Western Reserve Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

A special edition of the
Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter

LANDLINE

www.wrlandconservancy.org

2012 - 2013

A transforming gift builds a new home for conservation

A generous, unsolicited gift – the largest in our history – from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous has enabled Western Reserve Land Conservancy to construct its new campus and Conservation Center, a project that relocates the organization's main office to a corridor with more than 55,000 acres of preserved, connected parkland.

Rich Cochran, president and chief executive officer of the nonprofit Land Conservancy, said construction of the center, located at 3850 Chagrin River Road in Moreland Hills, would not have been possible without the gift and will help the organization further achieve its mission. Cochran said the funds are restricted for use on this project, which did not even exist at the time the anonymous donor made the offer.

He praised the donor's generosity and said the project will benefit the entire region.







"Construction of the center...will help the organization further achieve its mission." - Rich Cochran

"This astonishing gift carried with it an element of trust that is embodied in the saying, 'Of those to whom much is given, much is expected,'" Cochran said. "With the gift that enabled us to design and build our campus and Conservation Center came the responsibility to do it well – to maximize the value we provide to the community, to advance our conservation mission, to utilize the very best and most responsible design and building technologies, to invest in local providers of services and materials and to provide our community with a beautiful amenity in harmony with nature."

The campus, which is across the street from the Cleveland Metroparks Polo Field and adjacent to the village of Moreland Hills' Forest Ridge Preserve, includes a restored 5,000-square-foot Century Home with an 11,000-square-foot office addition on a 4-acre site.

Cochran said the Land Conservancy, which had been leasing space in Chester Township, now has a more appropriate base from which to do its conservation work.

It was a 2007 visit to the former Land Conservancy offices – located in cramped quarters above a fast-food restaurant and strip mall – that inspired the donor and her husband to make the offer. They stipulated that the funds were to be used only for a new Land Conservancy home, and that they would be able to approve both the site and the architect for the project.

In a statement, the donor described the gift as an opportunity to "create for the Land Conservancy a facility which would provide appropriate space and efficiency for its operations. It could be a place that reflects their values and the community they represent. A place they would be proud of."

The donation was the largest single gift ever made to the Land Conservancy.

The Land Conservancy has permanently preserved more than 30,000 acres in a 14-county region of northern Ohio. It works to preserve land with high natural resource endowments and agricultural values, including natural areas, coastlines, streams and working farmlands. In 2011, the Land Conservancy launched Thriving Communities Institute, which is helping counties around the state establish land banks and revitalize urban neighborhoods where the foreclosure crisis has left thousands of

see gift, page 2

Welcome to our homecoming


Rich Cochran

As I write this, Western Reserve Land Conservancy central office staff is moving to an amazing new campus and conservation center. Far more than a headquarters building, our new home is a land protection project and a campus for learning about conservation. These new facilities – made possible only through the unprecedented generosity of an anonymous donor – will enable us to achieve our mission to a greater extent than ever before.

Our move, in so many ways, is a homecoming. In the mid-1990s, the office of a small all-volunteer organization called Chagrin River Land Conservancy – the predecessor to today's Western Reserve Land Conservancy – was kept at the home office of Ken Lang and his son Charles on the very land in Moreland Hills we have now preserved and upon which our new facility resides.

Ken was a trustee of ours, and Charles, a youthful and very organized lawyer, served as a volunteer. When the organization hired its first employee (me), Charles helped establish our first office in the village of Chagrin Falls. A decade later, the Land Conservancy purchased three properties in Moreland Hills – one from the Langs, plus two other parcels – and partnered with the village to create Forest Ridge Preserve, now a wonderful public park along Chagrin River Road.

From humble beginnings, the Land Conservancy has grown to become one of the nation's top 10 land trusts. Working good-naturedly from cramped and inefficient offices above a fast-food restaurant in a strip center, our dedicated staff has now preserved more than 30,000 acres of northern Ohio land.

