

Keeping the belt green

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One local group committed to preserving open space has taken a huge step in making sure the West End of Scituate doesn't become overdeveloped.

The Maxwell Conservation Trust, a charitable non-profit Scituate-based group, has reached an agreement with the landowner of 76 acres of woodland on the northeastern side of Bates Lane off Clapp Road to purchase the parcel and preserve it as open space.

"It's a very important piece of property," said Maxwell co-founder and trustee Cynde Robbins. "it's never been developed, it's never had a house on it, and it's the last large piece of undeveloped property in Scituate."

Preserving the land was vital for the trust, in part because right across Bates Lane is another piece of land, one that is under agreement for development by Toll Brothers and will soon see a plethora of housing units spring up on the land.

The property was on the market for more than a year when the Maxwell Trust reached an agreement with owners Charles and Margaret Moncy of Scituate. Now, they have 17 months to raise \$1.3 million in order to complete the purchase, which amounts to roughly \$17,000 an acre.

"We feel it's a very good price" Robbins said, who added that in addition to raising private funds through donations, the Maxwell Trust is looking into fund raising events and raffles to help accumulate funds.

"I feel that it's going to be bought with private donations, I don't know if we can depend on the government for anything at this point."

If purchased, Robbins said the group would ultimately like to create what she calls a "greenbelt" of open space around town. The property off Clapp Road abuts land already placed in conservation by the town that has trails and passages. Robbins anticipates one day connecting all the open space lots.

"We could create a greenbelt from Route 3A all the way to the West End," she said. "If we could create a trail system and greenbelt that way, all that open space would purify our water and air."

As for the land, the Robbins want to act on the opportunity to purchase it while they can before it's developed and loses its pristine, natural beauty.

"It's lovely, it's all wooded and there are hills and valleys and brooks." Robbins said.

This is the third piece of land in Scituate that Maxwell Conservation Trust is involved in preserving. They have recently purchased an 8-acre parcel and home on Clapp Road and are working with the committee of Save the River View, a group trying to preserve land overlooking the North River on Third Cliff.