and open space. With a dedicated source of local funding, we can make [Local Government Name] eligible for state and federal matching funds that would otherwise go to other communities. The measure is a [your millage amount] mill levy that, for [the number of years you have decided on] years, will generate revenue dedicated to protecting the places where families recreate and children can explore nature.

Proposal [number or letter of proposal] will allow the [local government] to ensure that [your geographical area] creeks and streams stay clean by acquiring sensitive lands that border them, thereby preventing pollution from seeping into [your geographical area] water.

There is not a lot of undeveloped land left in [your geographical area]. Proposal [number or letter of proposal] will allow [local government] to act now, while land prices are inexpensive, and before developers have the opportunity to build on [your geographical area]’s last natural areas and open space.

Having clean water is essential to the health of our communities. Clean water also strengthens our economy because investing in our parks and natural areas to protect our water helps to attract business. Property values increase too; research shows that homes near parks increase in value.

[You can add other arguments for the proposal that are specific to your community, such as this example from Oregon]: Tigard is a parks-deficient City by national standards. In order to remedy this critical shortfall, the City must acquire 82 acres now and 245 acres within the next 20 years. The Tigard Parks Master Plan also calls for parks within a half-mile of every Tigard resident, and Measure 34-181 will allow the City to achieve these goals.

About the [name of your preservation group] [example from HRWC] HRWC is a nonprofit coalition of local communities, businesses, and residents established in 1965 to protect the Huron River and its tributary streams, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater. HRWC protects and restores the river for healthy and vibrant communities. Services include hands-on citizen education, technical assistance in policy development, and river protection and monitoring projects. See [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org) for information.

###

## Yard Signs & Other Collateral

Yard signs are a simple and effective way to promote your ballot measure and share information about how and when to vote. When planning yard signs, consider quality over quantity. Think about high visibility locations and focus your requests for yard sign placements on those areas first. During door-to-door campaigning, ask supporters to place a sign on their property.

Your campaign can also create other items like window clings and stickers to spread the word.



## Schedule Ahead to Include Absentee Voters

Research absentee voter rates and find out when absentee voters typically send in their ballots. Understanding these patterns will assist with planning communications and outreach activities. Contact the Clerk's office for your local unit of government to get these data.

The chart to the right shows the absentee voter profile for Acme Township. For a 2014 campaign, the committee used data provided by the township to analyze absentee voter behavior from the 2010 (mid-term) and 2012 (presidential) elections. Based on the data showing the number of weeks before the election date that absentee ballots were returned to the township, the campaign committee planned their dates for postcard mailings and media placements so these voters would get information about the campaign before returning their ballot.

In the chart, "Week 0" means the same week as the election, or the Monday before election day and the election day itself.

# of Weeks	2010 Ballots <sup>+</sup>	2012 Ballots <sup>**</sup>	2010 %	2012 %
6	3	24	.5	2.4
5	3	71	.5	7.2
4	20	122	3.2	12.3
3	149	150	24.0	15.1
2	100	206	16.1	20.7
1	259	225	41.8	22.7
0	86	195	13.9	19.6
TOTAL	620	993	100.0	100.0

\* 2010 - 21 AV ballots not returned

\*\*2012 - 23 AV ballots not returned

# Presentations to Clubs + Associations

Many civic groups and clubs have opportunities for you to make short presentations at monthly meetings. Consider contacting your local Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Garden Club, Rotary Club, Elks Club, Young Professional Club, Farm Bureau, or others to see if you can give a short presentation. Your goal is to educate voters, answer questions, and seek endorsements for the campaign.

Think about the audience when considering the best spokesperson from the campaign to share the message. Creating a script and “canned” presentation for ambassadors to use can help to create a broader pool of potential presenters and keep your message consistent. Encourage your presenters to practice their presentations to polish their pitches.

## MANAGE YOUR CONTACTS

Maintain a digital database with names and contact information.

Use this database to plan, record, and track activities such as gifts from donors and contact with voters including door-to-door campaigning, phone calls, postcard mailings, yard sign placement, emails, and other activities.

## Website and Social Media

If the campaign committee has the resources and capacity, a website and social media outreach can be effective tools. Assign an individual responsibility for creating and maintaining your campaign’s online and social media presence through Facebook or Twitter. The messages and images shared on social media should be the same messages that are shared in print media and presentations.



### PHASE 4 ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- Create a website to promote awareness of the campaign.
- Develop a brochure or fact sheet for mailing or distributing door-to-door.
- Deliver literature door-to-door and talk to voters.
- Create and install yard signs at strategic locations.
- Write letters to the editor and secure radio spots.
- Make presentations to service clubs and community groups.
- Seek endorsements from service clubs and community groups.
- Use emails and social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter to share information with potential voters.
- Produce “Vote Yes” window clings and stickers.
- Create and place print ads to include in local news media.
- Hire a professional to design TV ads and secure placement. Place the ads on social media too (30 seconds or less in length.)
- Send press releases and pitch your campaign story to local media outlets (print/online news and radio).

# How To Implement Your Millage Campaign

## Phase 5: Election Day + Next Steps

On Election Day, make calls to ensure that voters have transportation to the polls, or childcare that enables them to get to a voting station. Campaigners can continue to distribute literature, make posts on social media, and send emails to champions and supporters to encourage them to vote.

### ELECTION DAY CAMPAIGNING: OBEY THE RULES

No person is permitted to solicit votes or engage in any type of campaigning within 100 feet of any doorway used by voters to enter the building in which a polling place is located. As an exception, "exit pollsters" may position themselves as close as 20 feet from the doorway used by voters to enter the polling place.

Prohibited by Michigan law:

- The use of video cameras, still cameras, and recording devices by voters, challengers, and poll watchers is prohibited in the polls during the hours the polls are open for voting. (This includes the video camera, still camera and recording features built into many cell phones.)
- Cell phone use by voters who have entered a voting station. Voters may use cell phones while waiting in line at the processing table if not disruptive to the voting process. Similarly, challengers and poll watchers may use cell phones if not disruptive or intrusive.
- Posting, displaying or distributing material that makes reference to an election, a candidate or ballot question anywhere within 100 feet of the polling place. The following activities are included under this restriction:

Displaying "pro and con" information on the proposals appearing on the ballot.