In 2007, a donor made an unsolicited offer to contribute funds to build us a permanent home after visiting those offices. She only wanted to select the architect and the location of the project. With gratitude, we agreed. Over three years, we looked at an estimated 150 properties. And then, Charles Lang sent us a beautiful letter expressing his dream that we would convert his remaining property to our permanent home. Our donor loved the idea, and the village graciously amended its zoning code to accommodate our proposed use of this breathtaking property.

More than 15 years after moving away, we return to 3850 Chagrin River Road, across the street from the Polo Field, connected to the Cleveland Metroparks, and nestled into the warm embrace of our beloved Forest Ridge Preserve. Indeed, we are coming home. Our new offices and the land they occupy are the culmination of a six-year, four-phase land preservation project that has protected more than 130 acres from certain development and created beautiful, publicly accessible preserves with more than 3.5 miles of hiking trails. This is a land protection campus and conservation center for the future, and it links with more than 55,000 acres of parkland in four counties. The building and campus embody our work, and, of course, have been built to be environmentally and economically responsible using local resources.
With deep gratitude, we thank all of the generous, creative and amazing people who made our homecoming possible, especially our anonymous donor, the Langs and the officials of Moreland Hills, led by Mayor Susan Renda.

Please come visit us and learn more about our work and why it is so important to preserve land today for future generations.

Gift continued

abandoned homes on land that can potentially be greened or restored.

Cochran said about two-thirds of the Land Conservancy's 35-member staff will be based in Moreland Hills, with the rest working from field offices in Cleveland, Akron, Oberlin, Medina, Painesville, Orwell and Orrville.

The Land Conservancy acquired the 22-acre Moreland Hills site from Charles Lang in 2010. After village voters overwhelmingly approved a ballot issue allowing conservation groups to locate in a residential district under specific conditions, the Land Conservancy retained 4 acres for its new home and allowed the rest to become part of Forest Ridge and a new village park.

"I believe having Western Reserve Land Conservancy, the largest land conservation organization in Ohio, headquartered here is a feather in Moreland Hills' cap," Moreland Hills Mayor Susan Renda said. "They have preserved the historic homestead at 3850 Chagrin River Road and are working with the village to obtain funding for the purchase of 18 acres that will be added to Forest Ridge Preserve. The results of the partnership between the Village of Moreland Hills and the Land Conservancy will benefit residents for generations."

The donation was the largest single gift ever made to the Land Conservancy.

Cochran praised Renda and the village for embracing the project.

The environmentally friendly center features geothermal heating, natural poplar bark siding, a cutting-edge stormwater retention system and insulation systems so efficient that the building required 60 percent less HVAC equipment than a conventionally built structure of the same size.

The location is also significant. In 2007, the Land Conservancy and Moreland Hills worked together to acquire 115 acres off Chagrin River Road and create the village's Forest Ridge Preserve. The new Conservation Center is adjacent to the preserve and to the Metroparks South Chagrin Reservation, from which you can get to virtually every portion of the 22,000-acre Emerald Necklace and the 33,000-acre Cuyahoga Valley National Park without stepping on unprotected land.

Trails in Forest Ridge Preserve are connected to those on the Land Conservancy campus. The paths are open for public use.

The anonymous donor selected Cleveland architect Anthony Paskevich to design the center, which reflects the tradition of New England connected farms of the mid-1800s. The construction manager was Legacy Construction Services, LLC of Lyndhurst. Work on the office addition started in the fall of 2011.

According to Cochran, the gift from the anonymous donor inspired a number of other large donations to the project. They included monetary gifts from Elizabeth Juliano, a Land Conservancy board member, and the family of the late Dick Grimm, the longtime board member and supporter who died in early 2012. Key materials donations were made by Willoughby Supply (metal roof) and Fairmount Minerals (gravel).

