



## CHURCHILL VALLEY GREENWAY | CONSERVATION PROJECT

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **Who is Allegheny Land Trust?**

Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) is a local, nationally-accredited land conservation non-profit that has collaborated with community groups, other non-profit organizations, businesses, and municipalities in the Greater Pittsburgh Region for more than 25 years to permanently protect green space for the greater public good. To date, ALT has protected more than 2,500 acres of undeveloped land in 27 different municipalities to preserve our region's unique natural beauty, provide enhanced outdoor recreational and educational opportunities, improve water and air quality, sustain biodiversity, and contribute to the overall quality of life in the region. More information can be found at [alleghenylandtrust.org](http://alleghenylandtrust.org).

#### **Why is ALT interested in acquiring the former Churchill Valley Country Club?**

In addition to its well-recognized recreational and aesthetic benefits, protected green space is a key part of the solution to many issues our communities are grappling with today including landslides, flash flooding, combined sewer overflow, traffic congestion, and poor air and water quality. The capacity of local green space to provide a place for easily accessible, close-to-home, healthy recreation, absorb and filter storm water, clean the air, and contribute to economic vitality make its strategic protection critical to a community's livability.

Local residents contacted ALT earlier this year to request our involvement to protect the 148 acres (108 in Churchill and 40 in Penn Hills) that were once the Churchill Valley Country Club. After conducting significant due diligence, ALT agreed that protecting this land as public green space presents an extremely rare opportunity for the communities of Churchill and Penn Hills to experience the conservation benefits noted above.

It is a rare oasis in a densely populated area (95,000 people live within a three-mile radius), adjacent to many residential streets, within walking distance of several thousand neighbors and an easy drive for thousands of other residents many of whom already informally use the area for passive recreation due to its solitude, easy and safe accessibility (paved golf cart paths), and proximity to their homes. Additionally, this property is bisected by Chalfant Run, a tributary of flood-prone Turtle Creek and plays an important role in sequestering and filtering 127 million gallons of rain water per year.

Protecting this land will preserve natural scenic beauty, provide an outstanding place for close-to-home outdoor recreation, foster environmental education, prevent further congestion on area roadways, mitigate flooding, increase property values, and enhance the attractiveness of the two municipalities to current residents and prospective homebuyers who increasingly cite "proximity to open space" as a significant factor in their selection of a community to call home. This has the potential to become a truly differentiating amenity for Penn Hills and Churchill.

#### **What does ALT intend to do with the property once they have acquired it?**

ALT will own and responsibly manage the land as a greenway in perpetuity. The area will be open to the public for low-impact recreational activities. On-going community input and volunteer involvement with the stewardship of the conservation area will be encouraged.

#### **How does ALT anticipate the property will be used by the community?**

Visitors interested in passive recreational and educational pursuits including walking, running, bird watching, berry picking, and nature and environmental education will be welcome to enjoy the land for these and similar activities daily from sun rise to sun down year-round. The existing network of paved trails will be maintained and enhanced to provide broad public access to nature and outdoor experiences to people of all ages, abilities, and interests. Senior citizens in need of a safe and beautiful place for daily exercise, people with disabilities looking for barrier-free places to experience the outdoors, athletes in training, and families with small children seeking to explore nature together will all come to rely on this unique community asset.

#### **How will ALT pay for the acquisition of this property?**

ALT is implementing a funding plan that includes pending grant requests at three different Commonwealth of PA agencies, as well as support from targeted local foundations, businesses, civic organizations, and specifically \$100,000 from individuals in the community through a recently launched community fundraising campaign. We have until the targeted closing date of March of 2020 to raise the necessary funding.

#### **Why is the community campaign important?**

The community campaign is critical to the success of the project, not only to help close the funding gap but also to serve as the matching local funds required to unlock the pending state grants and to show local support to other potential funders. We encourage supporters to be as generous as possible, but donations of all sizes are important to the local campaign goal of \$100,000.

