



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Borough of Chester Heights to Purchase 40 Acres of Community Open Space

MEDIA, Pa., June 21, 2023 – Natural Lands and the Borough of Chester Heights, Delaware County, announced today the Borough has entered into an agreement to purchase 40.2 acres of open space on Valleybrook and Smithbridge Roads for public open space. Natural Lands, a non-profit land conservation organization, has been assisting the Borough in negotiating the project and securing grant funding.

The property is comprised of rolling meadows and woodlands, and includes a tributary to Chester Creek. The land provides important natural services like slowing and absorbing stormwater to help reduce flooding and filtering rainwater before it enters Chester Creek. This waterway is one of the healthiest streams in Delaware County largely because much of the land along it remains undeveloped. Chester Creek empties into the Delaware River and is part of a watershed that provides drinking water to 15 million people. By purchasing the property to preserve as open space, the Borough will ensure the land continues to provide these valuable environmental services and offer habitat to native wildlife.

“Natural Lands applauds the Borough of Chester Heights for investing in our region’s open space,” said Natural Lands President Oliver Bass. “Natural areas offer us all more than just pretty views. They contribute to our way of life, improve our physical and mental health, and generate significant economic value for our region. We’re delighted to help Chester Heights with this important conservation project.”

The Borough of Chester Heights plans to establish low-impact trails on the property for residents to enjoy.

“I am filled with gratitude for the many individuals who are working very hard to leave a legacy of open space: Natural Lands, our solicitor, Councilwoman Lim, the grant committees, and more,” said Borough of Chester Heights Mayor Gina Ellis. “I am most especially thankful for the cooperation of landowners Lorraine and Glenn Powell. The current and future residents of Chester Heights and the surrounding area will be able to enjoy the rolling hills for generations to come.”

The property is valued at \$3.74 million; the current owners have agreed to sell it for \$3.4 million. The Agreement of Sale is contingent on the Borough of Chester Heights raising sufficient funds to complete the acquisition.

Natural Lands has applied for grant funding from a variety of sources for the project on the Borough's behalf. A \$500,000 grant has been awarded from Delaware County through its Delco Green Ways Grant Program. Private, anonymous donors have committed \$750,000.

An application is pending with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which may be awarded through Pennsylvania's allocation of federal Land and Water Conservation Funds. As these funds are only available as reimbursement after the project closes, the Borough has secured a loan commitment for \$1.87 million from The Conservation Fund to demonstrate to the Commonwealth that it has the means to proceed if a federal grant is awarded. If all project funding is not secured, The Conservation Fund loan will not take effect and the Borough will only owe a \$500 application fee.

Natural Lands is dedicated to preserving and nurturing nature's wonders while creating opportunities for joy and discovery in the outdoors for everyone. As the Greater Philadelphia region's oldest and largest land conservation organization, Natural Lands—which is member supported—has preserved more than 125,000 acres, including 42 nature preserves and one public garden totaling more than 23,000 acres. Nearly five million people live within five miles of land under the organization's protection. Land for life, nature for all. natlands.org.

Please note: "Natural Lands" is the organization's official operating name and should be used instead of its legal designation (Natural Lands Trust, Inc.).

Media Inquiries:

Kirsten Werner, Senior Director of Communications
610-353-5587 ext. 267
267-222-0072 (mobile)
kwerner@natlands.org

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