‘A place that reflects their values’

Why a couple wanted to further our mission by building us a new home

In 2007, following a visit to our leased offices on the second floor of a commercial building, a Land Conservancy supporter made an extraordinary, unsolicited gesture: She and her husband offered to build us a new home. We asked the couple, who wish to remain anonymous, to reflect on this generous offer. Here is what they wrote.



We’ve been asked what motivated us to offer the Land Conservancy a building for its headquarters.

Not only have the two of us lived and worked in Northeast Ohio for many years but our family has a long history here. As children, farming was part of our lives, from apples to haying to raising chickens. We love this community – its people, countryside, communities (and even the weather). Seeing farms disappearing and developments filling in the beautiful fields was distressing.

We were always impressed with the passion and skill the Land Conservancy brought to the table; tracking the community to find possible properties, soliciting funds and finding creative ways to preserve them. They were achieving a huge success for our community. The little, second-floor Land Conservancy office was stretched to the limit. But that in itself was not a bad thing – pressure breeds excitement. Some of the most creative and passionate initiatives we have known, thrive under that pressure.

Then a few years ago we began noticing something new – at least new to us. The vision of the Land Conservancy was expanding well beyond traditional land conservation programs, to consider more broadly the threats and needs of the future. They started involving people with expertise in areas such as urban development, water issues, pollution, forests, wildlife and food production.

We began to realize that here was the opportunity: to create for the Land Conservancy a facility which would provide appropriate space and efficiency for its operations. It could be a place that reflects their values and the community they represent. A place they would be proud of.

At the same time, it would provide a beautiful facility to bring community people together with their own dreams of possibilities.

We suspected that the Land Conservancy desperately wanted space but it would certainly not have been appropriate for them to ask their donors for money to build fancy facilities. We could solve that problem by just offering it to them as a gift – take it or leave it. But we could just give it to them for them to take or not as they saw best.

So…

How’s it going so far? Well, it took quite some time to find the right location and get some plans together, but we were joined by a number of other people who, in one way or another, made very serious contributions. Having Charles and Sandy Lang come forward with their generous offer was just incredible. Everything was right about the property – the wonderful old house and the land completely surrounded by parkland. What could be better?

Far and away, the most exciting part is that Rich Cochran and the Land Conservancy board have indeed led us all in a much more farsighted initiative to envision and protect our environment and community. Particularly, we love their commitment to an educational program on community issues.

It has been an incredible experience for us. We have gotten to know so many wonderful people. We love architecture and construction and they have been nice enough to involve us in the whole process. It has been a great experience to see so many other people and businesses give so generously of their time and money to help the project along. This is truly a generous community.

The new headquarters is certainly a dream that has come true for us and we feel strongly that it will provide a base for many new ideas and directions. Future generations will be able to enjoy and live with nature at its finest.

“Far more than a headquarters building, our new home is a land protection project and a campus for learning about conservation. These new facilities – made possible only through the incredible generosity of an anonymous donor – are enabling us to achieve our mission to a greater extent than ever before.” – Rich Cochran

WALKING
Environmentally friendly featu

The Land Conservancy used innovative, environmentally friendly materials and initiatives in its campus and Conservation Center. We embraced the principle of Reduce, Re-use, Recycle, and we insisted on selecting products that are both less costly and better for the world than conventional ones.

So with all these environmentally sound features, one might assume the building is LEED certified. It isn't. That's because we chose not to pursue the certification, according to Robert Koonce, who managed the project for the Land Conservancy and is the organization's director of development.

"While we clearly embrace the philosophy and values that the LEED process puts forth, and while we succeeded our goals of meeting or exceeding those guidelines in every way, as a nonprofit we frankly struggled with paying a large six-figure fee to go through the certification process," Koonce said. "We are charged with using the dollars we receive from philanthropy and grants for land preservation work, rather than for building certifications. It was a hard choice for us because we knew people might ask about this, but in the end, we have high confidence that we were as environmentally responsible and energy-efficient as possible with this project, and felt that we should not use extensive resources for the actual certification."

