



GREENWICH LAND TRUST

Land Donations

Donating land for conservation purposes to Greenwich Land Trust (GLT) is a straightforward process with a set of sequential steps. These steps ensure clear communication between a potential donor and GLT. We have developed this primer to acquaint you with the process and to answer questions about the timeframe and costs.

First Step: Contact Us

If you are considering donating land for conservation purposes, the first step is to contact our Executive Director, Will Kies, by phone: 203-629-2151 or by email: will@gltrust.org. GLT is located at 370 Round Hill Road, Greenwich, CT 06831 if you would like to send a letter or stop by in person. This initial conversation will help to develop a common understanding of your goals and wishes and will establish a basis for exploring the various land donation methods most suitable to your situation.

When thinking about a gift of land to GLT, prospective donors should speak to their legal counsel, tax advisors and families about their personal circumstances. GLT does not give tax advice.

Initial Property Walk-Through

It is beneficial to both GLT and a potential donor to meet at the property and walk through it to determine mutual goals for the land. GLT has environmental science experts who can help to evaluate the conservation values and other unique features of the property. If the prospective donor is unavailable, GLT representatives, with the owner's permission, will visit the property to do an initial assessment.

GLT Acquisitions Committee & Board of Directors Review

If there is initial agreement to proceed, the Acquisitions Committee of the Board of Directors and stewardship staff will visit the property together to determine if it fits strategically with GLT's goals for conservation. For example, GLT would take into consideration: proximity to other protected open space parcels or corridors, the size of the parcel, and conservation values. The Acquisitions Committee will then make a recommendation to the full Board.

The final determination to accept a donation of land requires a formal vote and approval by GLT Board of Directors.

Due Diligence

The next step is for GLT staff to begin the work of due diligence and obtaining property details, including assuring a clear title to the property, conducting appropriate environmental assessments, and determining a clear description of the bounds of the property through existing or new survey work.

For conservation easements, GLT prepares a Baseline Documentation Report (BDR) for the property, recording the condition of the land at the time of the easement, and its conservation values and public

benefits, by means of maps, photographs, and other written reports. Copies of documents are kept by both the easement donor and GLT in their permanent records for future reference.

For outright land gifts, GLT prepares a property management plan which will be used to manage the land in the future.

Contractual Agreements Drafted

GLT then works with the land donor and advisors to define the terms of the gift of land or conservation easement, producing draft deeds for review by all parties.

Closing

When all of the terms have been satisfactorily agreed upon and a final deed is ready to be recorded, GLT will set up a closing with the donor, at which time the deed (and baseline documentation report if a conservation easement) is signed, notarized, and properly recorded with the Town Clerk.

Timeframe

The timeframe to complete this process is three months at a minimum. The timing depends on availability of key documents and information, and the complexity of the transaction.

Costs

There are some costs associated with donating land or a conservation easement to GLT. Generally, the landowner would be expected to be responsible for the items needed for conveyance, including survey costs, legal and recording fees, due diligence fees such as a hazardous waste review, and title search.

When GLT accepts ownership of a property, it also undertakes a responsibility for the ongoing stewardship and maintenance of the property in perpetuity. GLT therefore asks that a donor contribute to its Stewardship Fund, to help the organization to meet its obligation of maintaining the land. Such a contribution may be tax-deductible to the donor.

Additional Resources

If you would like to learn more about land trusts in general, and their standards and practices, the Land Trust Alliance (lta.org) provides extensive information