



OPEN SPACE AND PARKLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

ACTIVITY REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2013-2014 JULY 1, 2013 – JUNE 30, 2014

PREPARED FOR:
THE CITY OF ANN ARBOR
GREENBELT ADVISORY COMMISSION
PARKS ADVISORY COMMISSION

PREPARED BY:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	3
GREENBELT	3
<i>Strategic Direction</i>	3
<i>Land Acquisitions</i>	6
<i>Leveraging Funds</i>	8
<i>Public and Landowner Outreach</i>	9
<i>Preserve Washtenaw</i>	9
<i>Financial Spreadsheet</i>	10
<i>Stewardship Funds</i>	10
<i>Status of Goals for 2013-2014</i>	10
<i>Goals for 2014-2015</i>	11
PARK LAND ACQUISITIONS	12
<i>Strategic Direction</i>	12
<i>Land protection</i>	12
<i>Financial Spreadsheet</i>	13
<i>Status of Goals for 2013 – 2014</i>	13
<i>Goals for 2014 – 2015</i>	13

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In 2003, residents of Ann Arbor passed the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage. Money generated through this tax levy is used to purchase parkland within the City, as well as to protect farmland, open spaces and natural areas within portions of 8 Townships surrounding Ann Arbor, known as the Greenbelt District. The purpose of the initiative is to preserve open space, natural habitats, working lands, and the City's source waters outside the city limits, as well as additional parkland and recreational opportunities within the City limits.

The Greenbelt program just completed its ninth year and is making great strides in achieving the goals set out for the program. Within the City, the millage has provided funds to add 82 acres of additional parkland within the City limits. These additions have provided critical linkages between existing parks, protected high quality natural features remaining in the City, and increased access to existing parks, increasing the viability of the overall park system for the Ann Arbor residents. All of these are priorities for acquisition are stated in the City's PROS Plan. Outside of the City, the millage has helped to protect over 4,300 acres of working farmland and open space. Protecting farmland provides many benefits to the Ann Arbor residents by protecting the rural, scenic vistas, local agricultural economy, as well as protecting land along tributaries of the Huron River.

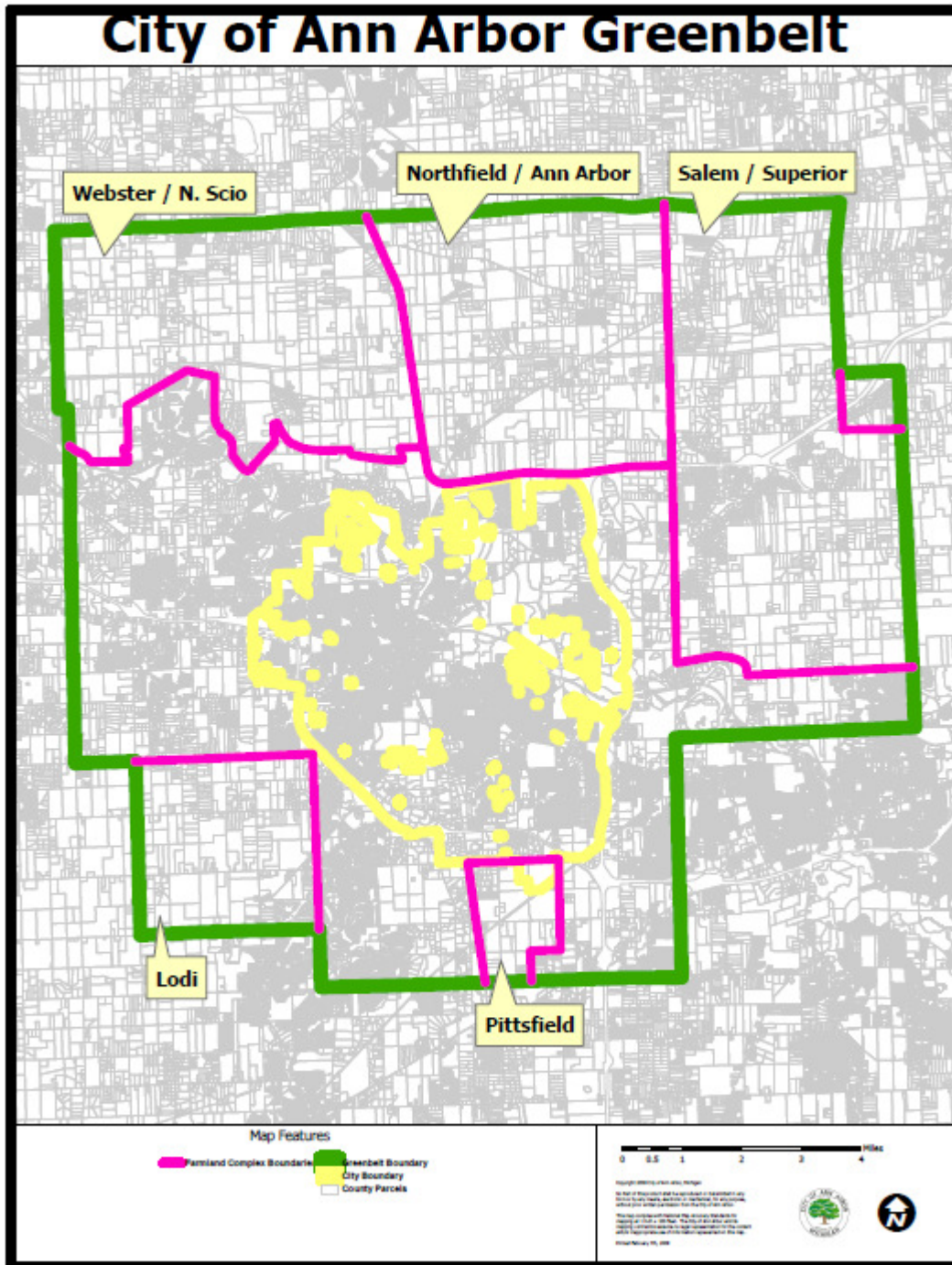
This fiscal year, the program protected an additional 125 acres of farmland and open space in the Greenbelt District and added 26 acres to the City's park system.

