



## **Essex Land Trust – Strategic Plan**

### **Mission (Why we exist/what we do)**

The Essex Land Trust acquires, preserves, and manages its open space to protect the environment and small-town character of the villages of Centerbrook, Essex, and Ivoryton for current and future generations and to provide our community with recreational and educational opportunities through strategic acquisitions and responsible stewardship of properties with significant environmental value.

### **Vision (What we want to be)**

Our vision is to provide the Essex community with a network of permanently protected preserves that give residents of all ages ample opportunities to enjoy the beauty of nature while safeguarding our waterways, wetlands, and supporting healthy wildlife habitats.

### **Values (What we believe in)**

The Essex Land Trust pursues its mission with an emphasis on connecting the community and the environment to support the wide variety of interests and diversity of the people of Essex. We value the commitment of our volunteers, the historic heritage of our properties and partnerships with our community, organizations, and landowners. We act ethically with transparency, integrity, and respect based on the highest professional standards and in a fiscally responsible way.

### **Strategic Goals (Desired outcomes)**

#### **Goal #1 - Acquisitions**

Enhance and grow open space in the three villages of Essex through the acquisition of additional preserves consistent with the ELT Mission with a focus on expanding current preserves and completing corridors with appropriate available funding.

#### **Strategies**

- Develop and annually update a Land Acquisition Plan based on the ELT objectives of protecting priority natural resources, expanding existing preserves, and creating new corridors.
- Proactively pursue properties targeted in the Plan.
- Be responsive to other opportunities as they arise, both from direct contact with owners and from information gained from communication with various Town land use officials and commissions.

#### **Goal #2 - Stewardship**

Proactively manage Essex Land Trust preserves to sustain and enhance conservation values while also meeting the community's need for appropriate passive recreational opportunities.

#### **Strategies**

- Establish and maintain preserve specific plans that address the challenges of providing passive recreation, protecting habitat and water resources, controlling invasives and dealing with the impacts of climate change.
- Develop and enhance a sufficient level of qualified stewards to appropriately manage our properties.
- Plan and manage external sources as required for technical skills, capacity, equipment, safety, etc.



**Goal #3 - Community**

Be a leader in the Essex community in providing opportunities to support and participate in the Essex Land Trust's mission, activities, and programs.

**Strategies**

- Increase community awareness of and engagement with ELT, its mission, and its role in the community.
- Promote interactions with schools, Scouts, and other community minded groups.
- Expand social media presence to reach a more diverse demographic.
- Deploy programs, events, and communications that will attract the people of the three villages, those new to town, families with young children, and students.
- Continue to provide environmental related information to help inform members of our community.

**Goal #4 - Funding**

Plan and provide for sustainable financial resources that ensure future management and maintenance of preserves, annual operating expenses, and acquisitions of new properties.

**Strategies**

- Develop and maintain a financial plan that identifies and addresses the long-term financial needs of the organization.
- Evaluate and implement additional sources of revenues including, but not limited to, membership levels and thresholds, legacy programs, expansion of corporate members, sponsorships, and grants.
- Build our designated stewardship funds towards the level where our annual stewardship expenses are covered entirely with income generated from such accounts.

**Goal #5 - Organization**

Continue to be an organization that is efficient, effective, and forward looking, consistent with best practices and Land Trust Alliance (LTA) standards.

**Strategies**

- Maintain an active and engaged Board focused on strategic planning, succession issues and the identification of needed skills at the Board, Committee, Steward, and Volunteer levels.
- Ensure that the organization maintains effective policies and practices and leverages appropriate digital tools and technologies.
- Grow and effectively deploy our volunteer roster to assist with trail maintenance, committee assignments, etc., to expand our talent pipeline for future stewards and Board members.

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