Approaching voters to encourage them to vote for or against a candidate or ballot question.

Distributing any type of campaign literature or write-in stickers.

Displaying signs, posters, or bumper stickers.

Attempting to collect petition signatures.

Requesting donations, selling tickets or engaging in similar activities. Election inspectors must request that voters entering the polls remove campaign buttons or cover up clothing which bears any reference to a political party or interest group, campaign slogan or a candidate(s) name.



# What To Do If The Millage Passes

## Woo hoo! You did it!

Promote good communication and transparency and maintain accountability to the community by thanking voters and supporters. Some campaign committees host a victory party on the night of the election. Some send handwritten thank you notes to financial supporters, or call volunteers who supported campaign activities. Some also give special gifts to those whose time and talents made the campaign's success possible. Some take out ads in the local newspaper thanking voters for their choice to support the millage. When planning your post-campaign activities, consider what would be most meaningful to those who worked on your campaign.

Keep in mind that communication with voters does not end with a vote to approve a millage. A strong campaign process includes ongoing communication with voters and community members to share news of the millage's successes. This can be done by including semi-annual or annual program updates in a local government newsletter or annual paid newspaper ads on the anniversary of the millage vote.

# What To Do If The Millage Fails

## Breathe. Do not lose heart.

Sometimes millages fail. Take some time to regroup as a committee and reflect on what worked well during the campaign. Thank volunteers and donors and proceed with the close out activities listed below. Reflecting and being honest about the reasons a millage failed will inform planning for the next campaign.

### EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

If first you fail: try, try again. When a campaign committee in Washtenaw County first tried to encourage voters to pass a millage, it failed due to well-funded and organized opposition from the local realtor association. The campaign committee regrouped, changed its approach and tactics, and crafted a new campaign that was later approved by voters.

# Closing Out Campaign Operations

After the campaign and election are over, the committee will need to close its bank account and file appropriate campaign financial forms. The State of Michigan's Secretary of State website has information, a filing guide, due dates, a manual, and forms specific to ballot measures. To access the website and this information, search for, "Michigan Secretary of State campaign finance ballot guide."





## PHASE 5 ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- (ON ELECTION DAY) Make phone calls to encourage likely voters to get to the polls.
- (ON ELECTION DAY) Arrange for transportation to the polls for people who need rides.
- (ON ELECTION DAY) Conduct outreach at polling stations, while following state law governing such activities.
- (ON ELECTION DAY) Host a victory party or prepare a message regarding millage failure.
- If the millage passes, take out an advertisement in a community newspaper thanking voters for their choice and reviewing ballot measure goals and desired impacts.
- Send a letter to campaign donors thanking them for their contributions.
- Make phone calls to volunteers to thank them.
- Host a thank you gathering to honor the commitments of volunteers, donors, and champions (including elected and appointed officials and staff).
- Complete financial reporting and file appropriate reports.
- Close bank account.
- If the millage passes, send an annual program update letter or newsletter to voters and residents. Report on progress on how the goals expressed in the campaign have been met as an outcome of the approval of the millage.
- Share an annual report with elected and appointed officials within the community. This can include a written report, similar to the letter or newsletter sent to residents and voters, or additional materials.

## Conclusion

**Community-based conservation efforts are fueled by the vision, passion and leadership of local citizens.**

The success of a community millage campaign is dependent on a variety of factors. Each campaign has its own flavor and its own pace and conditions. As more communities work to advance voter-approved conservation millages, there will be more examples of successful approaches. This will, in turn, provide more opportunities to share more tools and approaches and case studies, and to learn from and with each other. We look forward to hearing your feedback on the resources provided here.

# LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*Economic Impacts of Parks and Natural Areas*. 2009. Michigan State University Land Policy Institute.

*Conservation Finance Handbook*. The Trust for Public Land.

*Purchase of Development Rights: Preserving Farmland and Open Space* by Gayle Miller & Douglas Krieger. Planning Commissioners Journal. Number 53. Winter 2004.

*Partnering for Parks: Intergovernmental Options in Providing Parks and Recreation – A Guidebook for Michigan Municipalities*. Land Information Access Association.

## Reports Regarding the Economic Benefits of Natural Areas and Farmland

- Travis Warziniack, US Forest Service
- Sham, C., Morgan, R., Feferholtz, Y., 2016. *Effect of Forest Cover on Drinking Water Treatment Costs*. American Water Works Association, U.S. Endowment for Forestry.
- Freeman, J., Madsen, R., and K. Hart. 2008. *Statistical Analysis of Drinking Water Treatment Plant Costs, Source Water Quality, and Land Cover Characteristics*. Trust for Public Land white paper.
- Stein, S.M., McRoberts, R. E., Alig, R. J., Nelson, M. D., Theobald, D. M., Eley, M., Dechter, M., and M. Carr. 2005. [Forests on the Edge. Housing Development on America's Private Forests](#). USDA Forest Service. Technical Report PNW-GTR-636.
- Ernst, Caryn. 2004. *Protecting the Source. Land Conservation and the Future of America's Drinking Water*. The Trust for Public Land and the American Water Works Association. San Francisco, CA.
- Todd Gartner, James Mulligan, Rowan Schmidt and John Gunn - October 2013. *Natural Infrastructure: Investing in Forested Landscapes for Source Water Protection in the United States*. World Resources Institute
- *The Economic Impact of Oakland County's Green Infrastructure*. Oakland County Planning and Economic Services. 2007
- *The Economic Impact of the Huron River*. 2017. Huron River Watershed Council
- *Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space*. 1999. Trust for Public Land. <https://www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-parks-and-open-space-1999#sm.000005jq3fnnsadvqt1b8iqo3zbd0>
- *Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System*. 2003. Trust for Public Land. <https://www.tpl.org/measuring-economic-value-city-park-system#sm.000005jq3fnnsadvqt1b8iqo3zbd0>
- *The Future of Michigan's Parks and Outdoor Recreation: A Report to Governor Rick Snyder*. September 23, 2012. Prepared by the Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel with assistance from: Public Sector Consultants Inc. [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/ParksPanelFinal\\_401824\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/ParksPanelFinal_401824_7.pdf)
- *Green Infrastructure: A Landscape Approach*. 2013. American Planning Association.
- *Measuring the Economic Value of Recreation, Programs and Parks: A How-To Guide*. 2007. Michigan Recreation and Parks Association. <http://www.mparks.org/Portals/0/Resource-Center/Justifying%20Parks%20and%20Recreation/Economic%20Impact/Guide%20to%20Measuring%20Economic%20Value%20of%20Parks%20and%20Recreation%20-%20MRPA.pdf>

