

Dorchester County Greenbelt Program FAQs

General Information

Q1: What is the Dorchester County Greenbelt Program?

A: The Dorchester County Greenbelt Program is an initiative aimed at preserving natural areas, protecting wildlife habitats, promoting sustainable land use, and enhancing the quality of life for residents. The program funds the acquisition and preservation of greenspaces and supports projects that align with these goals.

Q2: What is a Greenbelt?

A: A Greenbelt is a designated area of protected open land around urban areas, intended to limit urban sprawl, preserve the natural environment, and provide recreational areas for residents. Greenbelts help maintain the ecological balance and provide spaces for wildlife habitats, agriculture, and outdoor activities.

Q3: Why was the Greenbelt Program created?

A: The program was created in 2024 to safeguard Dorchester County's natural resources, ensure the availability of open spaces for recreation and enjoyment, and maintain the ecological health of the region. It is part of the County's commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Q4: Who oversees the Greenbelt Program?

A: The program is overseen by Dorchester County's Planning and Zoning Department and the Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission which consists of county officials, conservation experts, and community representatives. This commission provides strategic direction and ensures the program's goals are met effectively. County Council is the final decision maker regarding the disposition of Greenbelt funds.

Q5: What is the Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission?

A: On Monday, April 17, 2023, Dorchester County Council adopted Ordinance 23-07 creating the Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission consisting of seven members appointed by the County Council. The Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission reviews eligible applicant projects and makes recommendations to County Council for the expenditure of Greenbelt funding. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission, its members, and their duties and responsibilities.

Q6: How is the Greenbelt Program funded? Where does the money come from?

A: The Greenbelt Program is funded by \$35,000,000 allocated by the 2022 Dorchester County One-Cent Sales and Use Tax Referendum. These funds are dedicated to acquiring and preserving greenspaces in Dorchester County.

Q7: What is the Dorchester County Greenbelt Master Plan?

A: The 2024 Greenbelt Master Plan was developed through the collaborative efforts of Dorchester County staff, the Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission, and contracted consultants Weston & Sampson and Audubon South Carolina, using feedback from the citizens of Dorchester County. Approved by the County Council on May 20, 2024, the plan aims to provide comprehensive guidelines and tools for protecting, purchasing, and improving greenspaces and passive recreational sites in Dorchester County. To view a copy of Dorchester County's Greenbelt Master Plan, click [here](#).

Eligibility and Application

Q8: Who is eligible to apply for Greenbelt Funds?

A: Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, government entities, community groups, and private landowners committed to conservation efforts. Projects must be located within Dorchester County.

Q9: How can I apply for Greenbelt Funds?

A: In order to start the application process, all applicants are required to submit a *Notice of Intent* form and have a preliminary project meeting with Greenbelt County

Staff. During this meeting, County Staff will provide interested parties with detailed instructions about the online application and review process. The Notice of Intent form can be found on the County's website or by clicking [here](#).

Q10: What is the application deadline?

A: Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and are considered complete once Dorchester County staff receives a completed online application and all appropriate accompanying documents. The application will then be scheduled for the next available Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission Project review slot at their monthly meetings.

Q11: What documents are required for the application?

A: Required documents typically include a *Notice of Intent* form, a completed online application form, a detailed project proposal, deeds, maps, proof of non-profit status (if applicable), and letters of support or endorsement. Specific requirements are outlined in the application guide provided to applicants after meeting with County Greenbelt Staff.

Q12: Who decides who gets Greenbelt funding?

A: Funding decisions are made by County Council based on the advice given by the Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission and criteria such as the project's alignment with the program's goals, its potential environmental impact, community benefits, feasibility, and the applicant's capacity to successfully complete the project.

Funding and Property Acquisition

Q13: What kinds of properties can be purchased?

A: The program can purchase properties significant for conservation, including natural habitats, wetlands, forests, agricultural lands, and areas that provide passive recreational opportunities such as hiking, birdwatching, and kayaking. The goal is to protect and preserve these lands for public benefit and ecological health.

Q14: Can my property be bought as part of the Greenbelt Program?

A: Yes, if your property meets the criteria for conservation and aligns with the goals of the Greenbelt Program, it may be *considered* for purchase. Property owners interested in selling their land for conservation should contact the program office to discuss eligibility and the evaluation process.

Q15: What if I want to conserve my property to be part of Dorchester County's Greenbelt, but I wish to retain ownership?

A: You may be able to place your property into a conservation easement, a special legal agreement that allows you to retain ownership of the property while permanently limiting its development to conserve it. Conservation easements provide a unique opportunity for landowners interested in environmental conservation and potential tax benefits.

Q16: How is the land that is purchased used?

A: Purchased land is used for various conservation purposes, including protecting wildlife habitats, restoring natural ecosystems, creating public parks and trails, and maintaining open spaces for agriculture. These lands are preserved to ensure long-term ecological health and public enjoyment.

Q17: Can the land be resold later?

A: Generally, land acquired through the Greenbelt Program is preserved in perpetuity and is not intended to be resold. The primary goal is to maintain these lands for conservation and public use indefinitely. Land with a Greenbelt Program easement can be sold but the easement and associated conditions will convey with the property.

Benefits and Community Involvement

Q18: How does the Greenbelt Program benefit Dorchester County?

A: The Greenbelt Program benefits Dorchester County by preserving natural landscapes, enhancing biodiversity, providing recreational spaces, promoting sustainable land use, and improving the overall quality of life for residents. It helps protect the environment, supports local economies through eco-tourism, and fosters a connection between the community and nature.

Q19: How can I get involved/help?

A: There are several ways to get involved with the Greenbelt Program:

- Volunteer for conservation projects and community events.
- Advocate for conservation efforts within your community.
- Attend public meetings and provide input on Greenbelt policies and projects.
- Stay informed about the program's activities and spread awareness.

This FAQ page is designed to provide comprehensive information about the Dorchester County Greenbelt Program and guide potential applicants through the application process. For detailed instructions, specific requirements, and any other questions regarding the Greenbelt Program, please contact the Dorchester County Planning and Zoning Department at (843) 832-0020 or DCGreenBelt@dorchestercountysc.gov