



**ALLEGHENY
LAND TRUST**

Contact: Jake Seltman | jake@growpittsburgh.org | 412-362-4769 x201
Contact: Lindsay Dill | ldill@alleghenylantrust.org | 412-741-2750 x206

**August 22, 2017
For Immediate Release**

JOINT VENTURE FORMED TO PROTECT URBAN AGRICULTURAL LAND

Two Pittsburgh-area nonprofits, Grow Pittsburgh and Allegheny Land Trust (ALT), announced today that they will partner on a joint venture to protect and preserve selected urban agricultural lands in perpetuity.

The joint venture, *Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative*, will provide long-term security for existing community gardens and urban farms, and ensure that future urban agricultural expansion will be planned and conducted on protected land. The initiative will create the stability necessary to foster a vibrant, sustainable and expanding urban agriculture movement by removing the threat of future sales of agricultural lands for other development purposes.

“We are thrilled to be partnering with ALT, a regional leader in conservation and green space protection, to create this innovative program,” Grow Pittsburgh Executive Director Jake Seltman said. “Increasing development pressure in many Pittsburgh neighborhoods is causing concern among gardeners, farmers and government partners that they may lose their precious spaces to other uses. This initiative will give the community a tool to help support the long-term success of existing projects, and build the confidence necessary to develop new ones.”

“Green space is increasingly cited as a key component to the livability and sustainability of urban areas and one of the reasons for this is urban agriculture. ALT is really proud to work with Grow Pittsburgh to protect land that can be used by community members to reduce food insecurity,” said Chris Beichner, ALT’s President and CEO. “Grow Pittsburgh and their partners have done an amazing job in fostering urban ag in the region, and we’re happy to contribute to that momentum by providing land security.”

This partnership leverages the proven experience and skillsets of the two well-respected non-profit organizations. ALT will contribute its expertise as an accredited land trust to acquire and manage lands in perpetuity, while Grow Pittsburgh will provide its leadership in operating urban farms and assisting neighborhoods in starting and sustaining community gardens.

“We can empathize with the frustration of a well-organized community group being unable to identify a place in their community where a garden will be welcomed long-term, or when a

well-loved community garden is lost to an alternate land use,” Seltman said. “These projects become community anchors, playing a significant role in the social fabric of a neighborhood, and providing important food resources and they need to be protected.”

Community gardens and urban farms provide environmental benefits including stormwater mitigation, pollinator habitat creation and neighborhood food insecurity reduction. There are more than 80 community gardens and urban farms in Allegheny County, many of which are using land without a formal land use agreement or have only temporary permission. With this initiative, Pittsburgh will join Philadelphia, New York City, Chicago and Providence, which all have land trusts dedicated to protecting urban agriculture projects.

The *Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative* will be governed by a nine-person steering committee consisting of representatives from Grow Pittsburgh, Allegheny Land Trust and three representatives from local community gardening groups. For anyone interested in serving as a community representative, applications and nominations for the three steering committee positions are open until September 8th. [The form is available both on Grow Pittsburgh and Allegheny Land Trust’s websites.](#)

####

About Grow Pittsburgh

Grow Pittsburgh’s mission is to teach people how to grow food and promote the benefits that gardens bring to our neighborhoods. The organization was founded in 2005, and has been a registered 501c(3) entity since 2008. We use growing food as a platform to bring people and communities together, while inspiring them to be healthier individuals, learn new skills, care for the earth and make our city and region a more livable, equitable and desirable place to be. Please visit our website to learn more about the distinct programs and production sites that provide opportunities for people of all ages to grow their own food. More information can be found at growpittsburgh.org.

About Allegheny Land Trust

Founded as a nonprofit in 1993 in response to the rapidly declining amount of green space in Allegheny County, ALT has protected more than 2,100 acres to preserve our region’s unique natural beauty, provide accessible outdoor recreational opportunities, improve water quality, sustain biodiversity, and enhance the overall quality of life for all. ALT’s mission has expanded in recent years to include innovative methods of land conservation in support of community needs for urban green space as well the addition of a professional environmental education team teaching people of all ages to understand and appreciate the natural world. More information can be found at alleghenylandtrust.org.