## 'Cost of community services' studies and reports:

- *Cost of Community Services Fact Sheet*, American Farmland Trust. This study was published September 2016 and includes a list of studies from around the country and expenditure-to-cost ratios for residential land, commercial and industrial land, and working and open land.  
[http://www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/Cost\\_of\\_Community\\_Services\\_Studies\\_AFT\\_FIC\\_201609.pdf](http://www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/Cost_of_Community_Services_Studies_AFT_FIC_201609.pdf)
- *Ann Arbor Township 1999 Farmland Analysis & Cost of Services Study*. Available at <https://www.slideshare.net/JGNelson/ann-arbor-township-1999farmlandanalysis>.
- *A Cost of Community Services Study of Scio Township, Michigan*. This study was prepared in 1998 as a graduate student research project in the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan and was subsequently published by the Potawatomi Land Trust (now Legacy Land Conservancy). It found that for every local dollar raised in Scio Township, residential property required \$1.40 in local government service expenditures. Farmland generated more than enough revenue to cover its public expenditures (\$0.62). Commercial and industrial land had the largest positive fiscal impact on the township: for every dollar raised in revenue, services cost only 26 cents.  
[https://www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/Cost\\_of\\_Community\\_Services\\_Studies\\_AFT\\_FIC\\_201609.pdf](https://www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/Cost_of_Community_Services_Studies_AFT_FIC_201609.pdf)
- *Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Fiscal Impacts of Alternative Land Development Patterns in Michigan*. Found at:  
<http://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0032202/00001/pdf>

## Additional Funding Sources for Land Conservation and Restoration

### National Programs:

- The Conservation Fund: Has a revolving loan fund.  
<http://www.conservationfund.org/what-we-do/conservation-acquisition/our-revolving-fund>
- Acres for America: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's premiere land conservation program, established to provide urgently needed funding for projects that conserve large, landscape-level areas that are important habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants through acquisition of interest in real property.  
<http://www.nfwf.org/acresforamerica/Pages/home.aspx>
- Conservation Partners Program: provides staff and technical assistance to private landowners. <http://www.nfwf.org/conservationpartners/Pages/home.aspx>
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA): provides matching grants to wetlands conservation projects. <https://www.fws.gov/birds/grants/north-american-wetland-conservation-act.php>
- Land and Water Conservation Fund:  
[https://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/lwcf/plan\\_prjts.html](https://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/lwcf/plan_prjts.html) and  
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/index.htm> Provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities:  
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/stateside.htm>. Michigan's LWCF:  
[http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225\\_58672---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225_58672---,00.html)

- Landowner Incentive Program: provides federal grant funds to the states, the District of Columbia and insular areas to protect and restore habitats on private lands, to benefit federally listed, proposed or candidate species or other species determined to be at-risk. In Michigan it is now called Private Land Program (see below) <https://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/GrantPrograms/LIP/LIP.htm>
- Five-Star Restoration Program: The EPA supports the Five-Star Restoration Program by providing funds to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and its partners, the National Association of Counties, NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program and the Wildlife Habitat Council. These groups then make subgrants to support community-based wetland and riparian restoration projects. <https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/5-star-wetland-and-urban-waters-restoration-grants>
- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative was launched in 2010 to accelerate efforts to protect and restore the largest system of fresh surface water in the world — the Great Lakes. <https://www.glri.us/>
- Bring Back the Natives: The Bring Back the Natives initiative (BBN) funds on-the-ground efforts to restore native aquatic species to their historic range. <http://www.nfwf.org/bbn/Pages/home.aspx>
- Pulling Together Initiative: Invasive weeds represent one of the most significant threats to the economy and ecology of the United States, causing billions of dollars in damage each year to farms and ranches and degrading millions of acres of critical wildlife habitat. NFWF's Pulling Together Initiative provides modest grants to help local communities effectively manage these plant invaders. <http://www.nfwf.org/pti/Pages/home.aspx>
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP): The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) pays a yearly rental payment in exchange for farmers removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and planting species that will improve environmental quality. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), an offshoot of CRP, targets high-priority conservation issues identified by government and non-governmental organizations. Farm land that falls under these conservation issues is removed from production in exchange for annual rental payments. <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index>
- Farm Bill programs: <https://www.landtrustalliance.org/topics/federal-programs/farm-bill-conservation-programs>
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP): Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE): provides matching funds to purchase conservation easements on agricultural land, grasslands, and wetlands. Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) provides matching funds to protect wetlands. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/?cid=stelprdb1242695>
- Healthy Forest Reserve: to protect and restore forest lands. To qualify, conservation projects must benefit endangered species, improve biodiversity, or enhance carbon sequestration. This program funds restoration activities as well as permanent or 30-year easements. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests/>
- Forest Legacy Program: protects private forest land by purchasing conservation easements or land in fee from voluntary landowners. <https://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/aboutflp.shtml> Michigan Forest Legacy Program: [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-30301\\_34240\\_68250---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-30301_34240_68250---,00.html)

- Community Forests: financial assistance to local governments, Tribal governments, and qualified nonprofit entities to establish community forests that provide continuing and accessible community benefits.
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP): enlists partner groups, such as land trusts, state agencies, tribes, and other related groups to coordinate conservation activities on a national or state scale.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): provides financial and technical assistance for activities that benefit air quality, water quality, soil and water conservation, and wildlife habitat.  
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): helps farmers and ranchers to maintain, improve, and expand activities that benefit natural resources (including soil, water, air, and wildlife habitat) or conserve energy. Payments are based on performance.  
[https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/csp/?cid=nrcs143\\_008316](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/csp/?cid=nrcs143_008316)

