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TPL Assists In Expanding Allentown ‘Greenbelt’

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The Trust for Public Land has facilitated the purchase of more than 46 acres of land in Upper Freehold Township to be added to a growing [greenbelt](#) around the historic Borough of Allentown, the national conservation organization, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the Borough announced today. The land was conveyed to both the Borough and the State, and protection of the property ends a long local battle to prevent development of high-density commercial retail space or an industrial warehouse park on it and other nearby lands. Instead visitors will enjoy historic farmland views and preserved waterways.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the coalition of partners previously conserved 101 acres in 2008 for the greenbelt and have since worked with the landowner and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to close two small landfills on the 46-acre property along Breza Road. An endowment contributed by the landowner, Neil VanCleaf, will provide funding to the Borough to support annual monitoring of the landfills to assure they have no impact on the greenbelt or nearby water resources.

"TPL is proud to have been part of securing this important addition to the community's ambitious greenbelt vision," said Anthony Cucchi, TPL's New Jersey state director. "We are grateful to Mr. VanCleaf, the Green Acres Program, and the Borough of Allentown for working hard over several years to see this conservation project through."

"The Borough of Allentown is appreciative to The Trust for Public Land, the County of Monmouth, and the State of New Jersey for their staunch support and unwavering commitment in assisting us to acquire the last 46 acres," said Borough of Allentown Mayor Stuart Fierstein. "I would like to thank all who have served on the governing body and our taxpayers in Allentown who have supported the creation of and increases to the Open Space Fund. The same to all of our volunteers who spent countless hours supporting this project as well as those who contributed funds for insurance on the parcel."

The properties augment Allentown's Heritage Park and, combined with other recent purchases by the Township of Robbinsville and the Upper Freehold Regional School District, a total of 355

acres have been placed in public ownership for the greenbelt. About 200 acres are active farmland, and bike and walking trails are planned for the property to provide access to the new Stone Bridge Middle School from downtown Allentown. The 46-acre property includes portions of both Indian Run and Doctors Creek, which are part of the regional Crosswicks Creek/Doctors Creek Greenway.

Funding for the \$1.31 million purchase of the 46-acre property was secured from several sources, including a \$625,000 NJDEP Green Acres grant to Allentown, \$178,871 NJDEP Green Acres State funds, a \$250,000 Monmouth County grant, \$175,000 from the Borough of Allentown's Open Space Trust Fund, a \$71,129 Green Acres Non Profit Grant to TPL, and \$10,000 from a local donor.

"The Christie Administration is committed to protecting the air, water, lands, and natural and historic resources of New Jersey. That is our core mission," said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. "This preservation effort fits right into that mission, preserving a key parcel that will protect open space and allow for enhanced natural and recreational opportunities. This year, as the Green Acres Program's celebrates its 50th anniversary, we are especially pleased to have helped complete this critical link in this important Greenbelt project."

The Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. Since 1972, TPL has helped protect nearly 3 million acres nationwide, including more than 24,000 acres in New Jersey. TPL depends on the support of individuals, corporations, and foundations.