

# austerlitz community forest



The future Austerlitz Community Forest is a 560-acre property home to steep forests, a pond, two swamps, and nearly a mile of streams draining into the Green River. With a successful campaign, CLC will secure the property and protect it from development, care for it in perpetuity, and create a community of volunteers inspired to manage it.

## Your investment will:

- Protect climate-resilient forests and wetlands that rank among the top 20% of forest blocks in the Hudson River Estuary.
- Prevent development that would fragment nearly 10,000 acres of nearby conserved lands, preserving habitat connectivity.
- Create public access near existing open lands — offering trails, connection, and education for families.
- Build a living legacy of stewardship, engaging volunteers in hands-on care of the land year after year.

## What is a Community Forest?

A community forest is a conservation model in which land is permanently protected and managed in partnership with community members. The Columbia Land Conservancy pioneered this approach with the Taghkanic Community Forest. Rather than managing the land solely through staff, CLC establishes a committee of trained volunteers who help design trails, participate in habitat restoration, monitor ecological health, and make shared decisions about land care. CLC provides technical guidance and conservation expertise, and ultimately owns the land.

## Why this model succeeds

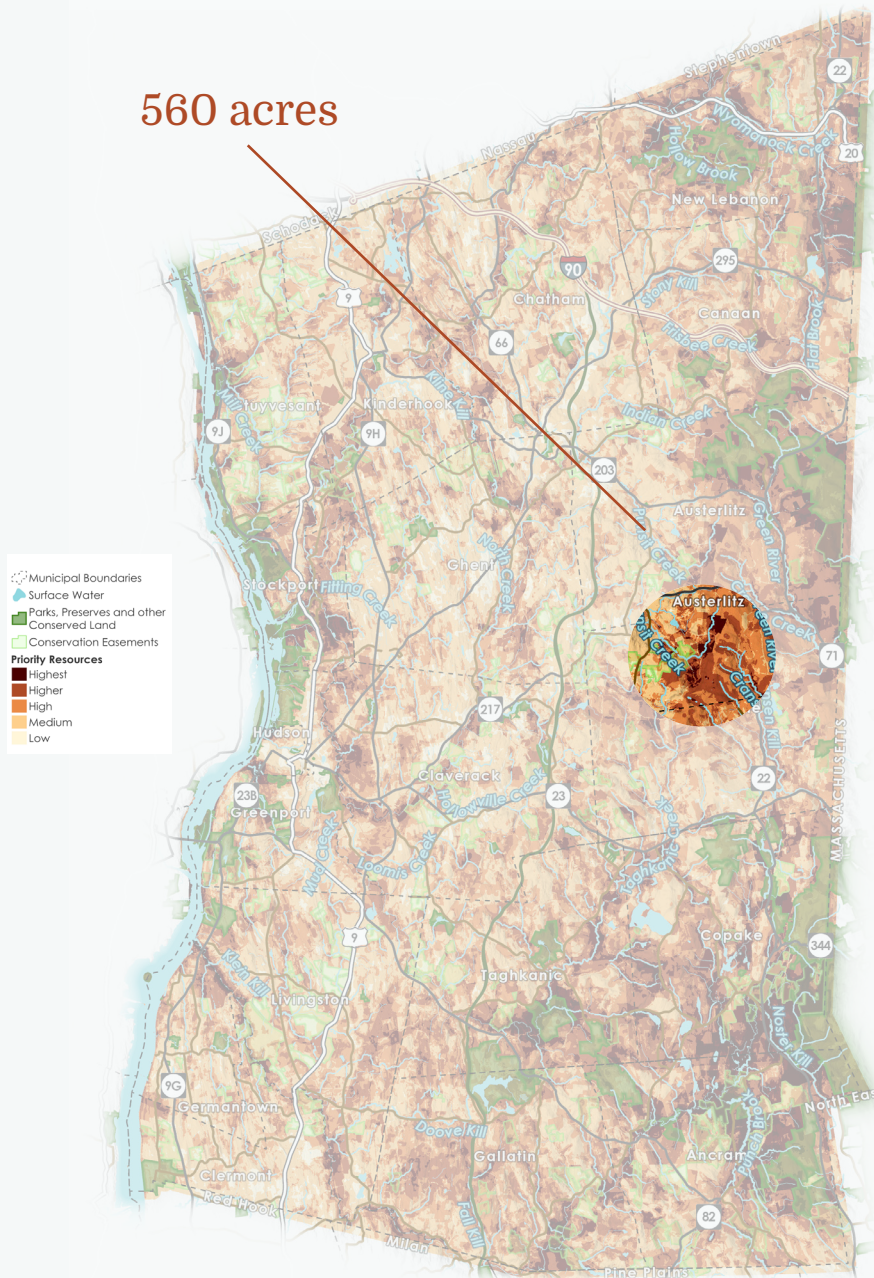
- ***It builds long-term care, not just protection.*** Land is secured forever — but stewardship requires ongoing commitment. Community forests cultivate hundreds of “acts of care” annually, mindfully stewarding the landscape.
- ***It creates local ownership and builds conservation culture.*** When neighbors help manage land, they become advocates for conservation. The forest becomes “our forest.” This is not a passive preserve. It is actively cared for by engaged citizens who model environmental responsibility.
- ***It stretches philanthropic investment.*** Volunteer stewardship amplifies the impact of every donated dollar, ensuring that operational costs remain sustainable over time.
- ***It strengthens climate resilience.*** Community forests often demonstrate best practices such as deer management, pollinator plantings, sustainable thinning, creating replicable models for private landowners across the region.

“I was looking for a project that would leave a legacy, and this Community Forest was the perfect opportunity! Being involved in this personally has been a privilege, an honor, and a great responsibility.”

- Tim Kennelty, volunteer and Taghkanic Community Forest Committee member, where CLC first used the community forest model



560 acres



## A legacy you can create today

***This is a rare opportunity to protect 6% of Columbia County's 10,000-acre priority landscape goal with one decisive action.***

Your support safeguards one of Columbia County's most critical landscapes while building a model of shared care for the land that will serve this region for generations. This property is part of a landscape that has been identified as a top priority for habitat protection and climate resilience.

**Protecting the forest is not only about acreage. It is about making an impact.**

With philanthropic support, this forest will become:

- A permanent refuge for wildlife
- A hands-on classroom for restoration
- A place where community members invest their time, skill, and care

## Strategies:

- Conserve 30% of Columbia County’s priority landscapes - this project represents 6% of the 10,000-acre goal.
- Support conservation partners in the Town of Austerlitz.
- Encourage 2,500 acts of care per year among Community Forest Committee Members and Land Stewards.



This project increases access near existing public lands. CLC will collaborate with community members to manage public land through the Community Forest model.



This project will replicate the Community Forest approach that’s been so successful in Taghkanic. Volunteers will demonstrate habitat improvement practices such as deer exclosures, hunting, sustainable thinning projects, or pollinator plantings.



This site can serve as a demonstration site for landowners interested in implementing restoration projects for forests and wetland ecosystems, while conserving critical ecology for climate resilience and landscape connectivity.

## Project funding goal: \$7.5M

Cost to purchase the property	\$4.5M
Endowment for the land’s care and maintenance	\$2.5M
Funds to open the property (create trail system, install signage, start Community Forest Committee)	\$500,000

*CLC hopes to secure a \$5M state grant to purchase this property, matching every dollar of privately-raised funds with \$2 of grant money.*



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