



Athens Land Trust

West Broad Market Garden

Background & Context:

In November 2010, the Athens Land Trust, working in partnership with the University of Georgia, was awarded a Community Food Project grant from the USDA. The program aimed to increase healthy food options and economic opportunities for low-income residents. However, local zoning restrictions complicated the process of choosing a commercial agriculture site located near the target community. The West Broad property that was eventually selected previously housed the historic West Broad Elementary School that had been fenced off from the community for years.

Implementation:

In March 2012, the Athens Land Trust broke ground on the community garden located on the playground of the former school. Today, Athens Land Trust manages several agricultural programs at the West Broad Market Garden and will be adding a farmers market in May 2013.

“It’s important to have patience; these things will keep living and keep going.”

Challenges

Local zoning codes prohibited commercial agricultural land uses on most parcels located near the target community. As a result, implementation was delayed for a full year until a workable solution could be found. The West Broad site was eventually selected because it is owned by the school district and thus exempt from zoning restrictions. The Athens Land Trust does not own the site, but has permission to access the site for its agricultural programs.

Benefits

The garden has helped the Athens Land Trust expand its relationship and visibility to the local community while addressing an identified community need. Athens Land Trust is also able to serve a large number of residents through the West Broad Market Garden site and at a relatively low cost to the organization.

Project at a Glance

Location:	Athens, GA
Project Category:	Urban Agriculture
Year Completed:	2012
Agricultural Acreage:	1/2 Acre
CLT Role	Programmatic Support
Agricultural Activities:	Community Garden, Market Garden, CSA Market, Produce Stand
Tenure Arrangements for Securing Land:	Partnership with Clarke County School District
Major Partners:	Clarke County School District, University of Georgia
Website:	www.athenslandtrust.org
Staff Contact:	Heather Benham, Director of Operations heather@athenslandtrust.org

Lessons Learned

CLTs can use many methods to secure access to agricultural land. Athens Land Trust was not able to purchase suitable land due to local zoning codes that severely restricted commercial agricultural land uses. Further, as state tax policies assess CLT land at unrestricted market value, the holding costs associated with fee-simple ownership were prohibitively high. Athens Land Trust found a creative solution by partnering with the Clarke County School District to adapt and reinvigorate an underutilized parcel in the heart of the community.