

Baltimore Green Space

preserving neighborhoods' treasured open spaces

Baltimore Green Space can help your neighborhood preserve its community garden, pocket park, or other open space so that you and your neighbors can enjoy it forever. This sheet explains how, and answers some common questions.

Overview

If your neighborhood has an open space that has been cared for by residents for at least 5 years, we can often acquire the land on behalf of your neighborhood, giving you security that your urban oasis will not be redeveloped. We also provide basic liability insurance, and technical assistance.

Most of the sites we preserve are on land that is City-owned. Others are on abandoned land whose owners owe large sums to City government. In these cases, the City can take title to the land, and then transfer it to us. We can also accept donations of land, and may be able to purchase from private owners. Baltimore Green Space and other qualified land trusts can acquire land from Baltimore City for \$1 per lot.



The Process

Land preservation is rarely quick.

We always meet with potential applicants before they fill out an application. This lets you get to know us, and lets us learn about you.

After we receive an application, our board of directors decides whether the site looks like a good match for us. If it is, we enter into an “interim agreement” with the applicants, and then do some research. Assuming all goes well, our board votes to acquire the site.

In most cases, we apply to City government to acquire the land at \$1 per lot. The Planning Department checks out our request, and if all goes well (as it has so far), the sales agreement is prepared. But none of this is quick, especially if the land has been abandoned by a private owner. Once the land is transferred to Baltimore Green Space, we enter into a long-term agreement with the applicants. From the moment we receive an application, we do our best to provide technical assistance to the garden or park.

Q&A

Q How does Baltimore Green Space decide whether to preserve a green space?

A We look for 4 things:

1. The **request for preservation must come from the community**, with the application completed by the person who is volunteering to be the Site Manager.



2. The community must be able to ***care for the site for the long term***. There must be an ***able, committed Site Manager***, an Assistant Site Manager, and ***enough volunteers*** to care for the project. The project must be ***at least 5 years old***, to show that it is past the excitement of start-up. There also must be a Partner Organization – a community association, church, social club or other ***organization that is active in the neighborhood***.

3. The project ***needs to provide benefits to the neighborhood*** – such as recreation, food, education, beautification, or gathering space. It's also great if it makes the neighborhood more livable by pushing out blight or crime, or if it improves Baltimore's ecosystem.

4. Since city soils can be contaminated, the site needs to show a ***good match between any identified environmental risks and how the site is used***. For example, a former truck garage isn't a great place to grow radishes, but it can make a wonderful grassy pocket park.



Q How can we show that our green space satisfies all that?

A Your application does a lot to answer these questions. We also use our own research.

Q Can our neighborhood preserve the green space without a land trust?

A Yes, but you may find it simpler to work with a land trust. First, as a land trust, we are able to buy liability insurance at a very good price. Second, the \$1 price for City-owned land is reserved for land trusts. You could form a new land trust, but that's a lot of paperwork and expense. We feel that it makes sense to have one or a few land trusts help many neighborhoods.

Q Are there other options?

A If permanent preservation through a land trust doesn't seem like a good option right now, we may be able to help you think about other options. Give us a call at 443-695-7504 or write to info@baltimoregreenspace.org