Cory Maher, vice president of Lyndhurst-based Legacy Construction Services LLC, the construction manager, said this is "the most energy efficient building that I have built in my 15 years in construction. It by far exceeds any conventional construction means and methods by at least 40 percent. And the best part of it is that it was less expensive as well."

Here are some key features of the project:

Local talent: Northern Ohio has an amazing abundance of resources, both natural and human. On this project, we celebrated those resources by drawing on them for talent, materials and craftsmanship. We are particularly grateful for the contributions of Lake County-based Willoughby Supply, which donated steel roofing that was made in Middleburg Heights and Mentor, and Chardon's Fairmount Minerals, which donated about 6,000 tons of local gravel.

Other local contributions included electrical products from Eaton Corp., assembled in Parma; paint from Cleveland-based Sherwin-Williams Co.; plumbing products from Moen, made in Cleveland; landscape design and construction by Impullitti Landscaping of Burton; architectural design by Anthony Paskevich of Cleveland; construction management by Legacy Construction Services of Lyndhurst; interpretive design displays by Studio Graphique of Cleveland's Shaker Square; and recycled hardwoods from abandoned homes in Cleveland, provided by Cleveland Woodworks.

This old house: By reusing an entire house, we reduced the size of the building we had to construct. The centerpiece building of our project is a Century Home restored by previous owner Charles Lang over a 15-year period using all local materials – cherry and other hardwoods from the property itself, stones from the region and other materials salvaged from local farms. In addition to incorporating the home into the conservation center, the Land Conservancy re-used bricks on the home's rooftop terrace – where herb, vegetable and flower gardens will be located – and hardwoods in the house.

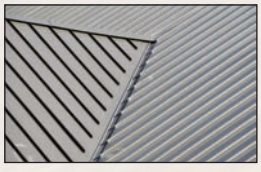


Our retaining wall uses boulders instead of concrete, creating a more natur









Clockwise, from above, a hand-hewn beam was salvaged from a barn and used in a balcony; Insulated Concrete Forms were used in the foundation of the office addition; poplar bark siding is durable and never needs to be treated; and the standing seam metal roof was donated by Willoughby Supply.

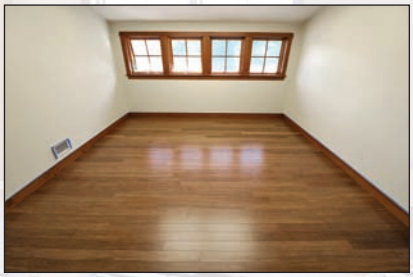
Straight from the earth: To heat and cool our building, we are using the steady temperature of the earth (55 degrees F) as a starting point for our geothermal heating and cooling system. The foundation of the office addition was constructed with Insulated Concrete Forms (ICFs), which are plastic foam blocks filled with concrete and rebar. Unlike masonry construction and poured concrete foundations, there is no field waste

THE TALK:
ures, local materials and talent



al look at a lower cost.





Bioswales, left, have been incorporated into the landscape design, while the center's bamboo flooring is durable and less costly than most alternatives.

and the technology is stronger, more durable, vastly more efficient and identical in cost. The end result is a building that required 60 percent less HVAC equipment than a conventionally built structure of the same size.

SIPs for savings: The exterior walls of the office addition are constructed with structural insulated panels (SIPs). These panels are strong, cost efficient, energy efficient and pre-made to avoid field waste.

Engineered by Mother Nature: The unique exterior of the office addition is poplar bark siding. This untreated wood is durable, beautiful and less expensive than conventional siding – and it never needs to be treated!

Over our heads: The standing seam metal roof on the building is made of reused and recyclable steel manufactured right here in northern Ohio.

Bamboo flooring: Durable, attractive and environmentally friendly, bamboo is harvested sustainably and is less costly than most alternatives.

Rock on!: By using nature's engineering wisdom instead of a poured concrete retaining wall, we created a beautiful rockery – and saved $60,000 in the process.