GREENBELT

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

As outlined in the Greenbelt's Strategic Plan, which was originally adopted in 2005, the program has focused on forming large blocks (1,000 acres or greater) of protected farmland and open space through the acquisition of easements, protecting land within the Huron River Watershed, and capitalizing on partnership opportunities. The Greenbelt identified 5 areas to concentrate acquisitions within the Greenbelt District to form these large blocks of protected land (see map below). The Commission continues to use the Strategic Plan to guide recommendations to Council on all land acquisition deals. The Greenbelt Advisory Commission updated the Strategic Plan in 2012 to include broader information on agriculture in Washtenaw County, additional

details on each of the strategic plan blocks, and priority on community outreach on the program.



Strategic Plan Block	Acres Protected
Webster / Scio	1,314
Northfield / Ann Arbor	1,513
Salem / Superior	819
Lodi	337
Pittsfield	89
<i>Purchases Outside St. Plan Blocks</i>	<i>258</i>
Total:	4,334

Note: These figures are for the Greenbelt related purchases only and do not take into consideration properties protected by other agencies which the Greenbelt was not involved.

The Greenbelt Advisory Commission modified the Strategic Plan in 2008 to also include language to acknowledge the increased interest from owners (and prospective owners) of small farms and local food producers. Prior to 2008, the Greenbelt focused on larger farms – 40 acres or greater – that were eligible for Farm and Ranch Land Protection (FRPP) grant funding. The Greenbelt continues to explore ways that the program may also be a viable option for smaller farms that are producing for the direct market in the Ann Arbor area in order to protect a diversity of types of agricultural properties in the area.

