

Land Trust and Conservation Planning

Our experience with land trusts and government programs established to protect the unique land resources of their communities, counties, and states is rich and varied. Several principals and associates began working with land trusts and the tapestry of land conservation tools in the early history of the land trust movement. Between these land trust elders alone, we have more than two centuries of experience in serving land trusts, conservation organizations, and a variety of government agencies in every capacity.

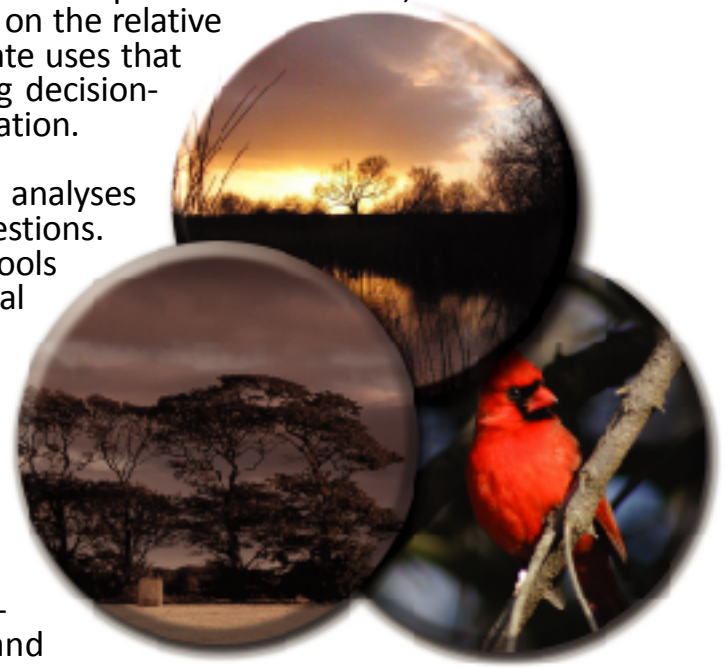
This awareness combined with our skills in land use planning, economics, natural resource management, law, geography, appraisal, forestry, conservation biology, and a variety of other biophysical disciplines uniquely qualifies Resource Dimensions to provide the broad range of services often required to achieve land conservation goals, including restoration and sustainability. Some of the unique services we provide include:

Real Estate and Land Transactions: Resource Dimensions has successfully conducted a wide variety of land and real estate projects for land trusts, public programs, and private landowners in more than a dozen states. We have performed land negotiations, economic and fiscal impact studies for residential subdivisions, and complex negotiations for multi-million dollar conservation, reuse, and rehabilitation strategies.

Benefits of Conservation/Valuation Studies: We have conducted conservation valuations for a variety of land resources (e.g. agricultural, wetlands, open space, and cultural/historical), used to raise public and political awareness, set conservation priorities, and facilitate land use decisions. Valuation studies provide information on the relative long-term economic benefits of resource use through conservation versus alternate uses that permanently alter land resources and remove these economic benefits, enabling decision-makers to better calculate trade-offs of various development options with conservation.

Land Consumption Analysis: We have conducted a variety of land consumption analyses relative to suburban, rural, and exurban growth issues to address an array of questions. Several analyses have focused on evaluation of regulatory and incentive planning tools for redevelopment and conservation, which have been used to compare potential impacts dictated by current zoning against more favorable alternatives.

Conservation Development Plan Analysis: Resource Dimensions has worked with organizations and private developers in several states to assess and plan conservation developments. The goal of conservation or cluster development is to protect land resources while allowing for the maximum number of residences under current municipal zoning and subdivision regulations. We have also assisted communities in developing conservation subdivision regulations to enable residential growth within clusters while preserving, as dedicated non-development areas, lands that have open space, agricultural, natural, and recreational values.



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Natural Resources · Economic Analysis · Sustainability Planning · Land Use · Policy Analysis · Regulatory & Litigation Support

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Selected Projects



National Farmland Conservation Prioritization Model: Mapping Cost-Effective Farmland Preservation Priorities. *U.S. Department of Agriculture.* Resource Dimensions served as an advisor to the USDA-funded National Farmland Conservation Prioritization Model developed at the University of California at Santa Barbara, Bren School of the Environment. The purpose of the model is to aid public agencies and conservation organizations in prioritizing farmland for preservation through PDRs, TDRs, conservation easements and other methods. A unique goal of the model was to incorporate both the value of ecosystem services and social values. The project operationalizes the nationwide framework recently developed to help rank farmlands in terms of preservation values. The focus is on four conservation objectives (agricultural, environmental, growth control, and open space), identifying measurement criteria, suitable spatial data, and data processing steps. The project also used database design techniques to develop a spatial data model of the farmland objects, their relationships, and their behaviors, which will be a template for creating GIS databases that are compatible with the software.

Farmland and Natural Area Preservation Program Guidelines. *Dakota County, Minnesota.* In November 2002, the voters of Dakota County approved a \$20 million bond issue to preserve farmland through the purchase of development rights (PDR) and natural areas through fee simple purchase. Resource Dimensions worked closely with county staff and County Commissioners to draft PDR Program Guidelines and prepare the program for implementation. Since 2003, Dakota County has received all of the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) funds allocated to the State of Minnesota, more than \$5 million.

Integrated Land Conservation Decision-Support Model (ILCDS) Generation III. *U.S. Department of Agriculture, Land Trust Alliance, and the National Trust.* Resource Dimensions evaluated a series of data obtained over a 4-year period in the U.S. and Britain to aid in the development of a multi-criteria land conservation decision-support tool. The model employs choice experiments and contingent valuation methods to derive value and rank attributes (at the landscape-scale) and ecological constraints in facilitating strategic regional land conservation decision-making. Resource Dimensions designed the model and research strategy, developed focus group questionnaires and survey instruments, and conducted quantitative analysis, Ethnographic text-based analysis of transcripts derived from focus groups and in-person interviews, and econometric analysis. The ILCDS model is linked to a GIS framework to enable graphic presentation of conservation hot spots and location specific land and ecosystem service values. The integral data component modules include: 1) policy/regulatory, 2) local land use zoning, 3) local/regional economic information, and 4) social valuation. Gen. III acknowledges the complex suite of factors that interact to impact individual behaviors at the local and regional level relative to land use and environmental decision-making. The project is a cooperative public/private/non-profit venture. Project partners over its evolution have included a number of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, two universities, and a private foundation.

Nationwide Uniform Conservation Enabling Legislation Assessment. Resource Dimensions conducted a nationwide review and comparative analysis of conservation easement enabling legislation. The assessment and recommendations on proposed conservation easement law amendments led to work with colleagues from across the nation on an in-depth assessment of conservation laws and complementary case studies reflecting state-of-the-art applications of easements in practice, and the publication of the first comprehensive evaluation of conservation easements across the country, *Protecting the Land: Conservation Easements Past, Present, and Future* (Island Press).



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