

The Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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Chagrin River Land Conservancy (CRLC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit land trust that has served the 100,000 plus residents living in the 30 municipalities of the Chagrin River watershed since 1987. CRLC is among the oldest and the largest land trusts in the Western Reserve; for eighteen years the CRLC has acted strategically “to protect the scenic beauty, rural character, and natural resources of the Chagrin River watershed through direct land protection and promotion of the responsible use of land and water resources. “ In that time there has been permanently preserved over 6,700 acres on 121 properties and grown from an all-volunteer organization to one that currently supports a staff of 17. By many measures, extremely successful, CRLC sought to leverage this success to benefit the entire region.

In 2004 the venerable Boston Consulting Group (BCG) selected CRLC for a major pro bono project. BCG assigned three consultants to help CRLC develop a strategic plan that would best advance regional conservation efforts in Northeast Ohio without sacrificing the strengths that CRLC has established in the Chagrin watershed. After gathering input from a wide variety of sources and thoroughly evaluating three possible expansion avenues, BCG recommended the establishment of a regional land trust through a voluntary merger of local land trusts led by CRLC.

Following BCG’s recommendation, CRLC launched an effort to bring together a total of eight local land trusts to form a single organization focused on influencing the patterns of development so that permanently preserved natural areas are woven through the fabric of the communities that make up the Western Reserve. This organization will be called Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) and will served a fourteen county region of Northeast Ohio, stretching from the Pennsylvania border in the east to the Firelands of Erie and Huron Counties in the west, and from Lake Erie in the north to Wayne and Stark counties in the south. It is anticipated that the transition from separate entities to a regional organization will occur over the course of four years, allowing for several benefits including sufficient time to secure the anticipated \$3.3 million necessary to bring this project to fruition.