NRCS web site with more details on CSP, EQIP, and HFRP, list above:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/?cid=stelprdb1048817>

Michigan web site covering the above programs:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/mi/programs/>

Michigan Programs:

- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund: grants for recreation and preservation:  
[http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225\\_58301-257945--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225_58301-257945--,00.html)
- DNR Private Lands Program - providing technical and financial assistance to landowners interested in establishing and managing grasslands for pheasants and other grassland wildlife. [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370\\_36649-118332--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370_36649-118332--,00.html)
- PA116: The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. Agricultural Preservation Fund generates a funding source for the purchase of land, through a conversion fee: landowners enter into contract with the state to keep their land in farming, and in turn may receive state income tax credits. [http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1599\\_2558---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1599_2558---,00.html)

Other Web Sites:

- Private Landowner Network: Website with a compendium of resources for landowners who want to permanently protect their land. Could also be a great resource for preservation agency looking for partners:  
<http://www.privatelandownernetwork.org/Grant-and-Assistance-Programs/>
- Conservation Almanac for Michigan: Web site tracks local and state conservation programs.  
<http://www.conservationalmanac.org/secure/almanac/midwest/mi/index.html>

# APPENDIX

## Scio Township Millage Township Letter of Support

People for a Beautiful Scio  
Nancy Hedberg, Treasurer  
824 Honey Creek, Scio Township, MI 48103

October 6, 2004

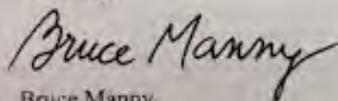
Dear Friend,

We have a unique opportunity to forever protect the natural beauty of our community's rural landscape by voting **"YES" on Proposal J, the Scio Township Farmland and Open Space Land Preservation Millage**. This 0.5 mil, 10-year proposal would enable Scio Township to buy conservation easements on open space and land for parks throughout the township. So, why does Proposal J deserve your support?

- Scio's open spaces **provide beautiful scenic vistas and a sense of place**. They also ensure clean air and water for us and habitat required by wildlife.
- Parks and greenway paths for walking and biking will **increase our recreational opportunities**.
- **Each of our local tax dollars for land preservation could be matched by 2 dollars** from City of Ann Arbor, county, state and federal programs. Proposal J could permanently preserve one quarter of the open space in Scio Township.
- **The alternative to Proposal J is permanently increased taxes**. Sprawl development requires new sewer and water lines, new roads, and new schools which cost more than new residences generate in property taxes. Proposal J would cost the average property owner in Scio Township about \$70 per year for 10 years. A recent study estimated that if sprawl replaced open space in Ann Arbor Township, it would lead to permanent tax increases of \$170/year to \$770/year on average. Scio Township's situation is similar. Proposal J is a bargain.
- **Now is our best chance**. The pressure for development is mounting rapidly. In recent years, developments that would build more than 1700 more homes have been proposed in Scio Township. Now is the time to act.

Proposal J is supported by most candidates running for township office in Scio this year. It's also been endorsed by the Ecology Center, Sierra Club, Washtenaw County Farm Bureau, and many others. Please see the enclosed answer sheet for more information about it. And, please join us in voting **"YES" on Proposal J**. Let's preserve what we love about our community, for our families and future generations.

Sincerely,



Bruce Manny,  
Co-Chairs  
People for a Beautiful Scio



Leslie Desmond,

Paid for by People for a Beautiful Scio committee; Nancy Hedberg, Treasurer, 824 Honey Creek, Scio Township, MI 48103  
No township funds were used to produce or distribute this material.

# APPENDIX

## Voter-Approved Property Tax Mill Levies for Parks and Conservation in Michigan, 1994 – 2016

Jurisdiction	Date	Description	Finance Mechanism	Total Funds at Stake	Conservation Funds Approved	% Yes	% No
Peninsula Township	8/2/94	15-year, 1.25 mill property tax for farmland and open space acquisition	Property tax	\$4,008,510	\$4,008,510	52.77 %	47.23 %
Ottawa County	11/5/96	10-year, .33 park millage extension for parks, recreation and open space	Property tax	\$16,500,000	\$16,500,000	53.53 %	46.47 %
Northville Township	11/3/98	4-year, 0.75 Mill Property Tax Increase for Recreation, Parks, Preservation of Natural Areas	Property tax	\$2,338,356	\$2,338,356	52.44 %	47.56 %
Ann Arbor	11/2/99	Ann Arbor City Charter Amendment, 5-year, .5 mill property tax increase for parks	Property tax	\$7,600,535	\$7,600,535	64.84 %	35.16 %
Meridian Township	11/7/00	10-year, .75 mill, property tax increase for open space acquisition, PDR, habitat preservation and recreation	Property tax	\$8,750,000	\$8,750,000	55.76 %	44.24 %

Washtenaw County	11/7/00	10-year, .25 mill, property tax increase for acquisition of environmentally valuable areas and wildlife habitat, water quality preservation and recreation	Property tax	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000	64.14 %	35.86 %
Oakland Township	9/11/01	10-year, 0.75 mill property tax increase for land acquisition and protection of natural habitat	Property tax	\$5,722,500	\$5,722,500	60.31 %	39.69 %
Peninsula Township	11/5/02	20-year, .75 mill property tax increase (to 2 mill) for farmland development rights and open space	Property tax	\$15,360,000	\$15,360,000	58.54 %	41.46 %
Grosse Ile Township	11/5/02	Proposal 2, 3-year, 1 mill property tax extension for open space	Property tax	\$1,632,000	\$1,632,000	57.39 %	42.61 %

# APPENDIX

## Northfield Township Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance

AN ORDINANCE authorizing Northfield Township to acquire voluntarily offered property development rights in real estate that is farmland and open space within the township and establishing the procedure for acquiring and financing the acquisition of the development rights.