Interpretive stops: Information displayed both inside and outside the building will educate visitors about healthy places.

Water systems: One of the world's most critical natural resources is its fresh water supply. Indeed, it would be impossible to maintain a healthy habitat without fresh, clean water. That is why minimizing the impact of its new center on natural resources – including water – is important to the Land Conservancy.

To that end, the Land Conservancy has undertaken three significant initiatives utilizing state-of-the-art and environmentally friendly processes and technologies related to its water use.

- ***Groundbreaking water treatment and purification system:*** The Land Conservancy has partnered with a world-class research and development company to conduct an on-site pilot demonstration of first-in-class, revolutionary new water treatment technologies. Designed by some of the world's foremost experts in water treatment and purification, this energy-efficient system emulates nature and purifies water to the highest possible standards of cleanliness. Together, we hope to demonstrate how organizations can reduce wastewater and become more effective, more responsible users of fresh, healthy water.
- ***Bioswale storm water management:*** To reduce storm water run-off and surges that diminish aquatic habitats and lower water quality, the Land Conservancy will incorporate water management features known as bioswales into its landscape design. Six bioretention areas, two underground detention areas, and an extensive piping and catch basin system are being built. Beautiful and functional, the bioretention areas are catchment areas filled with sand and gravel soils and planted with native wildflowers and grasses. Capturing the site's rainwater and gradually restoring it into the ground also creates a healthier habitat on the property.
- ***Stream restoration:*** The Land Conservancy will restore what has become a diverted straight-line, channeled stream running though the property. By again merging it with the Chagrin River, the aquatic species of the preserve will be reconnected to the greater watershed. Restoration will also include removing a culvert to open the stream to its surrounding ecosystem, and digging meandering curves to slow the water flow and reinstate its natural sinuosity. We expect these initiatives to encourage more plant and animal life, and hope this cold water stream will once again be populated with brook trout.

Forest Ridge campus embodies our land preservation mission; took years to achieve

Western Reserve Land Conservancy's new campus and Conservation Center and the adjacent Forest Ridge Preserve are the culmination of more than six years of work, including multiple conservation projects.



The first piece fell into place in January 2006, when Moreland Hills Village Council voted unanimously to partner with the Land Conservancy in purchasing 52 acres on Chagrin River Road, across from the Cleveland Metroparks South Chagrin Reservation. About a year later, the village and the Land Conservancy again joined forces to acquire and preserve an adjacent 63-acre parcel, thereby creating the 115-acre Forest Ridge Preserve.

It took good timing to put the final piece of the campus project in place.

In 2007, a Land Conservancy donor offered to contribute funds to build a permanent home for the organization. She asked only that she be able to select the architect and the site. After looking at about 150 possible locations, the Land Conservancy received a letter from Charles Lang – whose family was one of three who helped create Forest Ridge – indicating his desire to convert his remaining property to the organization's permanent home. The donor embraced the plan, and voters later amended the village zoning code to conditionally permit the Land Conservancy to locate its headquarters there; the existing zoning would have allowed up to 11 cluster homes on the 22-acre site and more than 50 homes could (and very likely would) have been built on the larger parcel. Instead, about 135 acres of green space will be preserved in Moreland Hills forever.

The Land Conservancy retained only 4 acres for its new campus and Conservation Center. The remaining 18 acres will be used to enlarge Forest Ridge Preserve and to create a new village park. The village park is expected to include a community garden, fishing pond, ice skating, birding trails and the use of an existing house as a new community gathering space for this village of 3,200 residents.

Frequently asked questions about the project

Why not use the money for land conservation instead of a building?
The anonymous donor who made this project possible stipulated that the gift be used only for the construction of a new home for the Land Conservancy, so we could better achieve our mission. It could not be used for any other purpose. Our staff had been working in overcrowded, leased space on the second floor of a commercial building. The new home will position us to preserve far more land more quickly.

