

SEED PROJECT IDEA

Resilient Land Acquisition

The following is a project idea for inspiration—ultimately, the Seed Project you choose should be based on your community's climate resilience priorities. Remember that you will have up to \$50,000 to spend on the Seed Project and about 9 to 10 months to accomplish it, so you may need to carve out a piece of the following action to fit those guidelines, and then work together on a plan for financing the next phase. This project sheet provides a suggestion for which tasks might be completed within the scope of a Seed Project; however, communities may have different starting points or capacity to advance projects and should decide which scope is achievable for them.

Project Description:

This project intends to identify opportunities for land acquisition to promote community climate resilience. In this project, land acquisition means a parcel of land is purchased by a municipal agency, state agency, Tribe, land trust, or other organization, such that ownership (and rights) transfers from the former titleholder to the organization making the acquisition. Land acquisition can be part of a broader resilience strategy.

Resilient land acquisition can enhance the protection of environmental ecosystems and resources such as drinking water supplies; it can also provide equitable access to recreation and outdoor spaces and align with a community's Open Space and Recreation Plan. Some strategies focus on cooling, stormwater and floodwater mitigation, and nature-based solutions or low impact development, while others focus on connecting the network of forests to provide safe passage for wildlife migratory routes. Resilient lands benefit flora and fauna, ensure clean air and water, protect communities from flooding, and preserve open green spaces. Working at a regional scale may support more efficient use of funding and stakeholder time, and meaningful coordination for communities that share certain natural resources or have strong cultural or economic ties.

As the MVP 2.0 Equity and Climate Justice Learning Series modules demonstrate, social resilience is foundational to overall community resilience, which makes it important to consider land acquisition projects with a climate justice lens. Many land acquisition projects have deprioritized Environmental Justice (EJ) and other priority populations. Equitable land acquisition requires that the following kinds of questions that consider the past, present, and future impacts of the acquisition are asked at each step of the process:

- Beyond ecological benefits, how will the conservation of this parcel benefit everyone, including those in adjacent communities?
- How will conserving a specific land parcel impact housing affordability? Will it remove a

parcel that is actually better suited for housing?

- If open to the public, will it be accessible by public transport?
- How will new visitors be welcomed to the land?
- Does the land have cultural significance to a Tribe who may actually be better suited at stewarding the land and can you work with them to make that happen?

High-level List of Potential Project Tasks:

1. **Form a project team and define objectives:** Engage a project team to develop guiding principles and objectives for a resilient land acquisition strategy that have a strong focus on social equity. These objectives will set the tone for how your team is considering land acquisition. If you and your team are unfamiliar with how land acquisition, environmental justice, and social resiliency intersect, building out this knowledge could be a central task in your project. The project team should include members from EJ and other priority populations; EJ advocates and community liaisons; Tribes, and those who work and live adjacent to potential sites; among others. Paid community liaisons can assist with outreach and ensuring that the objectives reflect the needs and priorities of EJ and other priority populations. Technical vendors, including community planners, land trusts, and ecologists, can assist with the project analysis and strategy development.
2. **Assess opportunity:** Through climate data mapping (e.g., [Resilient MA Map Viewer](#), the [Nature Conservancy Resilient Land Mapping Tool](#)), takeaways from GEAR explorations, and property analysis, identify critical parcels of land to consider for resilient land acquisition. Parcels may be within a current or projected future floodplain, forested area, agricultural land, or within a heat island. Analyze property ownership, parcel value, available funding, potential partners (land trust), zoning, proximity to other municipal resources, proximity to EJ and other priority populations, etc. Analysis should also assess whether certain parcels are better suited to Indigenous stewardship, in which case the project could be a conduit to returning the land to the Tribe, and whether there are opportunities to benefit EJ neighborhoods in the municipality and the region in which it is situated. It should also be considered if acquiring certain land parcels will have impacts on affordable housing or food production.
3. **Develop land acquisition strategy:** Create a preliminary list of parcels, reasons for acquisition, and an implementation timeline based on priority. When developing this acquisition strategy, consider ownership, property value, funding, land use, history, proximity to other municipal resources, environmental concerns, and social resilience benefits of acquisition.
4. **Rank parcels:** With involvement of the project team including municipal staff, community members, and other key stakeholders, identify any red flags (e.g., title issues, easements, liens, contamination). Complete site visits as necessary. Remember to consider future land management and improvement costs when developing a strategy and prioritizing parcels. Discuss whether the land will be put under a conservation restriction and whether a Cultural Respect Easement is appropriate. Other options and legal factors may be important to consider for a given community. A checklist can be helpful when considering the various parcels and prioritization of acquisition.
5. **Engage the community:** Engage the community on what a resilient land acquisition strategy is, and why it is important (e.g., protection of natural resources, water resources, open space, affordable housing, public health, extreme weather, and expanding access to open spaces). In

the process of engagement, essential knowledge is gained from the community about how they would like to see land used, and how they would like to interact with public spaces. Potential engagement methods include the following:

- Presentations
- School field trips
- Nature walks
- Open house workshops
- Digital surveys and online tools (e.g., website, StoryMap)
- Recorded videos
- Flyers
- Booths at festivals/outdoor programming

Consider offering programming in multiple locations, various times of day, and by different methods to maximize participation from the community. Offer translation/interpretive services as needed. Engage community members to further identify strategic land parcels not previously identified for resilient land acquisition and affirm the parcel list as prioritized.

Seed Project ends – Subsequent tasks likely to be completed in future project phases

6. **Identify funding and partnerships:** Explore funding opportunities to acquire properties identified in the resilient land acquisition strategy. Consider public/private partnerships with community-based non-profit organizations such as land trusts. Identify sources such as conservation and agricultural land tax credits, state grants (includes conservation, preservation, and restoration funding), local support, and affordable housing incentives, among others).
7. **Parcel selection and appraisal:** Based on prioritization in the strategy and the funding investigation above, identify a parcel to acquire and conduct an appraisal. Note that MVP Action Grant applications must be accompanied by an [appraisal that meets EEA standards](#) to justify the grant request.
8. **Acquisition:** Receive necessary approvals to proceed to the acquisition phase. Negotiate and prepare a letter of intent and purchase agreement. Perform due diligence (title investigation, environmental inspection, survey). Finalize forms and legal work and complete transaction.