### THE NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES ORDAINS:

#### SECTION 1: Findings and Declaration of Purpose

The Board of Trustees finds that:

1. Northfield Township is a desirable place to live, work and visit in large part because of the availability of farmland, natural features and open space. The Township Master Plan includes scenic views, agriculture, open spaces and wildlife habitat as valuable natural and aesthetic resources that should be protected.
2. The climate, variety of soils and terrain make the Township well suited to the production of a great number of agricultural products. These resources include several thousand acres of land currently in agricultural production and other woodland, wetland and open lands adjacent to these farmlands. Such lands provide unique aesthetic and economic benefits to the citizens of the Township and are an important part of the Township's natural and agricultural heritage.
3. Northfield Township is experiencing substantial residential development because of its proximity to Ann Arbor and other employment centers, its attractive landscapes and excellent public schools. The same characteristics which have made this area so desirable for agricultural production and recreation also make it attractive for residential sites.
4. It is the policy of the State of Michigan, Washtenaw County and Northfield Township to protect, preserve and enhance agricultural lands as evidenced by the Township Master Plan, the Township Zoning Act, the Washtenaw County PDR Ordinance, MCLA 125.271 et seq. and other state and local statutes and policies. Ordinances regulating land use by zoning and subdivision control enacted by the Township also serve these purposes. These measures by themselves, however, have not effectively provided long-term protection of agricultural areas and open space from the increasing pressure of residential and commercial development.
5. The Township recognizes the agricultural industry's significant contributions to the local economy.

6. Generally, farmlands which are close to urban centers have a greater market value for future residential development than their market value for farming or open space. Prime agricultural land often has the same features (such as well-drained soils) that are components of desirable residential areas. This encourages the speculative purchase of these lands at high prices for future residential development, regardless of the current zoning of such lands. Farmland which has a market value greater than its agricultural value does not attract sustained agricultural investment and eventually this land is sold by farmers and removed from agricultural uses.
7. The permanent acquisition of voluntarily offered interests in farmland and open space within the Township, as provided in this Ordinance and as authorized by the United States Constitution and statutes of the State of Michigan, will permit these lands to remain in agricultural and open space use and provide long-term protection for the public interests which are served by those lands in the Township.
8. Properties on which the Township has purchased the development rights should remain substantially undeveloped in order to promote their natural and agricultural use.
9. The acquisition of interests in farmland and open space is a public purpose of Northfield Township as provided in this Ordinance. Financing such acquisition requires that the Township enter into purchases or installment purchases not to exceed statutory limits.
10. This ordinance is authorized by Sections 31 to 33 of the Township Zoning Act. MCL 125.301 B 125.303.

## SECTION 2: Definitions

"Agricultural Rights" means an interest in and the right to use and possess land for purposes and activities related to open space, natural habitat, horticultural and other agricultural uses.

"Agricultural Use" means farmland devoted to the production of plants and animals useful to humans, including forages and sod crops; grains, feed crops, and field crops; dairy and dairy products; poultry and poultry products; livestock, including breeding and grazing of cattle, swine, captive cervidae, and similar animals; berries; herbs; flowers; seeds; grasses; nursery stock; fruits; vegetables; Christmas trees; and other similar uses and activities. Agricultural use includes use in a federal acreage set-aside program, a federal conservation reserve program, or a wetland reserve program. Agricultural use does not include the management and harvest of a woodlot where such a woodlot exceeds 49% of the land considered within an application.

"Application" means the documentation and information submitted to the Township by a landowner on an approved application form for offering to sell, donate or otherwise grant to the Township a conservation easement, development rights or title to lands in the Township.

"Board of Trustees" and "Township Board" means the Northfield Township Board of Trustees.

"Chairperson" means the member of the Farmland Preservation Board who is elected Chairperson by the Preservation Board.

"Conservation easement" means a non-possessory interest in real property, which is acquired in accordance with MCL 324.2140 et seq., for the purpose of retaining and enhancing agriculture; preserving natural scenic or open space values of real property; restricting or preventing the development of land for purposes other than agricultural production; or other like or similar purposes.

"Development" means an activity which materially alters or affects the existing conditions or use of any land.

"Development Rights" means an interest in and the right to use and subdivide land for any and all residential, commercial and industrial purposes and activities which are not incident to agriculture and open space.

"Development Rights Easement" means a grant by an instrument whereby the owner relinquishes in perpetuity the right to develop the land as may be expressly reserved in the instrument, and which contains a covenant running with the land not to develop, except as this right is expressly reserved in the instrument.

"Eligible Land" means farmland and/or open space for which the purchase of development rights easements with tax funds and other monetary sources are authorized pursuant to this Ordinance.

"Farmland" means those lands designated in the Township Master Plan for agricultural uses.

"Farmland and Open Space Preservation Board" means the board formed pursuant to Section 6 of this Ordinance to advise the Board of Trustees in the selection of Eligible Lands for easement purchases.

"Full Ownership" means fee simple ownership.

"Governmental Agency" means the United States or any agency thereof, the State of Michigan or any agency thereof or any Township, City or municipal corporation.

"Open Space" means substantially undeveloped land that is not devoted to agricultural use, but possesses special qualities including natural areas, scenic views, wildlife habitat and threatened and endangered species.

"Owner" means the party or parties having the fee simple interest in land.

"Parcel" means all property under a single ownership that is included in the application.

"Permitted Use" means any use contained within a development rights easement essential to farming.

"Residential Development Rights" means the right to sell portions of a property, or to construct houses on a property, for residential uses not related to the agricultural use of the property.

"Substantially Undeveloped Land" means land on which there is no more than one residential dwelling unit (exclusive of housing units directly associated with the farming operation).

"Supervisor" means the Northfield Township Supervisor.

"Value of Development Rights" means the difference between the fair market value of full ownership of the land (excluding the buildings thereon) and the fair market value of the agricultural rights and/or the open space value plus any residential development rights to be retained by the owner.