Why didn't you seek LEED certification for the project?
LEED certification, a measurement tool established by the United States Green Building Council that tracks and scores a building's environmental impact, has raised the bar for all sustainable projects, including ours. Our project is innovative and environmentally friendly. Instead of spending more than $100,000 in pursuit of LEED certification, we simply chose to invest that money in our mission. We have exceeded LEED standards without incurring the cost of certification.

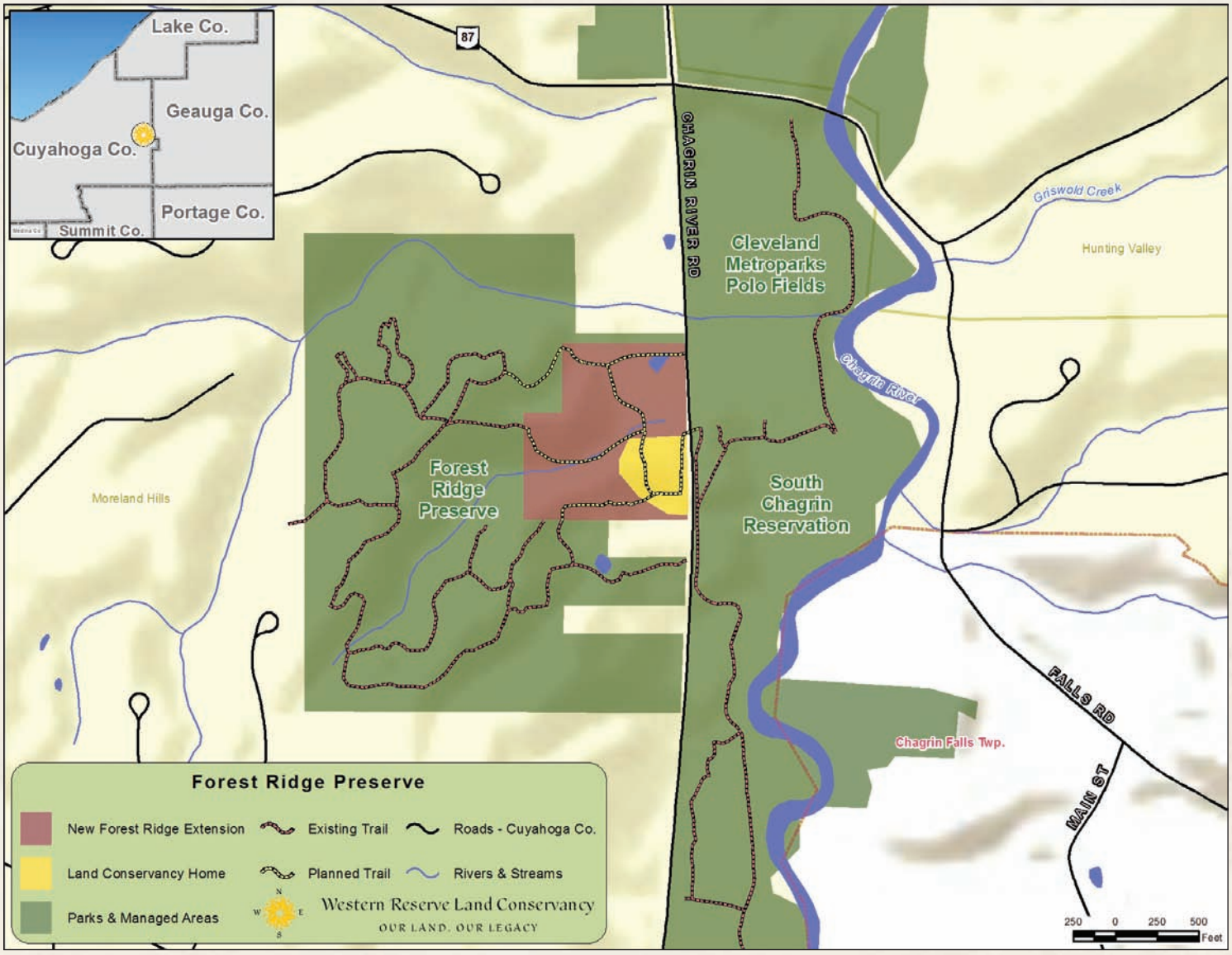
Why did you choose this site in Moreland Hills?
The property was offered to us at a below-market price, and our anonymous donor loved the site. In addition, the site is adjacent to Forest Ridge Preserve, which we helped create, and the Cleveland Metroparks. The environment reminds us of the importance of what we do every day.



