

Burlington residents form trust to save land from developers

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BURLINGTON — Several local residents worried about the pace of recent growth have formed a land trust to help save some of the town's woodlands, meadows and ridges for future generations.

The Burlington Land Trust Inc. will join about 100 similar groups throughout the state, including those in Farmington, Avon, Canton and Harwinton.

No single event led to the formation of Burlington's land trust, said Sherwood Anderson, a Bristol attorney and secretary for the trust.

"I think it's just that all the towns around Burlington have land trusts," he said. "Burlington is fast being developed, especially in recent years."

The non-profit group will hold its first public meeting June 8 at 7:30 p.m. in town hall. Karl Wagener of the state Council on Environmental Quality; Jeffrey Campbell, a forester with the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service; and Lansford Perry, a member of the Canton Land Conservation Trust, will speak.

To protect open space, the trust seeks donations of land. The trust also will buy land with the proceeds from yearly dues and donations, and will seek conservation easements from developers.

Land it acquires would be open to the public for passive recreational use, such as hiking, nature watching or fishing, Anderson said. The group has no plans to acquire specific parcels, he said.

To date, about 18,000 acres have been preserved by the roughly 100 land trusts operating in Connecticut, said Lesley Olsen, land-protection assistant with the state chapter of the Nature Con-

servancy, which often works with local groups.

Land it acquires would be open to the public for recreational use, such as hiking, nature watching or fishing.

The Nature Conservancy seeks to protect the habitats of threatened and endangered species of plants and animals throughout the nation, and while it does take donations of land, the land must have value as species habitat. Otherwise, the land may be sold with the donator's permission to raise cash to preserve valuable habitats, Olsen said.

The local land trust often will take land the conservancy cannot use. The conservancy often directs landowners to local land trusts, as well as provide other information to local groups.

Olsen said land-trust acquisitions can range from ball fields and farms to wood lots and meadows.

The Burlington land trust was started after several residents began meeting in February. Officers have been selected and the group is looking for members.

W. Joseph Campbell, a reporter on The Courant's national desk, is president of the land trust. Margaret Schuster, a member of the town's inland wetlands and watercourses commission, is vice president. Arnold DePascale is treasurer.

Dues for membership in the trust have been set at \$10 per year for regular members, \$50 for sponsoring members and \$1,000 for life members, Anderson said.