

The River Corridor

The Conservancy's vision for this corridor is to preserve the natural beauty of the land on both sides of the Chagrin River and to attempt to minimize development through conservation easements and riparian setbacks. One seventh of the Chagrin River's 51-mile length passes through our community. The Gates Mills portion of this watershed is a 175-square-mile network of tributaries, which collect and transfer this runoff to the river as it travels through our village.

Unique issues related to the preservation of the River Corridor include the significant annual erosion of the riverbanks. This may be due to shifting of the riverbank throughout the year from the powerful forces of the Chagrin River or can be the result of development activity in close proximity to these banks. These changes damage riparian areas, the naturally vegetated hillsides, meadows and marches on either side of the river, and additionally affect animal, bird and fish populations living in those riparian areas. Establishing wider riparian setbacks and planting trees and special vegetation native to the river, helps to stabilize stream banks, limits erosion, reduces flood size flows and/or filter and settle out runoff pollutants.

Gates Mills is an integral part of the larger geographical landscape and a major contributor of the Chagrin River Watershed. As John Reinier, Wetland Ecologist with the Cleveland Metroparks stated, "When you look at Cuyahoga County, this eastern third here along the Chagrin River Valley, is one of the few places where there's a lot of green space left. So, protecting these places through conservation easements is just one of the best tools. If you're a property owner, you can ensure that that land stays natural into the future and doesn't become a subdivision with asphalt, because from a watershed perspective, anytime that rain hits asphalt, it just shoots off into pipes and causes all kinds of erosion issues downstream."

With a conservation easement, the property owner makes an agreement with a conservator to permanently limit possible uses of the land to protect the land's conservation values. The current owner is still allowed to own and use their land, retain the right to sell it, or pass it down to their heirs. The restrictions of the easement stay in place, even when the land is inherited or sold.

We take our stewardship responsibility seriously, so we hope that you will reach out to us with your riparian questions, and that you will consider a long-term preservation plan for your property as well.