



*Richland Township ...
It's Worth Preserving*

Open Space Preservation Options for Residents



Prepared by the Richland Township Preservation Board May 2003

Balancing Community Needs

Richland Township was founded in 1734. The area remained essentially rural with cross-road communities being established around taverns, potteries, mills and churches. These communities remained relatively small until the second half of the 1800's when the area became a commercial center after the arrival of the railroad. Development has proceeded in a way that accommodates a mix of activities that include:

- Convenient shopping in commercial centers along major roadways
- Quality homes in residential neighborhoods
- Clean industries that provide jobs and a strong tax base

The most dramatic changes have occurred in the past 25 years as developers transformed hundred of acres of farm fields into new residential and commercial developments, which in turn caused the loss of important historic and natural resources.

In 1999, in response to the new growth demands, the Board of Supervisors of Richland Township adopted an Open Space Plan, which encourages and promotes the preservation of open spaces as well as natural, cultural and historic areas. At this time the Preservation Board, a volunteer group of residents, was created to put forth the goals of the Open Space Plan.

Over the past three years, the Preservation Board has utilized the funds from the Bucks County Municipal Program to protect and preserve Township land. The Preservation Board is currently using the proceeds of a 3.35 million dollar bond approved by referendum in November 2002 as the foundation of its land preservation program.

Land Preserved in Richland Township

More than 700 acres have been permanently preserved in Richland Township since 1978. They include:

- 77 acres preserved by the Bucks County Municipal Program
- 600 acres preserved during the development process, either used as open space for the development's residents or as Township-owned open space
- 17 acres preserved through conservation easements

Land Preservation Options

By using the monies generated by the referendum, the Preservation Board offers several options for landowners in Richland Township:

1. Outright purchase of property for open space uses.
2. Purchase of the development rights or conservation easement from the property owner.

All properties participating in this program will be protected from any future development by deed restriction.

Richland Township is also able to accept donations of conservation easements. The township holds and safeguards the easements in the same way the county does. Donors may take a tax deduction just as they would if they were dealing with a nonprofit organization.

Property that is actively farmed may be eligible to join an Agricultural Security Area. The property must be over 50 acres and currently be used for farming purposes. Participation in the program allows for the property's inclusion in County or State preservation programs.

Advantages of Preservation to Owners

The community-wide benefits of land preservation are important, but the advantages of the program to landowners are what makes the preservation program work so well. Land preservation options are designed to meet landowner's needs and township capabilities.

Where land is preserved through easements, there are significant benefits to landowners:

- Owners receive substantial compensation for giving up the right to develop their land, but retain ownership of the land.
- Owners can continue to use the land and pass their land on to future generations.
- Landowners can obtain tax benefits from donating or selling a conservation easement.

Advantages to the Community

- By protecting the Township's scenic, environmental and historic resources, land preservation enhances the value of all township properties.
- Land preservation conserves the Township's waters, woodlands and other natural resources.
- Land preservation will help maintain the balance in our community by saving open space and natural resources.
- Land preservation makes sense economically to the Township as new development costs money by putting new and expensive demands on governmental and school services that ALL taxpayers have to pay for.

Where to Start

If you are interested in learning more about preserving your property, the Richland Township Preservation Board will be happy to give you additional information without obligating you to take any action.

Watershed protection, areas along streams, scenic or historic value, natural resource protection or location relative to properties already preserved are among the site assessment factors considered valuable to the open space preservation program.

Every property is different, and every landowner has different needs. The Board works, within the parameters of the available funds, to find a suitable match between preservation approaches and individual needs. Whether or not a conservation easement is placed on a property or if the property is purchased remains under the control of the landowner who may withdraw from the process at any time or continue it until an agreement is reached.

For further information, please contact:

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