



Conservator

THE NEWSLETTER OF CITIZENS' LAND CONSERVANCY OF HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO, INC. / OCT. 2001

CLC Annual Meeting set for Mon., Oct. 29 7 PM at Nathanael Greene Lodge, 6394 Wesselman Rd., Green Twp.

Directions to N. Greene Lodge: I-74 to Rybolt Rd. Exit #11. Go 1.5 mi. up Harrison Rd. to R onto Wesselman Rd.; go 1/2 mi. to R into drive

You're invited to attend the 2nd Annual Meeting of Citizens' Land Conservancy of Hamilton County at 7 PM on Mon., Oct. 29 at Nathanael Greene Lodge. We're looking forward to a thought-provoking presentation by Eric Russo as we salute the work of The Hillside Trust.
During a brief business meeting, CLC will report on the year's

activities, update CLC's bylaws, and also hold election of Board members. We are pleased to announce that Stephen Dana, Tim Mara and Eric Russo are seeking new terms. And, CLC will honor retiring Board members Bill Reichling and Gwen Wise.
If you are interested in the work of CLC, and would like to apply for a Board position, please call 513.574.1849.

Recognizing **25** years of hillside preservation & advocacy — The Hillside Trust Sounds "A Call To Action"

A *Call to Action*, a color slide presentation about the work of The Hillside Trust by Executive Director Eric Russo, will be featured at the 2nd Annual Meeting of Citizens' Land Conservancy on October 29.



Eric Russo is Executive Director of The Hillside Trust, and a Board member of Citizens' Land Conservancy of Hamilton County, Ohio.

He was named THT's Executive Director in June 2000 after serving 11 years as Administrative Assistant for the nonprofit organization. For seven of those years Eric was also Assistant Director of Little Miami, Inc.

Since June 2000, THT and CLC each have contributed a Board member to the other's organization. CLC's Board is pleased to benefit from Eric's knowledge and experience and years of productive work for area land trusts.

"The time has come for all of us to take a more active role in protecting our natural environment," said Eric.

"How? By taking action in our daily lives, and not waiting for others to do what we ourselves can do to make our communities safer and healthier places."

THT shows the way

For 25 years, The Hillside Trust has worked to instill a desire in the public to preserve hillsides and other natural resources. THT actively promotes the adoption of hillside development guidelines and regulations.

In 1991, THT published the acclaimed study of area hillsides: *A Hillside Protection Strategy for Greater Cincinnati*, which contains guidelines that could be implemented by county governments.

Officials say "not"

Despite THT's efforts, the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County have both chosen not to adopt any portion of the guidelines to protect hillsides. However, other cities in the U.S. have done so. And, the city of Ft. Thomas in Northern Kentucky has used elements of the study to enact a protective "tree ordinance."

Change public policy

Eric implores citizens to work together to affect change at the policy-making level. "We must let elected officials know that we want policies that protect our threatened environment," he said.

"We must convince officials to stop the loss of our landmark hillsides to inappro-

priate development and landslides; that hillsides and other natural resources have value far beyond developers' profit motive."

Eric cautions that we can no longer continue to build in floodplains without seeing the kinds of damage such as that caused by stormwater runoff this past summer.

Citizens taking action

Eric points to Anderson Township as an example of positive action. Here the community took it upon itself to preserve its remaining green areas.

"They did not wait for county, state or federal authorities, or an environmental group, to do what they themselves could do."

Forested hillsides provide beauty, personality and environmental quality

Greater Cincinnati's hillsides and valleys were slowly sculpted as three glaciers crept across the region during the Ice Age. Beautiful hillsides have defined the area ever since.

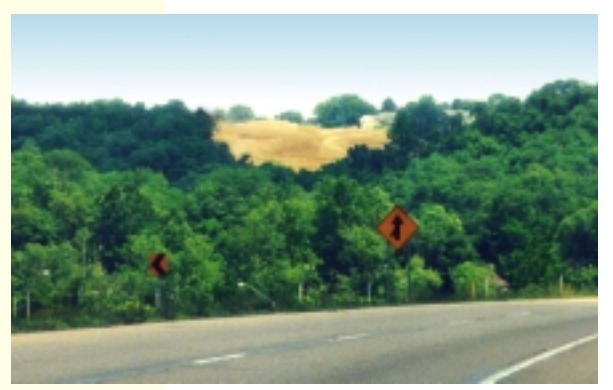
These hillsides and river systems give the region its unique visual personality and contribute to our quality of life.

The hillsides are both beautiful and fragile. And, they are prone to costly landslides. There is increasing concern as the pressures of development claim more hillside acreage.

The forested hillside system provides a visual richness which is an important counterpoint to urban development. Forming ribbons of green open space, hillsides offer spectacular vistas that define our sense of "place." They are a valuable element of environmental quality, providing wildlife habitat and migration corridors as well as relief from pollution.

Photo Below: *The Hillside Trust's Land Use Advisory Committee noted many objections when formally reviewing plans for this massive cut-and-fill hillside development on a 30-acre site in Green Township. (A majority of the site is located on steep slopes of 25% or more prior to grading.)*

THT's recommendations were ignored during Hamilton County's approval process, which does not prohibit this type of development, and has no standards that address aesthetic issues.