### SECTION 3: Authorization

1. The Board of Trustees is hereby authorized to create a Development Rights Acquisition Fund to provide matching funds for Purchase of Development Rights applications. This fund may be financed by any of the following:
  - a. Millage, voted upon and approved by the residents of the Township, for Purchase of Development Rights
  - b. Allocation from the Township General Fund
  - c. Fees that are earmarked for Farmland Preservation
  - d. Contribution or bequests.
2. The Board of Trustees is hereby authorized to expend tax revenues, specifically generated and set aside in the Development Rights

Acquisition Fund as stipulated in 3.1 above, to acquire property interests in the farmland and open space land described and prioritized in Section 5 of this Ordinance. The property interest acquired may either be the development rights or any lesser interest, easement, covenant or other contractual right. Such acquisition may be accomplished by purchase, gift, grant, bequest, devise, covenant or contract but only at a price which is equal to or less than the appraised value determined as provided in this Ordinance. The revenues shall be used to acquire such property interests only upon application of the Owner and in a strictly voluntary manner.

3. The Township is authorized to enter into cash purchase and/or installment purchase contracts and agreements for the receipt of tax deductible donations of easements, consistent with applicable law. When installment purchases are made, the Township is authorized to pay interest on the declining unpaid principal balance at a legal rate of interest consistent with prevailing market conditions at the time of execution of the installment contract for the tax-exempt status of such interest.
4. The Board of Trustees is further authorized to contract with recognized and legally established nonprofit land trusts, other experienced and qualified nonprofit groups or other units of government, to participate jointly in the acquisition of interests in eligible lands.
5. The Township may contract with recognized and legally established nonprofit land trusts, other experienced and qualified nonprofit groups, other local units of government and consultants that would assist the Township in program development and operation, establishing baseline studies, procedures for monitoring and/or the management of any Conservation Easements acquired under this Ordinance. Such studies and monitoring must conform to the "The Standards and Practices Guidebook" issued by the Land Trust Alliance.

#### SECTION 4: Retained Residential Development Rights

1. To promote agricultural use of properties on which the Township has purchased the Development Rights, it has been determined that such properties should remain substantially undeveloped.
2. It may be in the best interest of property owners and of the program that property owners retain some residential development rights so long as the land remains substantially undeveloped. When property owners retain some development rights their land value remains higher than it would be if they sold all their development rights and the value of the development rights to be purchased is correspondingly reduced.
3. Applications for the sale of development rights may include a provision to retain the right to build residential dwellings (residential

development rights). This is not to preclude the sale of all existing dwelling units on the site at the time the development rights are purchased. Sale of these existing dwelling units shall be in accordance with the conservation easement on the property.

4. The building locations for retained residential development rights may be restricted in the negotiated conservation easement in order to protect other important features of the property. Building locations and lot sizes must also conform to the existing zoning regulations.

## SECTION 5: Eligible Lands and Priority of Acquisition

Revenues shall be used to purchase property interests in the following lands in the following order of their priority subject to the provisions of Section 7.

### Primary Criteria that all properties must meet:

- Voluntary application by the property owner and
- lands designated in the Township Master Plan for agricultural uses and natural features.

### Criteria for Selection:

The following criteria shall be used in determining the order in which applications will be prioritized to purchase development rights on eligible lands for which complete applications have been received by the Township. This numerical ranking system has been developed to prioritize farm sites and open space for the purchase of conservation easements. After an initial screening, sites will be evaluated using this system. It is the intention of the users of this system to direct efforts toward high quality farmland and open space in areas of the Township where its preservation is most appropriate. Appropriateness is determined by favorable natural conditions and location factors which make farming a viable undertaking both currently and in the future. Areas targeted for preservation are those lands designated in the Township Master Plan for agricultural uses and special natural features.

### Initial Screening

1. Development Rights already purchased and/or Conservation Easement placed on the property.  
If yes, then reject application.
2. Permitted use according to local zoning: Is agriculture a permitted use according to the zoning designation for the nominated parcel? Or if the nominated parcel is considered "open space" as defined in this ordinance, is the current or proposed use of the nominated parcel a permitted use according to the Township's zoning ordinance?  
If no, then recommend rejection of application.

3. Contamination on the site: Is the site free of any known environmental contamination?  
If no, then recommend rejection of application.

Description of the System:

The screening and scoring system for review of potential easement acquisition consist of two land types: Agricultural Land and Open Space Land. The system is intended to identify high quality agricultural and open space properties that are appropriate for protection.

Priorities:

The point value arrived at through the use of this system will be used to prioritize farm sites for purchase of conservation easements. Higher point values indicate higher priority for purchase. All property in a single ownership may be included in one application. Contiguous properties under the same ownership will be treated as a single entity.

Note: An explanation of terms and parameters used in the system appears in Appendix A.

The Agricultural Land system consists of four sections and a maximum point value of 100.

The Open Space Land consists of three sections and a maximum point value of 100.

A. Agricultural Land

<u>PART</u>	<u>TOTAL POINTS</u>
I - Characteristics of the Farmland	54
II - Stewardship of the Land	3
III - Pressure for Conversion to Non-farm Use	18
IV – Leveraging Funds	25

PART I - CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FARMLAND

Percentage of Prime and Other Productive Soils

<u>Category</u>	<u>Score</u>
80% or more	15
50-79%	10
25-49%	6
Less than 25%	0

Size of Parcel Offered for Development Rights Purchase

<u>Acreage</u>		<u>Score</u>
80 acres or more		15
20 to 79 acres	8	
5 to 19 acres		3
Less than 5 acres		0

Farmland in Agricultural Use

<u>Percent of Property in Agricultural Use</u>		<u>Score</u>
90% & up		10
76% - 89%		8
61% - 75%		6
51% - 60%		4

Proximity to Protected Land

<u>Distance</u>		<u>Score</u>
Adjacent		10
Within 1 mile	6	
Greater than 1 mile		3

Scenic, Historical or Architectural Features

<u>Features</u>		<u>Score</u>
Farm site provides a vista and unique historical or architectural features, including architecturally significant barn(s)		4
Farm site provides an accent		2

PART II - STEWARDSHIP OF THE LAND

Commitment to Farming

<u>P.A. 116 Participation</u>		<u>Score</u>
Applicant property enrolled in P.A.116		3

**PART III – PRESSURE FOR CONVERSION TO NON-FARM USE (OR SITE DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITIES AND LIMITATIONS)**

**Amount of Road Frontage**

<u>Frontage</u>	<u>Score</u>
1,000 feet or more	6
500 - 999 feet	3
100 - 499 feet	1

