



STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028





WHAT'S NEXT?

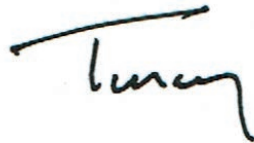
Harford Land Trust (HLT) is an accredited, nonprofit conservation leader. For over three decades, HLT has been the community's go-to partner for protecting the important lands that define Harford County.

Over the past year, HLT's Board of Directors, past Presidents, and staff developed a new Strategic Plan to guide the work of our organization through 2028. We did so with the recognition that, now more than ever, land conservation is critical to maintaining our county's quality of life.

Visionary land conservation remains the core of what we do. But HLT must also be flexible enough to respond to evolving community needs. We must elevate our roles related to public policy, advocacy, community engagement, and collaborative partnerships.

The ever-present threat of land conversion is just one of the challenges we face – high property values, finite funding, legislative hurdles, and a changing climate all present significant obstacles. To continue our work and deliver on this plan, we will need to raise more money, create a stronger and more diverse coalition of supporters and partners, and be more innovative.

What follows represents our unwavering commitment to conserve land and protect its resources for the benefit of the people of Harford County.



H. Turney McKnight
November 2023

WHO WE ARE



MISSION

To conserve land and protect its natural resources for the benefit of all people in Harford County.

VISION

We envision a Harford County where:

AGRICULTURE

A thriving, sustainable agricultural industry is prominent in the local economy, culture, and landscape — and is supported by greater demand for local food.

HABITAT

Habitat is biologically diverse, interconnected, and supports viable populations of keystone species.

FORESTS

Large tracts of forest are permanently protected for stable and sustainable production, wildlife habitat, scenic viewsheds, ecosystem services, and recreational uses.

RECREATION AND WELL-BEING

A network of trails, recreational lands, and waterfront provides abundant access to open space and enhances the quality of life.

VALUES

- We focus on results – more work, less talk.
- We foster a non-political, mission-based approach – land preservation unites us.
- We are committed to inclusion and diversity and serving every community within Harford County.
- We partner with like-minded organizations to achieve greater impact.
- We maintain our adherence to the highest operating standards.
- We are strongly invested in land stewardship – managing and caring for the land.
- We are respectful of private landowner interests and motivations.
- We are committed to transparency and integrity.



Photo courtesy of Ecatarina Grant

OUR TOOLKIT

REAL PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS

We conserve land and protect water primarily using conservation easements and fee ownership.

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE

We bring expertise in legal frameworks, business and economic considerations, and public policy to the above transactions.

FUNDING AND LEVERAGE

We pursue innovative financing mechanisms and strive to leverage our funds for greater impact.

ADVOCACY AND INFLUENCE

We advocate and exercise our influence for decisions and policy solutions that advance conservation goals.

LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP

We mobilize and guide others, partnering whenever possible, to facilitate problem-solving and collective action.



OUR PRIORITIES

- Land for Nature - Wildlife and biodiversity
- Land for Food and Fiber - Working farmland and forestry products
- Land for Clean Water – Waterways and natural filters
- Land for People – Scenic beauty and recreation