View of Green Twp. development site from I-74 (June 2001)

A Message from CLC's President

Dear CLC Member,

We appreciate your support during the past year. As a member of an active local land trust, you are part of a vibrant and expanding private land conservation movement.

CLC is not alone in its work to preserve land in Hamilton County. Many organizations have similar goals, and we are all talking to each other and coordinating our preservation and education activities. The new Regional Greenspace Initiative, of which CLC is a member, will be a positive force for preservation in the coming years.

Conservation work in progress

We are pleased to tell you that CLC is currently working with five landowners in Hamilton County to prepare Conservation Easements (CEs) to protect their lands.

A CE is a deed restriction that permanently limits the land's development potential. It is an agreement between the landowner and CLC, and is individually drafted to spell out the owners' terms for preservation of their land. The process also includes an appraisal to determine the value of the conserved land. When donated to a nonprofit organization like CLC, the value of the CE has important tax benefits to the landowner.

Valuing the land

Those who attended CLC's Summer meeting in August at the two farms on North Bend Rd. got a first-hand look at the viability of farming—and its potential—in Hamilton County. The land not only provides a livelihood for two families, it also provides fresh, locally grown produce full of nutrients and flavor you don't get when vegetables travel great distances to our tables.

The Bahrs and the Heaths are to be commended for their stewardship, because under their careful watch the land will continue to be an asset to them—and the community. This "undeveloped" land provides many additional economic benefits that are just now beginning to be understood.

Disrespecting the land

Other parcels of land in Hamilton County are not so fortunate, as you can see from the photo on the other side of this newsletter. The type of land use pictured is a direct result of escalating development pressures and no regulations to preserve our landmark hillsides.

Without accompanying "smart growth" public policies that encourage outright preservation of natural areas and wildlife habitat, or more protection for hillsides, we will continue to experience this kind of loss of Hamilton County's hillside heritage. And because of it, we may be losing economic advantage as well.

Quality-of-place matters to the economy

In addition to preserving land for the obvious reason—to safeguard our life-sustaining natural resources—other reasons have recently emerged.

Open space preservation, access to nature, and other "quality-of-place" amenities may be key to future economic development of an area. That's what a recent study commissioned by the city

of Pittsburgh found. The study has revelations important to the Cincinnati area looking to the future and hoping to rebuild its image. Areas that want to create leading-edge high tech firms and industries, and also attract young "knowledge" workers to live and work there, are taking notice.

The key findings of the study confirm that environmental quality matters in the attraction of talent and development of high technology economies.

If you preserve it, they will come

The new, easily understood value is "quality-of-place." It means that natural, recreational and lifestyle amenities are outstanding drawing cards. (It follows that having an attractive place to live and work is one of the reasons that keep people from wanting to *leave* an area for greener pastures.)

IMPORTANT: Nature LESS IMPORTANT: Professional Sports

Knowledge workers balance economic opportunity and lifestyle in selecting a place to live and work, the study says. These young workers are less concerned with "big ticket" amenities such as professional sports and "high" arts and culture. They want easy-to-get-to outdoor recreation: hiking and bike trails, water activities, parks and recreational

areas, and access to nature.

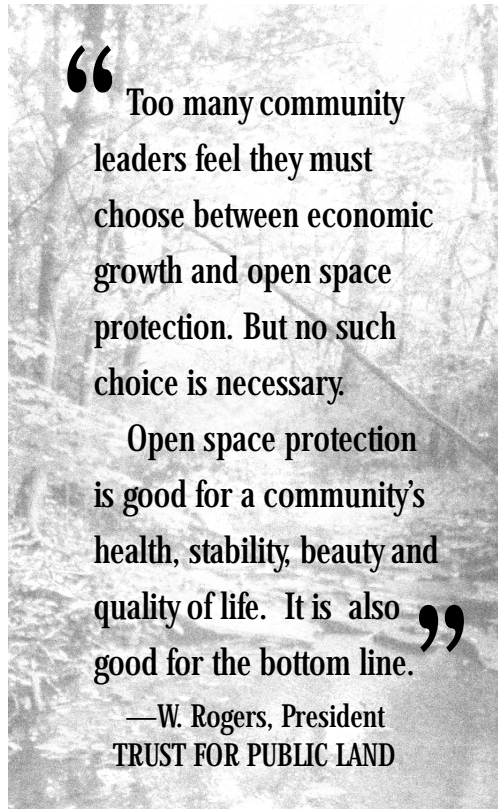
The bottom line

To compete successfully in the new "age of talent," areas must make quality-of-place a central element of their economic development efforts. (To find out more about the study by Robert Florida, a professor of regional economic development at Carnegie Mellon University, go to www.sustainablepittsburgh.org then go to the publications section.)

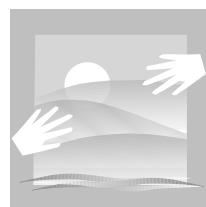
Economic value of preserved land

This means that we must stop looking at open space for its development potential, and recognize precious land in Hamilton County for its true "highest and best use"—as a valuable natural resource that needs our protection and stewardship.

—Roland Johnson, President, CLC Board of Directors



—W. Rogers, President
TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND



CITIZENS' LAND CONSERVANCY

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CLC is a nonprofit, member-supported land trust, founded in 1999 to help families preserve their lands. CLC informs the public about how land conservation protects the quality of life in Hamilton County.

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