



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative (TRALI)

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1. What is the Three Rivers Agriculture Land Initiative?

Urban agriculture has become increasingly important to residents in the Pittsburgh area. It enhances the quality of life through community education and engagement and provides improved food security. The Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative serves to protect urban agricultural land for generations.

Grow Pittsburgh and the Allegheny Land Trust entered into a Joint Venture Agreement in 2017 to support the major functions of acquiring and supporting land and projects for long-term agricultural use. Full participation from individuals invested in long-term agricultural protection is critical to the success of the Joint Venture Agreement, thus a 9-person steering committee was seated, representing both organizations and community perspectives. Ideally, individuals representing those protected projects are present on the committee.

We, as a group, seek to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of urban agricultural projects, the neighborhoods in which they reside, and the larger region in regards to equitable development and healthy food systems. To that end, we use a consensus-based model for decision-making to ensure that decisions are made with the broadest possible support.



2. How does TRALI differ from other land trusts

TRALI is not a land trust, but rather a collaboration between Allegheny Land Trust and Grow Pittsburgh focused specifically on preserving land being used for agriculture initiatives. Allegheny Land Trust has a long successful history of conserving and stewarding lands that support the scenic, recreational, and environmental well-being of communities in Allegheny County and its environs; TRALI is an extension of this. Grow Pittsburgh's 10+ years of experience starting, managing, and supporting urban agriculture projects will ensure that projects held in trust are supported long term.

Land trusts have long been a tool to preserve land by one entity for use by another entity. In this way, ALT will own land in order for the community to continue to use the space for agriculture purposes. Examples of other land trusts that are successfully protecting land for urban agriculture elsewhere in the United States include the Southside Community Land Trust in Rhode Island and Athens Land Trust in Georgia. You can find more information on these and other projects here: <https://cltweb.org/land-tenure-for-urban-farming/resources/clt-case-studies/>. You can find general information on Community Land Trusts here: <http://cltroots.org/what-is-a-clt>.

3. What is the benefit to our community agricultural project of becoming a TRALI project?

Most properties where community agricultural projects have permission are not protected long term, and the owner may require users to vacate the premises in mere weeks if desired. When a community agricultural project becomes a TRALI project, it ensures the land can remain an agricultural project in perpetuity, removing any possibility of development by other owners, whether public or private. ALT ownership of the property means that the property can never be developed for any other purpose than for agriculture. If the community decides agriculture is no longer a desired use, the land will always remain a green asset owned by ALT.

4. How long does the TRALI land preservation last?

Once acquired by ALT through TRALI the land will be permanent green space. However, ALT is not immune to eminent domain so if the land is needed for a public purpose such as a road, ALT can not stop that. TRALI personnel may review the status of the agricultural project with community agricultural leaders on a regular basis, but the land remains preserved.

5. What criteria does our garden have to meet to become a TRALI project?

In order to be considered, community agricultural projects must be able to show TRALI personnel that they are actively and collaboratively working on the property they would like considered.

Preference will be given to gardens with a successful track record, under potential development pressure, and evidence of outreach by current gardeners to actively include the surrounding



community in its endeavors.

6. How are TRALI projects chosen? Who chooses them?

TRALI accepts applications on a rolling basis throughout the year from interested garden groups. TRALI personnel may also reach out to community agricultural projects they feel may be in jeopardy of being removed from their land due to ownership issues or threats to the garden. Due to financial constraints, only a few projects are able to be chosen each year.

TRALI personnel make decisions by consensus. The 9-member Steering Committee currently consists of two staff and one board member from both Grow Pittsburgh and Allegheny Land Trust, and three community members, representing potential TRALI projects and/or communities where TRALI finds land preservation most critical because of development pressures. A goal is to seat at least one community member representing a protected project. Interested garden groups are encouraged to begin the application process by completing the interest form on the Grow Pittsburgh website:

<https://www.growpittsburgh.org/community-gardens/start-and-build-a-garden/land-trust/>.

7. Who owns the land?

Allegheny Land Trust owns the TRALI project property to keep protected in perpetuity. Grow Pittsburgh has a long-term land management agreement with Allegheny Land Trust to support the agriculture projects on the land. The garden groups enter into a memorandum of understanding with Grow Pittsburgh that ensures that they can continue to garden at the site for as long as it is kept active and Grow Pittsburgh will support their efforts through programming.

8. Who provides liability insurance for TRALI projects?

As landowner, ALT would provide the insurance relieving the community group of that financial burden.

9. What are the roles and responsibilities of the community group; Allegheny Land Trust; Grow Pittsburgh; TRALI?

Community groups are responsible for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of their land (and sidewalk if applicable) in accordance with the MOU they come to terms with. Community groups remain in communication with TRALI personnel especially when significant changes to use of the land are made.

ALT owns the property and is responsible for all costs and management associated with ownership.

Grow Pittsburgh will provide oversight to the project, offering support and technical assistance as needed.

The TRALI steering committee will consult with interested groups, approve leases and make recommendations to the ALT Board of Directors regarding acquisition of gardens by ALT.



10. What happens to the land if our community can no longer care for our garden?

If a community group that has entered into agreement through the TRALI program is no longer able to care for a TRALI conserved property, they may look to others within the neighborhood to care for the space, and that new group may enter into a new agreement with TRALI to tend to and care for the land. Grow Pittsburgh can help with the process of transitioning leadership to a new group. If after due diligence, no new local caretakers can be found, ALT will retain ownership and management of the property and, in cooperation with Grow Pittsburgh and other neighborhood groups, seek to find new users of the TRALI property, while providing care and maintenance so that the property remains a green community asset. Although the space will remain green and undeveloped, ALT is not required to maintain the space as a garden.

11. What are the benefits to using the TRALI model vs. starting a neighborhood or community land trust?

The main benefit is that capacity, expertise and the organizational infrastructure already exists to acquire and protect the land. Starting a new CLT may take years to incorporate an organization, generate funds and gather the expertise needed to succeed. Much of your time could be spent creating and administering an organization rather than working the garden. That being said, there are neighborhood CLTs forming and if it makes more sense for your project to work directly with them, the TRALI committee is happy to support the protection of land in many forms.