#### **Who will assume responsibility for caring for this new conservation area over the long-term?**

Allegheny Land Trust will be responsible for the on-going maintenance of the Churchill Valley Greenway. We develop detailed and prescriptive management plans for each of our major conservation areas that guide the on-going maintenance and enhancement of the property. Such a plan will be developed with public input upon ALT's acquisition of the Churchill Valley property. This plan would include the creation and management of a local "Friends of Churchill Valley" volunteer group for on-going community involvement. ALT has demonstrated success managing over 2,500 acres of protected land over 27 different municipalities through existing staff, hundreds of volunteers, and corporate partnerships.



**Will local tax dollars be required to acquire and/or maintain the property?**

No. While municipal support would be helpful and welcomed, ALT has a plan to acquire the project without municipal contribution, and a stewardship fund will be established for on-going maintenance. Any future special enhancement projects will be funded through grants in support of that specific project at that time.

**How will conservation of this property impact municipal finances?**

It is important to look at the complete picture when considering the fiscal affect the creation of this conservation area will have on the municipalities of Penn Hills and Churchill.

Since the property will be owned by a non-profit organization, ALT, it will not be subject to property taxes. However, since it will not be developed in the traditional manner it will not demand the typical municipal investment in infrastructure and on-going public services that standard developments require. The costs for municipalities and school districts to provide services required by standard developments sometimes exceed the tax revenue generated by that development. These costs are often overlooked when only the revenue side of development the development is considered.

As noted above, the municipalities will not be required to bear the costs of acquisition or on-going maintenance of the Churchill Valley Greenway.

The presence of a signature green space like the proposed Churchill Valley Greenway will deliver numerous quality-of-life benefits to the residents of Churchill and Penn Hills and give prospective home-buyers another reason to consider these communities as a place to call home. This unique community asset will help to enhance the attractiveness of the communities, increase demand for existing housing, thus stabilizing and elevating property values and tax revenues over time as borne out by various research studies. More information on the positive economic impact of protected green space can be found at the following links:

<https://www.heinz.cmu.edu/ced/file/ura-final-rev-report.pdf>

[https://alleghenylandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2004\\_farber\\_pitthillsides.pdf](https://alleghenylandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2004_farber_pitthillsides.pdf)

**Who has expressed their formal support of the project to date?**

Since the recent announcement of ALT's plan to permanently protect this land as a public conservation area, more than 125 individual residents of Penn Hills, Churchill, and surrounding communities have contacted ALT to express their support and inquire about how they can help. Many have already made financial contributions to the project. This list of individual supporters and donors is growing daily.

In addition to this grass roots citizen support, the following organizations and elected officials have provided formal endorsements of the project:

Churchill Borough Council	PA Senator Jay Costa
Allegheny County Planning Division	Penn Hills Shade Tree Commission
Blackridge Civic Association	Turtle Creek Watershed Association
Three Rivers Wet Weather	Sierra Club- Allegheny Group
Humane Animal Rescue League	B.O.B. Project Inc. (Bringing Out the Best in Penn Hills)

ALT is working to introduce the project to other officials, organizations, and businesses in the community and welcomes opportunities to meet with all parties interested in learning more.

**How can individuals stay informed on this community conservation project?**

- Updated information as the project progresses can be found on ALT's website: <https://alleghenylandtrust.org/churchill-valley/>
- ALT will issue periodic e-mail updates. To add your name to the distribution list please send an e-mail to [jhalyama@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:jhalyama@alleghenylandtrust.org)
- If you'd like to discuss the project with an ALT representative, please call us at 412-741-2750:
- Tom Dougherty | (x211) | VP of External Affairs
- Roy Kraynyk | (x203) | VP of Land Protection
- Lindsay Dill | (x206) | Director of Marketing

**What can I do to help protect this critical green space?**

There are many ways individuals can help. These include donating, discussing the project with your friends and neighbors, contacting your elected officials to express your support of the project, and contacting ALT to ask for ways you can volunteer your time and talents. If you are interested in donating please click on the following link and click the Churchill Valley Project box on the form <https://alleghenylandtrust.org/donate/>

*Thank you!*