

The White Barn Preserve Celebrating Nature at its Most Beautiful



The Norwalk Land Trust, a 501(c) (3) organization, invites you to join us in our quest to take advantage of a limited-time opportunity to purchase a unique and historic 15.4 acre property on the border of Norwalk and Westport, Connecticut. Your support will enable us to prevent development of the property, to nearly triple the size of the existing 5.5 acre White Barn Preserve established in 2008 and to ensure this environmentally important site remains open space in perpetuity.

Why the White Barn Preserve is Invaluable

Preserving the entire White Barn property with its woodlands, wetlands, meadows and eye-catching Stony Brook will immeasurably enrich local communities. Equally important, it is key to maintaining the integrity of the local environment – including the availability of safe drinking water in the area in which the property is situated.

A successful campaign will enable the Norwalk Land Trust to create walking paths from which the public can enjoy the mature forest and diverse wildlife. In addition, it will allow us to expand our outdoor classroom environmental program for students in the Norwalk public school system.

The White Barn property is perhaps best known as the site of theatre legend Lucille Lortel's storied White Barn Theatre, which served as an incubator and showcase for playwrights, actors, dancers and other performing artists for more than 50 years. Because of extensive deterioration, the house and theater were demolished in August 2017.

Playwrights and performers flocked to the White Barn Theatre because this beautiful site was both serene and inspiring. We hope that by saving the property from development, we will enable residents of Norwalk and surrounding communities to experience – and be inspired by – that same natural beauty, now and for generations to come.

“Saving this beautiful property is essential to protect a critical habitat for wildlife and a precious, mature outdoor resource for all to enjoy.”

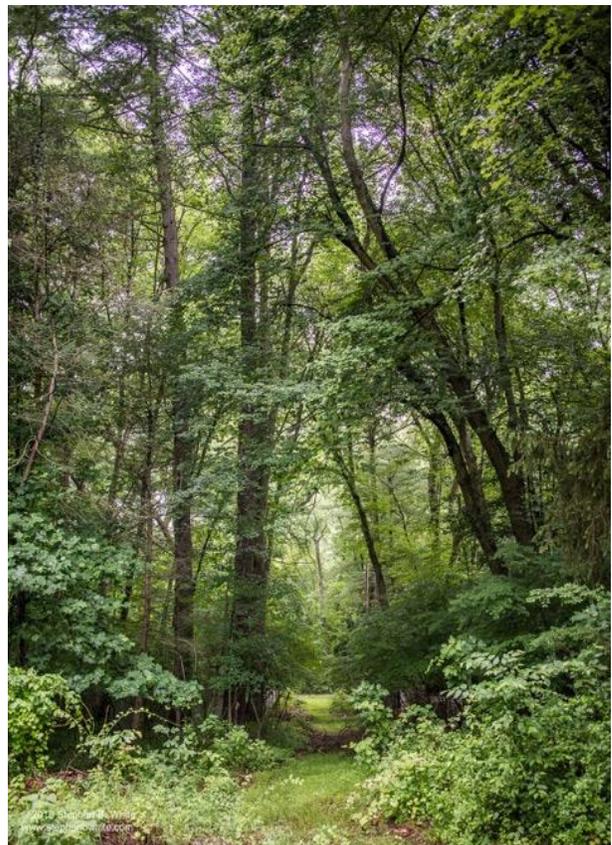
**Julian Henkin,
Norwalk Land Trust**

Making the Case for Conservation

The 15.4 acre White Barn property is the second largest, privately held unprotected natural property in Norwalk, Connecticut, and one of the last remaining large, privately held tracts of open space in this part of Fairfield County. The property includes a 1-acre pond, sensitive wetlands and a Class “A” stream (Stony Brook) that feeds into the Saugatuck River.¹

This open space plays a unique and important role in preserving the viability of the local environment by allowing natural filtration of rain and storm water runoff via the undeveloped land. The parcel assists in providing clean drinking water for the many private drinking-water wells in the area and also feeds clean water into the Saugatuck River Watershed that extends to the Long Island Sound. The existing trees capture CO₂ and help purify the air.

The importance of this project is underscored by wide support for the purchase and conservation of open space at the White Barn property.



¹ In Connecticut, a Class "A" stream indicates that the stream is both fishable and swimmable, and that it compliments and supports healthy populations representing the natural biological diversity of the watershed system.

Advocates include the Connecticut Audubon Society, the Aspetuck Land Trust, the Connecticut Nature Conservancy, adjoining neighbors, elected officials including the Mayor of the City of Norwalk and many others. Numerous experts attest to the importance of preserving the property as open space and wildlife habitat, forever safe from development.

Milan Bull, senior director of science and conservation at the Connecticut Audubon Society and author of *The Connecticut Warbler* commented, “Frogs, turtles, blue heron and wood ducks need sanctuary, and the property provides this.”

Michael Aurelia, professional wetland specialist, member of the State Board of Directors of the Connecticut Audubon Society and director of the Applied Ecology Research Institute states: "There are extensive inland wetlands and watercourses, and the property’s location in a heavily developed residential area makes it all that more important as an ‘island habitat.’ Sensitive water birds like great blue herons, black-crowned night herons and wood ducks use the pond and Stony Brook’s banks as foraging, resting or nesting areas. Small mammals like muskrats, river otters and weasels use the pond and Stony Brook corridor.”

Importantly, the White Barn Theatre property provides a wildlife habitat for some of Connecticut’s at-risk wildlife, including the little brown bat, great egret and snowy egret and spotted and Eastern box turtles.

The Impact of Development

- At least five-plus acres of existing, mature, healthy forest would be clear-cut.
- The meadow bordering the pond, which now has a gentle slope slowing runoff into the pond, would likely be leveled and filled with dirt, producing steeper rainwater runoff and introducing fertilizer and other waste material into the pond and brook.
- The amount of land with non-permeable surfaces would increase significantly, contributing to faster, more damaging storm water runoff.
- The areas providing homes to wildlife would be fragmented. Sensitive wildlife that depends on the rear of the pond for sanctuary would be driven off by the proximity of houses and the increase in human activity.
- Many trees now shading the pond would be cut down, raising the water temperature and impacting the wildlife living and nesting there.

Our Fundraising Goal

The price of the property is \$5 million. A generous \$1 million pledge by developers James, William and Robert Fieber leaves \$4 million to be raised by the Norwalk Land Trust – including \$1 million in pledges and donations that we must raise by the anticipated closing in April 2018.

A one-for-one challenge matching grant of \$300,000 has been established towards that goal.

Local Support

Neighbors of the property are partnering with the Norwalk Land Trust and the Friends of the White Barn Preserve to raise the funds. Talks are underway to enlist the White Barn Theatre Foundation and others to join the purchase initiative, which could make it possible to build a new theatre on a section of the property in the future.

The Norwalk Land Trust invites you to support our fundraising efforts. To recognize founding donors, a list of their names will be posted at the entrance to the property.

Additional information is available on the home page of the [Norwalk Land Trust](http://www.norwalklandtrust.org) (www.norwalklandtrust.org). Donations may be made online via PayPal or can be mailed to the Norwalk Land Trust, PO Box 34, Norwalk, CT 06853.² Tours of the property can also be arranged through info@norwalklandtrust.org.



When she established her country home and theatre at the White Barn property, Lucille Lortel understood the role serene open space and a natural setting play in inspiring creativity and well-being. Our goal is to keep that vision alive, so adults and children alike can enjoy the tranquility of nature and wildlife at its best at this beautiful – and unique – property.

² The Norwalk Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Donations made prior to the purchase will be held in an escrow account until the closing.