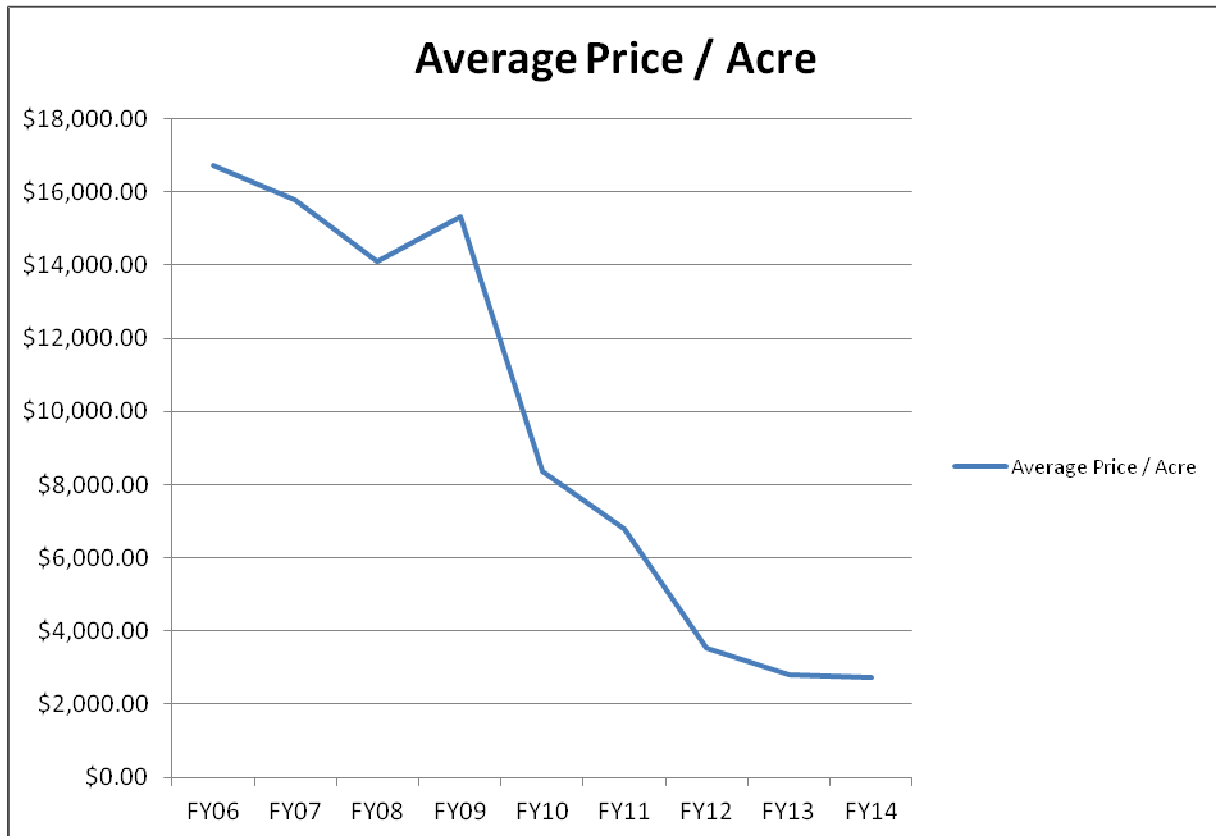
The Greenbelt Advisory Commission also continues to rank the protection of the Huron River as another top priority for land acquisitions. The Huron River is an important recreational and natural resource in the Ann Arbor area. Applications received either along the Huron River or which contain tributaries of the Huron River will be a priority for the Greenbelt, recognizing the significance of the Huron River to the Ann Arbor residents as their primary source of drinking water.

The Greenbelt scoring criteria awards points to applications that provide scenic views, and visibility from major corridors frequently traveled by Ann Arbor residents. Examples of these major corridors are along the highways that surround the city, which are often an entryway into the City, or routes that are frequented by cyclists. The scenic value of each of the applications

will continue to be a part of the scoring criteria. Furthermore, the strategic blocks encompass major corridors, so an added benefit of forming large blocks of protected land will be preserving critical viewsheds within the Greenbelt District.

LAND ACQUISITIONS

Over the last 6 years, the Greenbelt has witnessed significant changes within the local economy and real estate market, which has had an effect on land acquisition transactions. The downturn in the real estate market that began in 2007/2008 resulted in fewer developers buying land in the area and an increase in properties on the market. Furthermore, the properties were remaining on the market for a longer period of time. Ultimately, this equated to appraised values for development rights decreasing from an average of \$16,000 / acre to about \$2,700 / acre, as depicted on the graph below.



Over the last year, the market has seen some recovery, especially within the Ann Arbor area. According to the Ann Arbor Area Board of Realtors, average home sales prices in Washtenaw County in 2013 had increased to \$250,000, up from an average of \$180,000 in 2009. In addition, developers, such as Toll Brothers and Biltmore, who have been inactive in the area over the last several years, are returning to the area. Although some of these projects are in

the very preliminary phase, several large developments are currently underway in the Greenbelt District, ranging between 26 units up to almost 500 units.

