

Appendix A: Conservation Scorecard

A Tool for Prioritizing Land Conservation

Since the need to protect open space and to set aside land for conservation is far greater than the funds available,¹ acquisition efforts must focus on protecting the most important parcels of land. From a conservation perspective, this means identifying and then protecting those lands with the greatest ecological and environmental value.

This Conservation Scorecard, which was developed by Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences in Southeastern Massachusetts, prioritizes lands for acquisition by providing a single value for each parcel evaluated. It does so by comparing the attributes and qualities of a parcel to those of an ideal conservation parcel. The evaluation process uses existing ecological and regulatory information, to provide an assessment of the *relative conservation value* of any parcel of land in the Town of Canandaigua. This Conservation Value may be used in conjunction with social and economic considerations (e.g., aesthetics, cultural significance, and cost) or by itself to prioritize open space acquisition.

The Manomet Scorecard was developed specifically to provide municipal governments, land trusts, open space and recreation committees, community preservation committees, conservation commissions, regional planners, and foundations that support land acquisition with an objective, science-based tool for prioritizing land acquisition. This Scorecard also may assist "Managed Growth" efforts by identifying those parcels most appropriate for development (i.e., those with low conservation values.)²

HOW TO USE THIS SCORECARD. Commission members will need one copy of the Scorecard for each parcel being assessed. In addition, it is strongly recommend that the evaluator visit each parcel and review the Town's planning documents. Although neither the site visit nor familiarity with planning documents is necessary to complete the Scorecard, the parcel in question will likely receive a lower Conservation Value than if the Commission member visited the site in person and reviewed the appropriate documents.

For each of the Scorecard's questions, the evaluator will see two or more possible answers and a point value for each possible answer.

Begin by answering question 1 A. Knowing your parcel's size, find the correct answer to the question, identify the number of points associated with that answer, and enter the resulting value in the corresponding "Score" box. Continue in this manner until you have answered all of the questions.

¹ To learn more about Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, please visit www.manomet.org.

² The "Conservation Scorecard" that was adopted by the Town of Canandaigua's Environmental Commission was adapted from a scorecard developed by the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. The scorecard was developed specifically to provide land trusts, open space committees, conservation commissions and regional planners with an objective, science-based tool for prioritizing land acquisition. Given the uniqueness of the landscape in the Western Finger lakes, the Town of Canandaigua's Environmental Commission modified the Manomet scorecard to suit the Town's characteristics.

Landscape Factors

1. The size, shape, and location of a parcel of land affect its conservation value. Neighboring parcels of open space, and their proximity and connection to the parcel being evaluated, also influence the conservation value of the property. Because of this, the evaluator must consider the parcel as part of a broader landscape.

The following three questions address the parcel from a landscape context. The first two questions deal with size -- the size of your parcel and the size of the undeveloped patch of land in which your parcel occurs. The third question deals with the concept of "Landscape Proximity and Integrity." Landscape Proximity and Integrity consider a variety of factors, including the shape of the parcel, distance to the nearest protected conservation lands, and the number and type of connections between the parcel and protected conservation lands.

Measurement Map Layer Answer Points Score

A. What is the size of the parcel being considered for purchase or for an easement?

	1A	<u>Score</u>
> 100 acres	10 points	
10-100 acres	5	
1-<10 acres	2	
<1 acre	1	

B. What is the size of the undeveloped land (i.e., land with natural vegetation) in which the parcel occurs?

	1B	
> 100 acres	3 points	
10-100 acres	2	
1-<10 acres	1	
<1 acre or not indicated on map	0	

C. What is the Landscape Integrity Value for the area in which your parcel occurs?

	1C	
High	20 points	
Medium	10	
Low	5	
Not indicated on map	0	_____

Subtotal (1A+1B+1C)

Agricultural Factors

2. The preservation of Farmsteads and Agricultural Lands is best accomplished by preserving multiple, intact examples of desirable Agricultural Soils. For this reason, a parcel's conservation value is greatly influenced by the productivity of its soil. Parcels that contain prime soils should be scored higher than those with lesser qualities. In addition, Prime Agricultural Soils or areas adjacent to viable farms enhance the conservation value of the parcel. The following questions assess the conservation value of farm soils on the parcel being analyzed. Note: Consult map in "The Open Space Program For Prime Soils."

Measurement Map Layer Answer Points Score

A. Does the parcel contain Prime

Agricultural Soils?

2A

Score

Yes

6 points

No

0

B. Is the farmland parcel adjacent or in close proximity to viable farms?

2B

Yes

5 points

No

0

C. Would the parcel qualify for a PDR or other type of easement?

2C

Yes

3 points

No

0

Subtotal (2A+2B+2C)

Environmentally Sensitive Lands

3. Water quality is critical to the economic well being and quality of life in the Town of Canandaigua. Land use practices that interrupt, disturb or pollute the flow of surface waters flowing into Canandaigua Lake can adversely impact water quality. In contrast, land use that maintains surface water quality is beneficial to the Canandaigua Lake Watershed. Wetlands also are important by functioning as natural filters to dilute pollutants before they reach streams. Due to the potential for erosion, the development of steep slopes is to be discouraged and the preservation of stream corridors is to be encouraged.

The following questions consider the relationship between the parcel and water quality. Environmentally sensitive lands that contribute to the protection of surface and ground waters are considered to be of greater conservation value than those that do not.
 Note: Consult maps in "The Open Space Program for Slopes Wetlands and Hydric Soils."