Why doesn't the addition match the style of the historic building?
In historic preservation, the best practice is to construct additions that are architecturally distinct so as to allow the historic structure to stand on its own. Our architect designed the office addition in the tradition of New England connected farms from the mid-1800s, known as Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn.

Will the trails on your land that lead to Forest Ridge Preserve be open to the public?
Yes. The trails that go through our property and connect to the preserve's trailheads will be open to the public.

Doesn't constructing a large building run contrary to what the Land Conservancy stands for?
We reused the Century Home on the site and incorporated it into our Conservation Center rather than constructing an entirely new building. We believe it is possible for conservation and development to occur at the same time when both are done thoughtfully.



Trails link us to region

Connecting corridors of green spaces is a critical factor in protecting plant and wildlife biodiversity, as well as in creating enjoyable environments for humans. That's why we are so pleased that the beautiful land and hiking trails are part of our campus on Chagrin River Road in Moreland Hills. The trails are linked to those in the adjacent Forest Ridge Preserve and to those in the Cleveland Metroparks South Chagrin Reservation.

Our trails are available for public use and are symbolic of our connection to the region we serve. From the Land Conservancy's Center for Conservation, you can get to almost every portion of the 22,000-acre Emerald Necklace and the 33,000-acre Cuyahoga Valley National Park without stepping off of preserved land.

In addition, this corridor is connected to the Summit County Hike and Bike Trail. We hope you and your family explore all of these great parks and preserves. Stop by and say hello.



Western Reserve Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.
3850 Chagrin River Road
Moreland Hills, Ohio 44022



Who we are

You've read about the land preservation project that led to our new home and conservation campus. Now a little about us.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy is a nonprofit conservation organization.

We believe that people, plants, animals, communities, businesses and economies are more likely to thrive and prosper when provided with the benefits of vibrant, nutrient-rich surroundings. That's why we work to preserve and restore beautiful, high-quality environments for all living things in northern Ohio.

Using sophisticated real estate tools, we protect and nurture scenic beauty, rural character and natural resources like woodlands, wetlands, streams, coastlines and working farmlands; and we also revitalize and restore productive green spaces to aging urban neighborhoods. To date, our efforts have permanently preserved more than 30,000 acres and generated more than $120 million in funding for urban revitalization.

We focus our energies primarily on land in a 14-county region of northern Ohio known as the Western Reserve, although urban revitalization initiatives underway through our Thriving Communities Institute extend statewide.

We accomplish our work in various ways. We use conservation easements to help private property owners permanently protect land by voluntarily relinquishing development rights. We help conservation partners like park districts acquire and preserve land for public access. And we help establish land banks in Ohio counties to deal with land containing vacant and abandoned homes, principally as a result of the foreclosure crisis.

While Western Reserve Land Conservancy was formed in 2006 by the largest-ever merger of its type, the 11 local land trusts that joined forces to create the organization have been preserving natural areas, parkland and farmland since the late 1980s. Today, we are considered by the Land Trust Alliance to be among the top 10 land trusts in the United States.

If you'd like to get to know us a little better, visit www.wrlandconservancy.org, like us on Facebook or contact us at info@wrlandconservancy.org. Thanks for helping us make our region a better place to live, work and play.

Contact Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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