

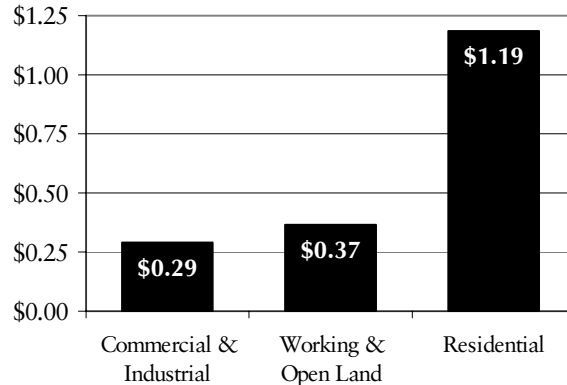


Assessing the Cost of Community Services

Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies are a case study approach developed by American Farmland Trust to determine the fiscal contribution of existing local land uses. A subset of the much larger field of fiscal analysis, COCS studies have emerged as an inexpensive and reliable tool to measure direct fiscal relationships. Their particular niche is to evaluate working and open lands on equal ground with residential, commercial and industrial land uses. Communities pay a high price for unplanned growth. Scattered development frequently causes traffic congestion, air and water pollution, loss of open space and increased demand for costly services.

COCS studies are a snapshot in time of costs versus revenues for each type of land use. They do not predict future costs or revenues or the impact of future growth. They do provide a baseline of current information to help local officials and citizens make informed land use and policy decisions. More than 130 COCS studies have been conducted during the past 20 years; in every study, farmland has generated a fiscal surplus to help offset the shortfall created by residential demand for public services. For more information about COCS studies and the findings of studies nationwide, see the Farmland Information Center's [Cost of Community Services Studies](#) fact sheet.

Median cost per dollar of revenue raised to provide public services to different land uses



Lexington-Fayette County, Kentucky

AFT conducted a COCS study for Bluegrass Conservancy and Land and Nature Trust of the Bluegrass in Lexington-Fayette County to help the community build support for creating a purchase of development rights (PDR) program. AFT collected data on local revenues and expenditures, grouped expenditures and allocated them to specific land use categories, grouped revenues and allocated them to specific land use categories, and calculated revenue-to-expenditure ratios for each land use category. AFT prepared a report that described the methodology, summarized the findings and suggested how to use the findings to promote farmland protection.

Skagit County, Washington

To help Skagit County build the case for farmland preservation, the County hired AFT to conduct a COCS study. The study demonstrated that protection of agriculture is crucial to the economic well being of the county. Crops produced in the Skagit Valley, including vegetable seeds, berries, potatoes, row crop vegetables, bulbs and flowers, contribute nearly \$200 million to the local economy annually.

Okanogan County, Washington

At the request of the Methow Conservancy, AFT conducted a COCS study to find out the current net fiscal impact of existing land uses in Okanogan County. The study focused on county and school budgets because they represent revenues and expenditures for the largest portion of government services provided to Okanogan County residents. The study found that for each \$1 from commercial and industrial land uses, the county spent 59 cents providing services; for each \$1 received from farm, forest and open land, the county spent 56 cents; and for each \$1 received from other lands, the county spent 62 cents.

Other COCS Studies:

- Hebron, Conn., Planning and Zoning Commission
- Campbell County, Ky., Conservation District
- Kenton County, Ky., Farmland Working Group
- Shelby County, Ky., Maintain Our Rural Environment, Inc.
- Crestwood, Ky., Oldham Ahead
- Frederick County, Md., AgriFuture Roundtable
- Harford County, Md., Harford Land Trust
- Wicomico County, Md., The Town Creek Foundation
- Agawam, Mass.
- Dartmouth, Mass.
- Deerfield, Mass.
- Middleboro, Mass., Planning Board
- Sterling, Mass.
- Calhoun County, Mich., Farm Bureau
- Farmington, Lake Elmo and Independence, Minn.
- Minneapolis, Minn., Land Stewardship Project
- Monmouth County, N.J., Monmouth Conservation Foundation
- Beekman and Fishkill, N.Y.
- Butler County, Ohio, Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Smart Growth Coalition
- Clark County, Ohio, Tecumseh Land Trust
- Knox County, Ohio, Regional Planning Commission
- Lake County, Ohio, Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Madison Village and Township, Ohio (1992 & 2008)
- Mount Vernon, Ohio, Tecumseh Land Trust
- York County, Pa., South Central Assembly for Effective Governance, Pa.
- Robertson, County, Tenn., Cumberland Region Tomorrow
- Blount County, Tenn., Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
- Tipton County, Tenn., Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
- Bandera and Bexar Counties, Texas
- Bedford County, Va., Board of Supervisors

- Northampton, Va., Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore
- Culpeper County, Va., Board of Supervisors
- Winchester, Va., Frederick County Farm Bureau
- San Juan County, Wash., Friends of the San Juans