



Madison Area CLT

Troy Gardens

Background & Context:

In 1996, the Madison Area CLT began participating in a coalition effort to save Troy Gardens, a beloved community garden and open space scheduled for redevelopment. After five years of planning and fundraising, the Madison Area CLT purchased the 31-acre Troy Gardens site in 2001. Another five years were required for fundraising, obtaining city development approvals, and completion of site planning and architectural work. Construction was completed in 2007.

Implementation:

Immediately upon purchase of the land, Madison Area CLT leased 26 acres of greenspace to the Friends of Troy Gardens (now Community GroundWorks), for the purposes of continuing the community garden, establishing a CSA farm, restoring a five-acre prairie, and developing an interpretive trail system. Community GroundWorks has since expanded its operations to include youth programming, adult education, and an off-site farming collaboration with Madison public schools.

“Community gardens are the best engine of community building that I have ever seen, crossing every conceivable boundary of class, race and culture.”

Challenges

The CLT engaged in lengthy negotiation with the State of Wisconsin to reduce the sale price to reflect the restrictions on the land. It was also necessary to create a custom zoning classification for the site. Finally, it was challenging to develop a long-term agricultural ground lease that suited the needs of the CLT and the lessee.

Benefits

The success at Troy Gardens brought Madison Area CLT new funding relationships, opportunities to write and teach about their experience, as well as a subsequent land donation. The agricultural and conservation elements provided a marketing advantage that helped keep sales strong through a declining market.

Project at a Glance

Location:	Madison, WI
Project Category:	Urban Agriculture
Year Completed:	2007
Agricultural Acreage:	10 Acres
CLT Role	Securing Land
Agricultural Activities:	Community Garden, Commercial CSA Farm
Tenure Arrangements for Securing Land:	Fee Simple Ownership, Ground Lease, Deed Restriction, Conservation Easement
Major Partners:	City of Madison CDBG Office, Northside Planning Council, University of Wisconsin, Urban Open Space Foundation
Website:	www.affordablehome.org
Staff Contact:	Andy Miller, Manager andy@affordablehome.org

Lessons Learned

Projects that blend a wide variety of land uses and incorporate a high level of neighborhood involvement, can take a lot of time to develop. It was also important for Madison Area CLT to develop a working understanding of urban agriculture issues in order to serve as master developer for the project, negotiate strong agricultural ground leases, and drive zoning discussions. Finally, Troy Gardens illustrates the wide variety of tenure arrangements that can be used to secure land for urban agriculture.