

Establishing the Land Trust

In the late 1980's, there was 2.5-acre minimum lot zoning in the Village. Concerns that large open spaces were being carved up into smaller lots led the Village leadership to increase the minimum zoning for home lots to five acres. The development of the Land Trust further allowed some of these large properties that had been subdivided and grandfathered in to smaller lots to be acquired by a Land Trust, thereby preserving the rural aspect of the village.

An organizing committee was formed under the leadership of Mayor Dan Collister and temporary chairman Fred Suppes. The Environmental Committee, attendees at the public meeting and representative leaders of all areas throughout the village, formed a committee of about 45 residents, who met and resolved to form the "Gates Mills Land Trust".

On August 24th, 1988, Mayor Collister proposed a slate of trustees comprised of Fred Suppes, Ray Burke, Bob Reitman, Tom Quintrell, Peter Hellman, Don Priis, Larry Salibra, and Lorinda Collister. The decision was also made to establish the new conservancy as a supporting organization of the Village and was named the Gates Mills Land Conservancy.

The first trustee meeting was held on February 13, 1989. The treasurer, Bob Reitman, reported an account balance of \$4,700 due to anonymous gift of \$5,000 in seed funding for the Conservancy that is credited to Don Perris. At a meeting on May 15th 1989, the board increased its trustees from 9 to 12 with the additions of Tom Liederbach, Bill Stepanek, and Tinkham Veale. Tom Quintrell was elected President of the Board on August 7th, 1989. Also at this meeting, Councilman Chris Manners presented a Village Master Plan and a list of "critical properties" for protection was created.

The initial properties considered in 1989 were as follows:

Burrows, Thelma Smith, Sedgwick, Svette, Soltz, Jones-Griesinger and Indian Wells. All of these properties were eventually protected. Indian Wells, which became Village Trails off of Wilson Mills Road, was a 50-acre property. This property was initially a particular disappointment to the Conservancy when a developer outbid them by nearly \$10 million. The developer, Village Trails Development Co., eventually granted conservation easements on the parcels located in Gates Mills. The Burrows property, 25 acres off of Mayfield, opposite Fox Hill Drive was acquired many years later by the Jeckering's and then placed under conservation easement.