

Conservation Easements: Preserving Land, Open Space, and Rural Character in Danby

The Danby Conservation Easement Template document can be viewed and downloaded from the Town of Danby website at danby.ny.gov, or by contacting the Danby Town Clerk at (607) 277-4788, clerkoffice@danby.ny.gov or at the Town Hall, 1830 Danby Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

What is a conservation easement?

These voluntary legal agreements protect land, open space, and rural character. Because they are permanent, conservation easements are one of the most powerful tools for protecting land in regions such as ours, where most land is privately owned. And because they are voluntary, conservation easements are among the most flexible tools for protecting land. Today conservation easements protect millions of acres of America's farmland and natural areas.

How could a conservation easement help me protect my land?

A land conservation organization – in this case, the Town of Danby – uses a conservation easement template to help you identify the conservation values of your land, be it farmland or forests, streams or meadows. This template is modified to protect the values you prize the most.

Once you and the town have agreed on the terms, you would grant the easement to the town. The town is responsible – with your cooperation, of course – for ensuring that these conservation values are adequately protected.

The Conservation Advisory Council – the CAC – acts on the town's behalf to negotiate and administer the easement. You retain title and ownership of the land.

What rights would I give up?

At a minimum, conservation easements prevent subdivision and residential development. Additional restrictions in the template focus on protecting the land resource from irreversible degradation while minimizing limitations on traditional uses of the land for agriculture, recreation, and hunting. The Town is poorly positioned to enforce special restrictions. Property owners with very special properties who seek permanent protection for their unique features would be better served by working with the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

Can the town sell the development rights it holds?

No. Once gifted to the town, they are legally extinguished.

Would the public have the right to enter my land?

Conservation easements don't provide public access unless that's what you want. But once you factor in roadside views, natural areas, open space, and rural character, others – whether your neighbors or passersby – benefit even so.

Would negotiations for a conservation easement be public?

Negotiations can be confidential if you want them to be. They can be public if you are willing. The end result becomes public once the Town Board is asked to accept the donation, and like any other land contract, easements are filed with the County Clerk and are a part of the public record.

Interested in a conservation easement for your land?

Danby's Conservation Advisory Council can help. Please email the CAC at cac@danby.ny.gov