



# North Andover, MA, First to Tap CPA Funds

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Massachusetts*

**North Andover, Massachusetts:** This week, North Andover became the first community in the Commonwealth to utilize funds under the new Community Preservation Act when Town Meeting voters approved spending \$1.51 million to purchase 27-acre Carter Hill. The vote was hailed by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit organization that is a leading member of the Community Preservation Coalition and is assisting North Andover with the Carter Hill project.

"North Andover continues to be in the vanguard," said TPL regional director Whitney Hatch. "In March, North Andover became the second town in Massachusetts to pass the Community Preservation Act through a ballot vote, and on Tuesday night it became the first to actually benefit from the Act. More communities are following suit every day—to date, 28 communities have adopted the Act and seven more ballot votes will be held by the end of May."

"This is exactly what I envisioned when I started working on growth issues as a legislator 15 years ago," said Bob Durand, Secretary of Environmental Affairs. "With this purchase, North Andover is saving a scenic vista for people to enjoy for all time, increasing the environmental value of adjacent protected land and protecting a drinking water supply."

Brad Wakeman of the North Andover Community Preservation Committee said, "The Carter Hill project is particularly exciting because it is the first town acquisition with Community Preservation Funds. North Andover has a solid history of land protection, but the town has never before had a permanent source of funds dedicated to projects like Carter Hill. With the Community Preservation Fund in place, we will be able to accomplish a great deal in the coming years."

A scenic mix of rolling hay fields and woodlands, Carter Hill lies adjacent to the 105-acre Mazurenko Farm, which North Andover purchased in 1988. Carter Hill drains directly into Lake Cochichewick, which is the sole source of drinking water for North Andover and the largest body of fresh water in Essex County. In March, TPL reached an agreement to purchase the property, preventing imminent development and providing the town time to vote on the purchase of the property. With Town Meeting approval in place, TPL plans to transfer the Carter Hill property to the town of North Andover for permanent protection in July.

The Community Preservation Act, which became law in December, grants Massachusetts' 351 cities and towns the right to raise local property taxes to fund land conservation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. It also provides roughly \$26 million annually in matching funds to participating communities.

In order for a municipality to qualify for state matching funds, the legislative body (e.g. Town Meeting or City Council) must vote to place a property tax surcharge of no more than 3 percent on the ballot. Alternatively, CPA may be placed on the ballot through a petition signed by at least 5 percent of the city or town's registered voters. Once CPA is placed on the ballot, local voters must then vote to approve it. Participating cities and towns can opt out of CPA after five years and end the surcharge.

A minimum of 10 percent of the annual revenues raised through the surcharge must be used for each of three core community concerns: land protection, historic preservation, and affordable housing. The remaining 70 percent can be allocated for any combination of these three uses. CPA exempts certain taxpayers from the property tax surcharge, including the disabled, veterans and the surviving spouses of veterans. Local governments may also choose from several allowable exemptions.

The Trust for Public Land is a national conservation organization dedicated to protecting land for people to enjoy as parks and open space. Since 1972, TPL has protected more than 1.2 million acres nationwide, including nearly 75,000 acres in New England. The Wall Street Journal's Smart Money Magazine recently named TPL the nation's most efficient large conservation charity, based on the percentage of funds dedicated to programs.