

# Conservation Boosts Local Economies In Towns Across New England



## Land Conservation: It Serves a Village

Access to open space and recreational opportunities are proving essential to our physical and mental well being. Advancing the pace and scale of land conservation throughout New England can significantly improve access to its many environmental and public health benefits while boosting the economies of local communities. This can be achieved when community development leaders and environmental advocates work together under a shared vision where land protection and economic stability can not only exist together but thrive in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Evidence is mounting that land conservation can have measurable economic benefits. Case studies focused on three New England communities, Bethel, ME; Grand Lakes Stream, ME; and Stamford, CT demonstrate how land conservation can amplify local economies. Although unique in geography, demographics, and the economic challenges they faced, by incorporating land conservation into their community development plans these communities realized both environmental and economic gains.

## Local Economies Rely on Protected Land for...



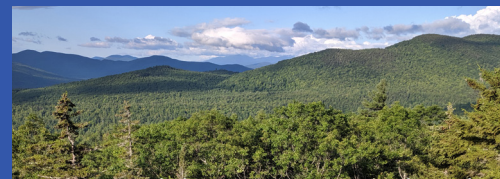
### Grand Lakes Stream, ME



Grand Laker Canoe /Downeast Lakes Land Trust

- Preserved 600-900 jobs at the local paper mill
- Increased wood fiber supplies
- Ensured open access crucial to the lodge and guide businesses
- Increased tax revenue and employment opportunities

### Bethel, ME



Bethel Community Forest/Gabe Perkins

- Access to over 11,300 acres of connected conserved land
- Increased tourism and construction job opportunities
- Established a year-round recreation destination
- Growing population of new residents

### Stamford, CT



Mill River Park/ Sahar Coston -Hardy

- Increased property values near the park
- Lowered insurance rates and new construction costs
- Provided outdoor classroom to 650 fourth grade students each year
- Increased visitation to nearby restaurants and businesses
- Lowered costs of recreation and healthcare for residents

## Did You Know?

More than 5 million acres have been conserved in New England since 1990. This protects New England's recreation industry regionally, which generates about **432,000 jobs** and **\$52 billion** annually.

## Meeting the Needs of a Changing Economy

Bethel, ME experienced shifts in its local forest products industry resulting in the closure of many sawmills and a loss of jobs. The town's community-wide approach to land protection led to the creation of the Bethel Community Forest, a conserved parcel of forest land that provides access to over 900 acres of land. This land connects to a larger ribbon of conserved forestland, attracting the attention of new residents and visitors, as well as the 500,000 people that flock to nearby Sunday River ski resort annually.

Bethel has evolved into a year-round recreational hub, with the local ski area and mountain bike trails at its center. These amenities attract thousands of visitors each year and have sparked job growth in the recreation and construction industries.

## Ensuring Public Land Access Secures Jobs

Grand Lakes Stream, ME lost public access to open space, creating hardships for local outdoor recreation guides and threatening the traditional way of life. Downeast Lakes Land Trust was formed to create a community forest that helped preserve 600-900 forest product jobs, as well as jobs in

the guiding, lodge, recreation, and travel booking industries. An additional benefit of the conserved land is that the local land trust is now able to generate funds from its sustainably managed forests through carbon offset credits.

## Urban Park Enhances Downtown Revitalization

Stamford, CT needed a way to anchor and accelerate the revitalization of its downtown area. Mill River Park was created, attracting new businesses, and providing green space, healthy recreation opportunities, and diverse programming for residents as well as an increase in real estate values surrounding the park.

## Open Space and Healthcare

Health care costs associated with hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes are **40% less for people with access to open spaces.**

## Learn More

For further discussion on these communities and how investment in land conservation helped to boost their local economies, read on with our in-depth case studies:

- [Community-Based Conservation Helps Maine Town Adapt to Economic Shifts](#)
- [Protecting Maine Land to Preserve a Communities Traditions](#)
- [Urban Park Fuels Downtown Revitalization in Stamford, CT](#)

**Local Stories, Regional Impact**—The research that informs this document found compelling connections between permanent land protection and positive impacts on local economies throughout New England, and this series was developed to show what these findings look like in individual towns. For more information about how conservation affects local economies across New England, see the full study at <https://bit.ly/CSConFi>.

Highstead is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the New England landscape and achieving the Wildlands and Woodlands Vision. Mailing address: PO Box 1097, Redding, CT 06875. 203.938.8809 [www.highstead.net](http://www.highstead.net)