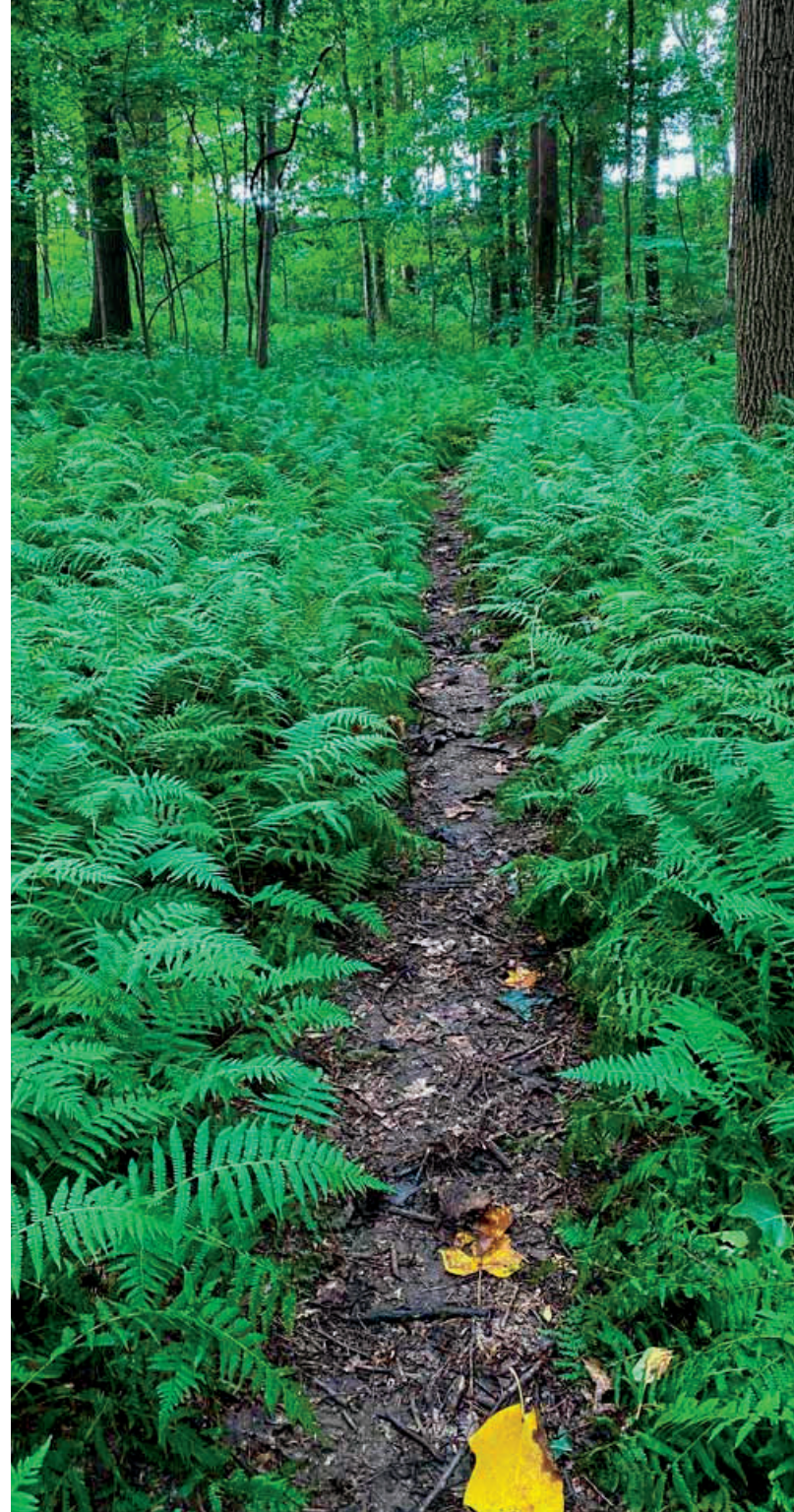
Save more land

- Accelerate the pace of land conservation
 - Achieve the HarfordNEXT goal of 75,000 acres of private land preserved by 2040
 - Achieve the Maryland the Beautiful goal of 30% of all Harford County land preserved by 2030 and 40% by 2040

- Pursue proactive, creative, and targeted conservation
 - Where necessary, employ legal tools such as purchase options and financing possibilities such as buy-protect-sell arrangements and bridge loans
 - Familiarize industry professionals including lawyers, CPAs, and bank trust and estate groups with our work by hosting continuing education events and workshops
 - Access funding for conservation projects tied to water quality and climate resilience goals

- Identify social and community needs that can be addressed through conservation
 - Support opportunities for natural spaces including greenways, pocket parks, and gardens, to foster community and well-being
 - Be sensitive to the need to redress environmental injustice

Photo courtesy of Judy Dettner



Advocate for conservation-oriented government policies and funding

- Educate policymakers about land conservation
- Press for sufficient and continuing county and state funding for conservation programs
- Support compatible economic development
- Promote smart growth and appropriate infill and redevelopment
- Serve as a technical resource on complex land use issues such as renewable energy siting, climate impacts, and redevelopment incentives
- Actively participate in Comprehensive Rezoning and Master Planning processes
- Commission and/or author relevant surveys and research



Photo courtesy of Scott McDaniel (below)

Build community momentum and coalitions of partners

> Community

- Broaden community awareness and relevance of our work through targeted programming and communication
- Prioritize relationships that increase our understanding of equity and inclusion considerations

> Partnerships

- Deepen existing partnerships with like-minded conservation organizations
- Partner with non-traditional conservation groups such as marginalized communities and faith congregations to achieve greater impact

Photo courtesy of Megan Rigdon



Reinforce organizational strength and stability

- Maintain land trust accreditation status
- Invest in our people and systems
 - Offer competitive compensation and benefits (in line with the Land Trust Alliance and Maryland Nonprofits Survey guidelines) and professional development opportunities
 - Maintain an attractive office environment and a supportive organizational culture
 - Explore opportunities for a permanent office, prioritizing location and on-site programming potential
- Reflect our community
 - Maintain a committed, diverse, and active board
 - Recruit volunteer advisors who bring varied perspectives to our work
- Expand organizational fundraising capabilities
 - Increase annual giving and new member retention
 - Increase Belle Vue Circle membership and engagement
 - Promote planned giving opportunities
 - Empower board engagement in fundraising
- Grow our Land Stewardship reserves
 - Offer and publicize various ways for donors to invest in our projects and initiatives
 - Foster and deepen relationships with local philanthropic entities





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MAP

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