**Adjacent Land Use**

<u>Percent of Perimeter in Agricultural Use</u>	<u>Score</u>
75-100%	6
50-74%	4
25-49%	2
<25%	0

**Adjacent Land Use Designation**

<u>Percent of Perimeter designated Agricultural Zoning</u>	<u>Score</u>
75-100%	6
50-74%	4
25-49%	2
<25%	0

**PART IV  
LEVERAGING FUNDS**

<u>Matching Funds</u>	<u>Score</u>
>50%	15
20 – 50%	10
<20%	5
No matching funds	0

<u>Landowner Contribution</u>	<u>Score</u>
>20%	10
10-20%	8
<10%	2
No contribution	0

B. Open Space Land

<u>PART</u>	<u>TOTAL POINTS</u>
I – Characteristics of the Land	40
II – Context	32
III – Leveraging Funds	28

I. Characteristics of the Land

<u>Mature Trees and/or Rare Species</u>	<u>Score</u>
Species and/or habitats of special concern	15
Mature native forest or grassland elements	10
Early successional plant communities	6

<u>Parcel Size</u>	<u>Score</u>
>40 acres	10
20 – 40 acres	6
<20 acres	2

<u>Road Frontage</u>	<u>Score</u>
>1000 feet	3
500 – 1000 feet	2
<500 feet	1
No frontage	0

<u>Wetlands and/or Floodplain (% of property)</u>	<u>Score</u>
>20%	6
10 – 20 %	4
<10%	2
No features	0

<u>Groundwater Recharge (% of property)</u>	<u>Score</u>
>75%	6
50 – 75%	4
<50%	2

II. Context

<u>Adjacent Land Use</u>	<u>Score</u>
(% of perimeter in open space and/or ag use)	
>90%	6
50 – 90%	4
<50%	2
None	0

<u>Proximity to Water Resources Frontage</u>	<u>Score</u>
(Amount of frontage on open water, a perennial stream, or county drain)	
>500 feet	10
100 – 500 feet	6
<100 feet	2
No frontage	0

<u>Proximity to Protected Land</u>	<u>Score</u>
Adjacent	10
1 mile or less	6
>1 mile	0

<u>Scenic and/or historical value</u>	<u>Score</u>
(Does the site provide a broad, sweeping view from publicly accessible sites, or does it have unique or historical features)	
2 or more attributes	6
1 attributes	4
0 attributes	0

### III. Leveraging Funds

<u>Matching Funds</u>	<u>Score</u>
(% of the appraised value of development rights available from other sources)	
>50%	15
20 – 50%	10
<20 %	5
No funds	0

<u>Landowner Contribution</u>	<u>Score</u>
(% of the appraised value of development rights the landowner is willing to donate)	
>20%	13
10 – 20%	9
<10%	5
No discount	0

### SECTION 6: Farmland and Open Space Preservation Board

1. A five-member Farmland and Open Space Preservation Board shall be appointed by the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall seek the names of nominees for the Preservation Board by the means usually employed for other boards and commissions. The Preservation Board shall determine the selection of eligible lands on which development

- rights are offered for acquisition by their owners. Selection of eligible lands shall be made by a majority of Preservation Board members.
2. The Preservation Board shall consist of residents of the Township. The Preservation Board shall include a representative of the Township Board of Trustees, three citizens at-large and one representative who owns agricultural land or operates an agricultural business. The Board of Trustees may appoint ex-officio members.
  3. The Preservation Board may consult experts for program staffing and the Board of Trustees may appropriate funds for that purpose.
  4. Members shall serve two-year terms, except that the initial term of two members shall be one year and terms of three members shall be two years. Members shall not be compensated for their services but may be reimbursed for expenses actually incurred in the performance of their duties. Members may be reappointed to successive terms but the Preservation Board shall be terminated two years following the expenditure of all proceeds for farmland and open space development rights acquisition.
  5. No member shall vote on the selection of individual parcels in which they have an interest or on individual parcels adjacent to property in which they have an interest.
  6. The Preservation Board shall annually elect a chairperson and a secretary.
  7. The Preservation shall meet at a minimum on a quarterly basis at a date and time to be determined by its members.
  8. A majority of the members of the Preservation Board (that is, three) shall constitute a quorum.
  9. Consistent with this Ordinance and subject to approval by the Township Board, the Preservation Board may develop bylaws and standing rules that further define the functional and procedural aspects of its duties.
  10. The secretary shall be responsible for taking written minutes of the meetings of the Preservation Board. The records of the Preservation Board shall be kept by the Township Clerk.
  11. Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, MCLA 15.261 et seq.
  12. The Preservation Board shall publish an annual report which shall include a listing of all parcels of land donated or for which development rights or conservation easements or other easements were conveyed; a map showing the location of acquired lands; financial costs; and other pertinent information on program operation.

## SECTION 7: Selection

The Preservation Board shall conduct a voluntary property selection process generally as follows:

1. The development rights on all eligible land properties shall be eligible for purchase. Properties of higher priority shall be purchased with available funds before properties of lower priority are purchased, provided:
  - a. The Preservation Board may negotiate for a lower price and/or seek outside funding for the purchase of development rights on any parcel offered.
  - b. In the interest of protecting a significant amount of agricultural land, the Preservation Board may determine not to buy all of any of the development rights on a particular parcel if the Preservation Board makes a finding that it is in the best interest of the program to protect a larger number of acres rather than a smaller number of acres of higher valued development rights.
  - c. The Preservation Board may receive and act on appeals of any factual nature by affected property owners.
2. The Preservation Board shall provide notice that applications may be submitted by property owners in Northfield Township. Applications shall be submitted to a location to be specified by the Preservation Board and stamped with the date of receipt.
3. The Preservation Board shall review each application which has been received to determine the eligibility and priority classification of each property interest and to verify ownership by tax records.
4. For those properties which meet the requirements of Section 5, the Preservation Board shall cause an appraisal of the applicant's property interest to be made. A "before and after" appraisal shall be made to determine the value of development rights. One appraisal shall determine the fair market value of full ownership of the land (excluding buildings thereon) and one shall determine the fair market value of the agricultural rights and/or open space value, plus any specifically retained residential development rights.
5. Appraisals shall be made by State certified appraisers, ARA Certified, selected by the Preservation Board. The selected appraiser shall not have a property interest, personal interest or financial interest in eligible lands. The same appraiser shall conduct the before and after appraisals.
6. Appraisals shall be in writing and shall be furnished to the respective owners for review. Errors of fact in any appraisal may be called to the attention of the appraiser by the Preservation Board or by owners of the property appraised, but corrections of the appraisal may be made only by the appraiser.
7. Terms and conditions of sale and information on the effect of the sale may be discussed by the entire Preservation Board with owners prior to the submission of written applications.