As of the end of the fiscal year, the Greenbelt Program has helped to protect 4,334 acres on working farms and natural areas (see map below of completed projects). These properties have a total fair market value of roughly \$40.5 million, with a cost to the Ann Arbor taxpayers of \$19.6 million. Thus, the City has contributed roughly 48% of the funds towards land acquisition projects, and the remaining funds have been secured from USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) grants, local partners, or landowner donations. In many cases, matching funds are secured through a variety of sources.

During the fiscal year 2013-2014 the Greenbelt Program completed 4 acquisitions, protecting a total of 125 acres of working farmland. These transactions include the following:

- **Partnership with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation:** The Greenbelt program partnered with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation on the purchase of 2 additional parcels, adjacent to the existing Goodrich Nature Preserve (owned by the County) and Marshall Park (owned by the City). In addition to purchasing the 2 parcels, which the Greenbelt was a partner, Washtenaw County Parks also purchased the 54-acre parcel, immediately to the west of Marshall Park, with grant funds from the Michigan Trust Fund. The two parcels of land with Greenbelt funds – one 12-acre parcel and one 5-acre parcel – add to a large block of preserved land. The 12-acre parcel is adjacent to the Goodrich Preserve, which was already owned and managed by Washtenaw County Parks. The 5-acre parcel provides connectivity from Marshall Park to Horner McLaughlin Woods, owned by University of Michigan and subsequently to the Goodrich Preserve. Collectively, these properties consist of more than 300 acres of contiguous, publicly accessible land. Both properties are located in a block of additional open space properties owned and managed by the County, the University of Michigan and the City of Ann Arbor.
- **Partner with Scio Township:** The Greenbelt partnered with Scio Township on purchase of development rights easement on 24-acre farmland property Thomas and Eleanor Moore. The property is in proximity to the Huron River and the Greenbelt was able to leverage the City funds through a partnership with Scio Township
- **Partnership with Scio Township:** The Greenbelt partnered with Scio Township on purchase of development rights easement on a 64-acre farmland property, owned by Maria E. White. The property is in proximity to other properties already protected and the Greenbelt was able to leverage the City funds through a partnership with Scio Township.

- ***Jane Sheldon and Robert Wolf Farm:*** The Greenbelt completed a purchase of development rights easement on the 20-acre property. The property is located in Webster Township, adjacent to a large block - over 1,000 acres - of land already protected by the Greenbelt and other local partners, and is located in one of the areas designated by the Greenbelt Commission as a priority for farmland preservation in their Strategic Plan. Webster Township made a \$2,000 contribution toward the purchase, and a portion of the donation from Cherry Republic was also used as match to the City's funds. The landowners also made a partial donation of the value of the easement.

