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**More Philly Residents Transforming Vacant Land with Help from  
[GroundedInPhilly.org](http://www.GroundedInPhilly.org) and Community Trainings**

Philadelphia, Pa. – The Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia’s [www.GroundedInPhilly.org](http://www.GroundedInPhilly.org) web mapping and organizing tool is now redesigned and updated to increase access to vacant land data for residents looking to transform vacant land for community use or preserve existing community spaces.

Philadelphia’s vacant land remains one of the city’s most visible challenges. With an estimated 40,000 public and private vacant lots across the city, vacant land has been known more for short dumping, tax delinquency, disinvestment, and threats to public safety, and for the quagmire involved in gaining legal access, than it has been associated with food production, green space, or community building. At the same time, Philadelphia residents have invested in our city’s vacancy as land stewards and urban farmers for decades, only to remain land insecure. The Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia is working to help residents change these narratives through Grounded in Philly and related initiatives.

[GroundedInPhilly.org](http://www.GroundedInPhilly.org) aggregates data on ownership, zoning, liability, permeability and other land characteristics from city agencies such as the Records Department, the City Planning Commission, the Water Department, Licenses & Inspections, the Office of Property Assessment, and the Redevelopment Authority. Residents can also use the site to connect with one another and start a project together if they are interested in using the same land. The website originally launched in 2013 to help connect residents to this data and to one another. Since then, the site has received more than 71,000 page views and over 100 gardeners have connected through the site to organize around 255 lots. Updated data and a streamlined design were added in early 2015, making the website even more user-friendly. Grounded in Philly will soon be enhanced to allow users to download a comprehensive database of vacant parcel data.

“Grounded in Philly brings together the information residents need to start the process to obtain legal access to vacant land or preserve their long-time garden,” said Amy Laura Cahn, director of the Garden Justice Legal Initiative at the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia. “On top of that, we are providing resources to help people connect to their neighbors and their political officials and become advocates in navigating the process.”

Grounded in Philly has provided a space to understand progress in the city’s effort to create and launch its new land bank, and supported residents to provide input around equitable access and urban agriculture in the land bank strategic planning process. While Philadelphia’s new land bank is gearing up, [GroundedinPhilly.org](http://www.GroundedinPhilly.org) will continue to fill an important information gap. And, even after the land bank becomes fully functional, [GroundedinPhilly.org](http://www.GroundedinPhilly.org) will continue to provide information to residents looking to understand the process.

In addition to providing information online, the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia is committed to working with community organizations to bring resources to residents in person and

on the ground. On Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, more than 90 residents, including community gardeners and market farmers, are scheduled to come together at Kensington CAPA High School for a “Vacant Land Information Session.” This Neighborhood Advisory Committee Service Area Briefing is co-sponsored by the Philadelphia Office of Housing & Community Development, New Kensington CDC, the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, the Healthy Foods Green Spaces coalition, and Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez is scheduled to open the meeting.

“For decades, residents have been determining the best use for vacant land in their neighborhoods,” said Kirtrina Baxter, community organizer for the Garden Justice Legal Initiative at the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia. “Through Grounded in Philly and our in-person training sessions, we are putting information, and therefore power, in the hands of community members so that they can actually carry out their plans for land in their neighborhood for years to come.”

Tuesday night’s training session is the second of its kind. The first, held last December, was attended by more than 80 people from across the city. In addition to a brief training, attendees will have the opportunity to meet with experts one-on-one to gain individualized counsel on zoning, water and other important topics.

[GroundedInPhilly.org](http://GroundedInPhilly.org) was created through a partnership between the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia and 596 Acres in Brooklyn, New York, and funded by the Merck Family Fund and The Claneil Foundation. Earlier this month, 596 Acres launched an updated community land access tool for their hometown, New York City: [LivingLotsNYC.org](http://LivingLotsNYC.org). [LivingLotsNYC.org](http://LivingLotsNYC.org) is a clearinghouse of information that New Yorkers will use to find, unlock and protect shared resources. [LivingLotsNYC.org](http://LivingLotsNYC.org) draws on lessons learned from the pilot, feedback from users of [GroundedinPhilly.org](http://GroundedinPhilly.org), and a shared codebase with a suite of Living Lots platforms that includes [LAOpenAcres.org](http://LAOpenAcres.org) and [LivingLotsNOLA.org](http://LivingLotsNOLA.org).

Learn more at <http://www.groundedinphilly.org> or [@Grounded215](https://twitter.com/Grounded215).

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**The Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia** is a nonprofit law firm that uses high-impact legal strategies to improve the well-being and life prospects of the region’s most vulnerable populations by securing access to six deeply intertwined resources – high-quality public education, healthcare, employment, housing, safe and healthy neighborhoods, and the right to vote. Through the Garden Justice Legal Initiative, the Law Center provides pro bono legal support, advocacy, education and organizing to community gardeners and market farmers in Philadelphia’s historically disinvested neighborhoods. Learn more at [www.pilcop.org](http://www.pilcop.org) or [@PILCOP1969](https://twitter.com/PILCOP1969).