8. Written applications by owners who desire to have their development rights purchased by the Township shall be submitted on forms provided by the Preservation Board. These written offers shall include any development options desired to be retained by the owners.
9. Upon receiving the recommendations of the Preservation Board, the Board of Trustees shall take final action on such recommendations.
10. Once action to select properties for the purchase of development rights has been taken by the Board of Trustees, the Preservation Board shall draft a baseline documentation report describing through photographic, pictorial and narrative means the condition of the property at the time of the grant of a development rights easement. The baseline report shall contain a signature page where the owner and the Supervisor sign to state that the report is an accurate description of the property at the time of grant. The easement shall similarly feature a page where the signatures of the owner and the Supervisor are notarized, following which the easement shall be recorded with the county register of deeds so that it is effective on all current and future owners.
11. Upon the completion of a purchase of development rights transaction, the Township assessor will be notified of the development rights purchase.

## SECTION 8: Duration of Acquired Interests

1. Development Rights acquired pursuant to this Ordinance shall run with the land and be held by the Township, for the benefits of its citizens, in perpetuity. A property owner who has sold Development Rights to the Township may repurchase those rights upon the following conditions:
  - Fifty (50) years have passed since the Development Rights were sold;
  - The Preservation Board determines that the property may not be reasonably used for Agricultural Use or has lost its open space value. A recommendation will be based on the following factors:
    - i. That, because of the quality of the farmland, agricultural production cannot be made economically viable with generally accepted agricultural and management practices
    - ii. That surrounding conditions impose physical obstacles to the agricultural operation or prohibit essential agricultural practices
    - iii. That significant natural physical changes in the farmland have occurred that are generally irreversible and permanently limit the productivity of the farmland
    - iv. That a court order restricts the use of the farmland so that agricultural production cannot be made economically viable

- v. That significant natural physical changes occurred in the open space making it less desirable to protect.
  - The repurchase of the development rights is consistent with the purpose of the Township's purchase of development rights program as determined by the Board of Trustees;
  - Any and all other funding partners in the purchase consents to have the development rights repurchased; and
  - The Township chooses not to exercise its 60-day option to purchase the remainder of the property interests in the parcel.
2. Once the Township Board determines that a property is eligible to have its Development Rights repurchased, the owner shall pay the fair market value of those rights at the time of their return, as determined by a State Certified Appraiser. The property owner may not challenge this appraisal. If the Appraiser has a conflict of interest associated with a potential appraisal, he/she shall report the conflict to the Township and the Township shall select another Appraiser to complete the appraisal. The Township will deposit the proceeds from any repurchases into a separate fund that shall be used to purchase additional Development Rights or for other agriculture land preservation means available within the Township.
  3. A repayment received shall be allocated to all original contributing fund partners in the same proportion as the proportion for the original purchase of the development rights of the parcel.

#### SECTION 9: Related Costs

The costs of appraisal, surveying, staffing, environmental assessment, closing, legal review and other services lawfully incurred incident to the acquisition of interests in eligible lands by the Township may be paid by the Township. The Township shall not be responsible for expenses incurred by the owner incident to this transaction, including surveying and the owner's legal review.

#### SECTION 10: Supplemental Funds

Supplemental or matching funds from other governmental agencies or private sources may become available to pay a portion of the cost of acquiring development rights, or some lesser interest in eligible lands or to supplement or enlarge such acquisition. The Township Board is hereby authorized to utilize such funds to purchase interests in eligible lands or to otherwise supplement Township funds in the manner provided by this Ordinance and in accordance with the applicable laws or terms governing such grant.

## SECTION 11: Purpose

The Board of Trustees finds and declares that the use of Township funds for the purpose of paying in whole or in part the cost of acquisition of interests in eligible lands as set forth herein, including any costs necessarily incident to such acquisition, and the monitoring and enforcement of development rights easements, or to participation with any party for such purposes will promote the public health, safety and general welfare of the people of Northfield Township.

## SECTION 12: Development Rights Funding Sources and Acquisition Fund

1. Funding for purchasing development rights may come from one or more of the following sources:
  - a. General appropriations by the township specifically set aside in the Development Rights Acquisition Fund (see Section 3).
  - b. Proceeds from the sale of development rights by the township subject to Section 8(2) of this Ordinance.
  - c. Grants.
  - d. Donations.
  - e. Contributions from land trusts, other non-profit entities or other units of government.
  - f. Other sources approved by the township board and permitted by law.
2. All revenues for purchasing development rights on farmland and open space land shall be placed in a designated Development Rights Acquisition Fund to be hereafter created in the office of the Treasurer of Northfield Township. Money in such acquisition fund may be temporarily deposited in such institutions or invested in such obligations as may be lawful for the investment of Township money.
3. The revenues and any interest received from the deposit or investment of such revenues shall be applied and used solely for the purposes set forth in this Ordinance.

## SECTION 13: Severability.

In the event any provision of this Ordinance shall be held invalid or unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, such holding shall not invalidate or render unenforceable any other provisions hereof.

## SECTION 14: Enforcement

The Township shall administer and enforce the terms specified in recorded conservation easements in which the Township serves as grantee. The Preservation Board will advise and make recommendations to the Township Board concerning monitoring and investigation of complaints of violation of rights acquired by the Township. The Preservation Board shall at least annually ascertain whether an owner is complying with all conditions of the easement or deed. Inspection findings shall be in writing and maintained in the Township records.