



Adopt-A-Lot

Potential Program Updates

Proposed Amendments to the Vacant Lot Toolkit

Expanded Uses and Activities

Currently, the Adopt-A-Lot program only allows for gardening, but we hope to expand it to also permit the following uses and activities:

- General Maintenance
- Commercial Vending
- Community Signage
- Community Use/Public Space
- Managed Natural Landscapes
- Public Art
- Play Fields
- Tree Nurseries
- Community events (eg. pop-up markets, outdoor movie theaters, workout classes, etc)

Prohibited Uses

- Parking
- Beer Gardens
- Parks & Dog Parks (currently prohibited)
- Memorials (currently prohibited)

Expanded Elements

This list reflects requested elements for Adopt-A-Lot sites. Each of these elements remain subject to relevant zoning and permitting requirements:

- High Tunnels
- Compost Bins
- Donation Pantries
- Shipping Containers
- Solar Panels (off grid)
- Chess Tables
- Temporary Cooking Stations
- Wash & Pack Stations
- Portable Generators
- Announcement Boards
- Bike Fixing Stations
- Canopy Tents (less than 400 sq ft)
- Trash Containers
- Temporary Sports Equipment
- Stages (with Special Events Permit)
- Picnic Tables
- Signage

Prohibited Elements

- Tires
- Playground Equipment
- Elements requiring concrete footing
- Trees (excluding nurseries)
- Boulders for climbing

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<https://engage.pittsburghpa.gov/adopt-a-lot>



Questions? Contact us:
oss@pittsburghpa.gov



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Policy and Process Updates

Proposed feasible policy changes requested:

- Permit employees and volunteers with paid stipends to steward Adopt-A-Lot sites.
- Provide greater resources on potential land access and ownership pathways based on interest in site permanency.
- Increase revenue limits beyond \$10,000 with a vending license.
- Allow for use of Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) pesticides and herbicides which meets USDA Organic Standards.
- Create an online application.
- Create an online liability waiver.

Lease Updates

- Update and clarify termination clause language and in what instances it may be used. It is important to note that the termination clause has not been used in the past to cancel lease agreements prior to their expiration.
- Maintain 1-3 year lease terms which may be renewed, in alignment with the City sale process and the majority response through engagement.
- Outline a remediation process and timeline for any Adopt-A-Lot sites out of compliance, which is not currently clarified.
- Extend the written notice period from 90 days to 180 days for leaseholders.
- Extend the holding period for removal of goods from 30 days to 90 days.

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Permit Paid Staff & Volunteers

Many organizations that steward vacant land believe in compensating folks for their time and effort. We are proposing to remove the prohibition that would allow organizations to pay employees or volunteers stewarding the land.

Commercial Vending

Commercial vending will be permitted as a primary use in commercial districts with suitable environmental conditions. Vending as an accessory use to agriculture, such as market stands, can be sited in any zoning district. The revenue limit may be increased from \$10,000 to \$50,000; beyond that limit, a vending license may be required.

Update Program Toolkit

The Vacant Lot Toolkit will be updated to reflect these more expansive program changes. It will provide guidance on what the program is, what is allowed and prohibited, process steps, application guidelines, and relevant resources.

Provide Resources around Land Access & Ownership Pathways

While Adopt-A-Lot is a temporary use program, the updated Toolkit will provide greater resources on pathways for land access or ownership for any applicant seeking longer-term use or to acquire City-owned property.

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Community Event Guidelines

Reserving Vacant Lots for Events

Those interested in hosting an event on a City-owned vacant lot without an Adopt-A-Lot agreement can go through the traditional event permitting process through the Office of Film & Event Management, by submitting a request for a Special Event Permit. If site prep is needed to clear or maintain a vacant lot prior to the event, folks can submit a DPW Volunteer Application to mow or clean up the site before event setup.

Small Events on Adopt-A-Lot Sites

Since Adopt-A-Lot participants already hold a lease for the space, they don't need to apply for a Special Events Permit for events that do not meet those requirements. The updated Toolkit will clarify when a Special Event Permit is not needed, which includes:

- Volunteer workdays
- Community events under the occupancy limit in the lease
- Pop-up markets

See below for proposed guidance regarding when leaseholders will need a Special Events permit.

Special Events Permitting

The Department of City Planning has coordinated with the Office of Film and Event Management to provide pathways and guidelines for leaseholders to facilitate safe and successful community-building events on City-owned vacant lots. The special events process plays an important role in both providing access to City-owned property and ensuring coordination with all relevant departments to provide support.

Adopt-A-Lot Leaseholders should apply for a Special Events Permit for needs including but not limited to:

- Amplified sound
- Potential obstructions of sidewalks or streets
- Additional City resources and coordination with Police, EMS, Fire, and/or Dept. of Public Works
- Stages
- Equipment rentals from Dept. of Public Works

Events expecting occupancy over 25 people must reach out to Special Events staff to confirm whether or not a permit is needed. For any questions regarding event permits, contact: ofem@pittsburghpa.gov

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