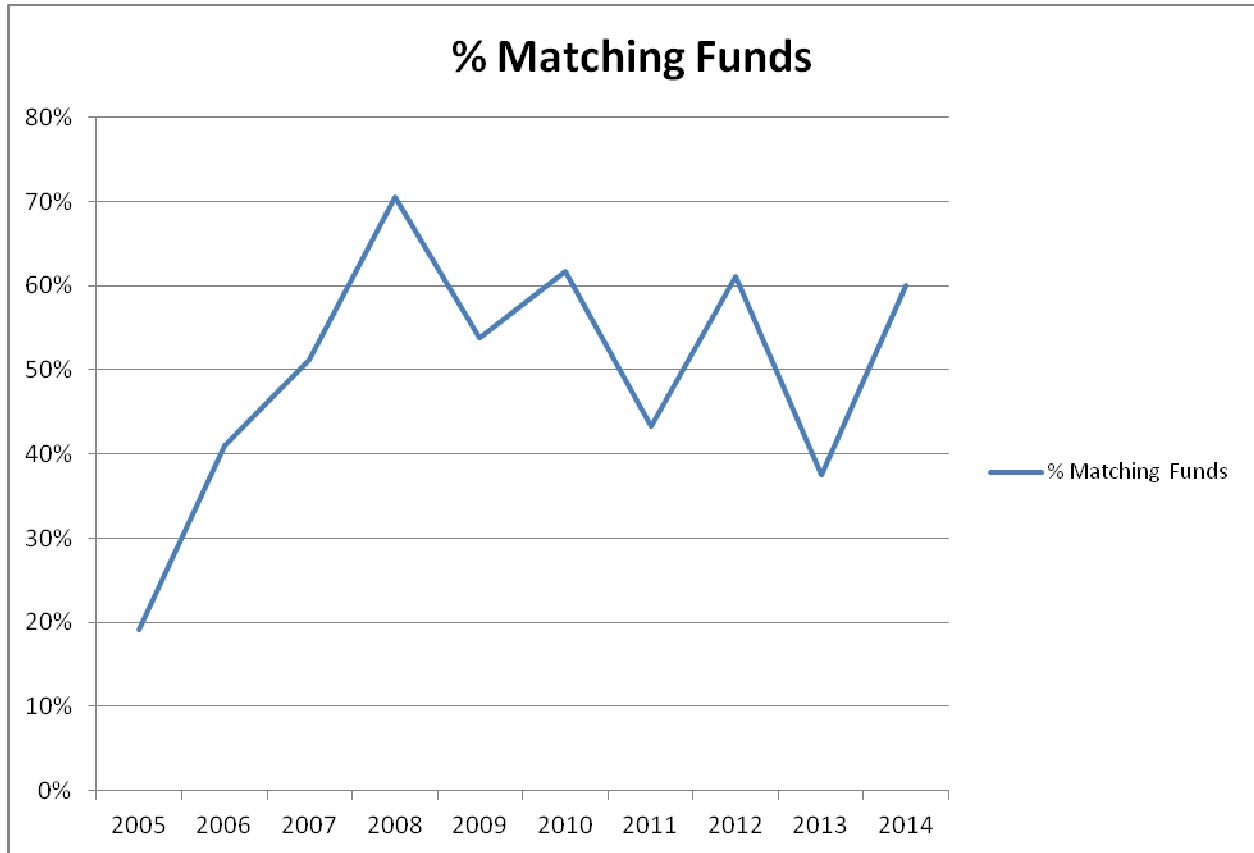
LEVERAGING FUNDS

FARM AND RANCHLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM (FRPP)

This year, Congress passed a new Farm Bill. Under this new Farm Bill, all conservation easement programs have been consolidated under the "Agriculture Conservation Easement Program" (ACEP). No applications were submitted during this grant cycle. The Greenbelt is working on completing 2 transactions that were awarded funds in 2013 and hope to close by the end of the calendar year 2014.

LOCAL PARTNERS

As discussed above, the Greenbelt program partnered with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation, Scio Township, and Webster Township for transactions completed this fiscal year. In addition, donations were allocated from Cherry Republic and landowners. In total, partners contributed just over \$450,000 toward the purchases completed this year.



The chart above shows the average percent matching funds the Greenbelt has received annually, since the beginning of the millage. Matching funds include landowner donations, USDA Farm and Ranchland grants, Washtenaw County, Townships and local land conservancies.

PUBLIC AND LANDOWNER OUTREACH

In addition to outreach to landowners within the Greenbelt District, the Greenbelt Commission and staff made strides in reaching out to the general Ann Arbor public. The Greenbelt continues to work with many landowners who have protected their properties to put up signs at Greenbelt properties. In addition, this fiscal year the Greenbelt organized its third annual Bus Tour for participants to visit Greenbelt properties, meet local partners and landowners who have participated in the program. Commissioners and staff have also participated in many local events to spread the word about the Greenbelt, such as the HomeGrown Festival, the Mayor’s Green Fair and hosted an evening event at the downtown Ann Arbor Library.

PRESERVE WASHTENAW

Preserve Washtenaw is a collaborative group consisting of public agencies and private organizations in Washtenaw County, focused on land preservation. Preserve Washtenaw has informally been meeting for over 7 years. The City is an active member of Preserve

Washtenaw. The purpose of Preserve Washtenaw is to serve as a coordinating body for ongoing public and private land protection efforts, ensuring the highest possible level of cooperation and communication, and least possible amount of duplication and overlap. The group hopes to provide a virtual single point of entry for landowners interested in land protection and/or stewardship to reduce confusion for landowners. The partners include Legacy Land Conservancy, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Natural Area Program, Raisin Valley Land Trust, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, Ann Arbor Township, Webster Township, Scio Township, and the City of Ann Arbor.

FINANCIAL SPREADSHEET

See Appendix A for detailed financial reports.

STEWARDSHIP FUNDS

For each conservation easement that is purchased, approximately \$23,000 is set aside in a separate endowment fund. These endowment funds are to cover the annual monitoring requirements in perpetuity and enforcement obligations of any violations on the easements. To date, a total of \$675,190 is in the Greenbelt's endowment fund to cover future costs for enforcement or monitoring of easements.