Measurement Map Layer Answer Points Score

A. Does the parcel contain a steep slope, a wetland or hydric soils?

	3A	Score
Yes	6 points	
No	0	

B. Does the parcel provide a natural (grassland or treed) vegetated buffer to a stream or rivulet that flows into the Lake?
If so, what is the extent of the buffer?

	3B
Yes - 200 or more feet	6 points
Yes - 100 - <200 feet	3
Yes - Less than 100 feet	1
No	0

C. Do one or more vernal pools or springs exist in the parcel?

	3C
Yes - Certified vernal pool or spring	2 points
Yes - Potential vernal pool or spring	1
No	0

D. Is the environmentally sensitive land threatened by development? or located in an area with intense development pressures?

	3D	
Yes	5 points	
No	0	_____
Subtotal (3A+3B+3C+3D)		

Ridgelines and Scenic Views

4. Since scenic views and ridgelines are attractive to development, protecting and preserving these natural resources benefits all members of the community and enhances Town's tourism potential.

Measurement Map Layer Answer Points Score

A. Does the parcel located in a "Hilly Area?"

	4A	Score
Yes - Undeveloped and Treed?	6 points	
Yes - Undeveloped w Trees & Fields?	4	
No	0	

B. Does the parcel contain a scenic view of Canandaigua Lake and/or farmland vistas?

	4B
Yes	7 points
No	0

C. Is the parcel visible from Canandaigua Lake?

Note: Consult map in "The Open Space Program."

	4C
Yes	3 points
No	0

Subtotal (4A+4B+4C)

Note: A low score in the Ridgelines and Scenic Views category does not automatically mean that the parcel is of low conservation value. Even high-quality upland sites may score low in this category. Parcels that score high in all other categories should be considered for purchase.

Legal Protection

5. The conservation value of your parcel may be enhanced by legal protection afforded it, and/or to its surroundings. Parcels that occur in areas already designated as environmentally sensitive or important to conservation may be subject to increased regulation, or increased availability of funds for acquisition and stewardship. The legal protection that is place on a parcel will determine if the parcel remains in conservation, or if it will be converted to another land use at some future time. Parcels that occur in one or more regulatory overlays and those with multiple layers of legal protection are of higher conservation value.

Measurement Map Layer Answer Points Score

A. Does your parcel occur within the political boundaries of an environmental regulatory overlay (e.g., Area of Critical Environmental Concern, wetland protection area, steep slope etc.?) This includes all federal, state, regional, local, and privately designated areas.

5A

Yes
No

4 points
0

B. What type of legal protection will your parcel possibly have after purchase?

The following terms are used to answer this question.
CE = Conservation easement

Ownership by Land Trust
Private Ownership CE Held by Land Trust
Private Ownership CE Held by Town including PDR
Ownership by Town

5B
3 points
3
4
1

Subtotal (5A+5B)

Potential For Development

6. Once purchased, conservation land may be protected from the direct impacts of development but not the indirect impacts. Development of areas adjacent to protected lands decreases the conservation value of those protected lands. Because of this, the evaluator should consider if the land surrounding your parcel is likely to be developed. In general, parcels in areas in which development is unlikely, maintain their ecological and conservation value longer than parcels in areas where development is encouraged. One indicator of the likelihood, and type, of future development is the designated land use, as identified in the town's planning and zoning documents.

Measurement Map Layer Answer Points Score

A. Does the parcel occur within an area designated as "lands that are most suitable for development" in the municipality's Comprehensive Plan, or an area zoned for commercial or DENSE residential development (one house per 2 acres or less)?

No

No plans exist

Yes*

\$A

6 points

0

-6

Subtotal (\$A)

* Use this answer for your score unless you have reviewed planning documents.

Parcel Name: _____ Date Evaluated: _____

Conservation Value

The Conservation Value of your parcel is the sum of your six sub-totals. The higher the Conservation Value, the greater that parcel's contribution to conservation.

Remember, this is a relative value that is to be used to compare multiple parcels being considered for acquisition.

Scorecard Category	Total Points Possible	Sub-total Value
1. Landscape Factors	33	
2. Agricultural Factors	14	
3. Environmentally Sensitive	19	
4. Ridgelines and Scenic Views	16	
5. Legal Protection	10	
6. Potential for Development	6	
	Total 100	_____

Note: Extraordinary Factors: A parcel may score a zero in one of the above categories such as Agricultural or ridgeline factors but still is unique from a conservation standpoint; i.e., a treed parcel or watershed formation (gullies) that is essential for protecting and preserving water quality; a farm with unique historical or architectural significance; an environmentally sensitive parcel that contains unique (rare) plant or wildlife or wetlands exceeding a certain size.

A. Does the parcel contain a factor that is deemed to be special and deserving of recognition and that is not covered in another category?

- 1. Yes 10 points
- 2. No 0

7. Extraordinary Factors	10	_____
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Total Adjusted Score

A quick rule of thumb for interpreting your score!

(Based on pilot studies)

- 0-20 Little to no conservation value
- 20-40 Poor to moderate conservation value
- 40-60 Moderate to good conservation value
- 60-80 Good to excellent conservation value
- 80-100 Outstanding conservation value (Only pristine, ideal parcels fall into this range.)