STATUS OF GOALS FOR 2013-2014

BUILDING BLOCKS OF PROTECTED PROPERTIES

- *Complete at least 3 transactions this year in the Greenbelt's strategic plan blocks.* As noted above, the Greenbelt completed 4 transactions, adding 125 acres of protected land to the Greenbelt.

LEVERAGING FUNDS

- *Apply for USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program grant funds on at least 3 properties.* The Greenbelt recommended submitting applications on 2 properties. However, the landowner did not wish to continue with the application, so the Greenbelt was unable to submit any applications this year.
- *Secure at least 20% matching funds on all transactions completed.* Between 20% and 80% matching funds were received on transactions completed this year, for an average of 60% for the fiscal year.
- *Secure partners for any other transactions.* Every transaction completed had local partners including landowner donations, township donations or contribution from local business, Cherry Republic.

OUTREACH

- *Organize annual Bus Tour in fall 2013 and schedule tour for next year.* Bus tour took place in September 2013.
- *Finalize branding effort and place signs on all properties, based on landowners' willingness.* Branding effort complete. Signs have been ordered for properties.
- *Have table at HomeGrown Festival and any other event, as appropriate.* The Greenbelt participated in HomeGrown Festival.
- *Implement Land Registry Program.* Information on the program was provided to Council and staff has begun to meet with landowners interested in the Registry Program.

GOALS FOR 2014-2015

BUILDING BLOCKS OF PROTECTED PROPERTIES

- *Complete at least 3 transactions this year in the Greenbelt's strategic plan blocks..*

LEVERAGING FUNDS

- *Apply for USDA Agriculture Conservation Easement grant funds on at least 1 property.*
- *Secure at least 20% matching funds on all transactions completed.*
- *Secure partners for any other transactions.*

OUTREACH

- *Organize annual Bus Tour in fall 2014 and schedule tour for next year.*
- *Finalize signs on all properties, based on landowners' willingness.*
- *Finalize Outreach and Communication Plan with subcommittee.*
- *Have table at HomeGrown Festival and any other event, as appropriate.*
- *Implement Land Registry Program.*

PARK LAND ACQUISITIONS

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The PROS Plan identifies the following criteria for evaluating future parkland acquisitions. Please refer to the PROS Plan for more details on each criteria.

1. City-wide System Balance / Geographic Distribution as well as Open Space Convenient to Each Neighborhood
2. Natural Resource Protection
3. Open Space and Green Space Imagery/Aesthetics
4. Enhance Access and Linkage
5. Protection of the Huron River, Watersheds, and Water Quality
6. Recreation Value and Suitability for Intended Use
7. Method of Acquisition/Direct Costs
8. Provides for Future Needs/Anticipates Growth
9. Long-Term Development and Maintenance Costs

LAND PROTECTION

The City of Ann Arbor received two additional park properties as donations this year, adding approximately 26 acres of additional parkland to the City.

William Martin donated 2.2 acres as an addition to the Stapp Nature Area. The 2.2 acre parcel contains a high quality woods, extended from the adjacent Stapp Nature Area, already owned by the City of Ann Arbor. Stapp Nature Area was purchased from William and Sally Martin approximately 10 years ago. The property is also in proximity to the Leslie Golf Course and Leslie Woods Nature Area. The property is planned to remain a natural area and will be maintained in conjunction with the Stapp Nature Area.

In addition, the 24-acre property formerly owned by Donald and Earldine Brokaw was donated to the City of Ann Arbor. The property was owned by the Joseph Donald Brokaw and Earldine R. Brokaw Foundation, nonprofit corporation, established as a charitable trust with the primary purpose to receive and administer funds for operating a park for the use of the general public. Both Mr. and Mrs. Brokaw had passed and the property was donated to the City as an addition to the City's park system, consistent with the mission of the Foundation established by Mr. and Mrs. Brokaw. An endowment was donated to the City for upkeep and management of the site. The property is a mix of open space and woods and is located along Huron River Drive.

FINANCIAL SPREADSHEET

See Appendix A for details.

STATUS OF GOALS FOR 2013 – 2014

- *Complete 1 – 2 transactions.* As noted above, the City parks accepted the donation of 2 new parcels of land.

GOALS FOR 2014 – 2015

- *Complete 1 – 2 transactions.*
- *Complete ranking system for evaluation of park acquisition applications.*

Appendix A: Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Financial Report