



NORTHERN  
VIRGINIA  
CONSERVATION  
TRUST



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**American Horticultural Society threatens sale of George Washington’s farm to developers while under investigation by Attorneys General**

*Virginia governor calls River Farm a “unique property of national significance”;  
Policymakers unite to preserve 27-acre open space on the Potomac River*

**ALEXANDRIA, Va.** — The Save River Farm Committee today called on the leaders of the American Horticultural Society (AHS) to publicly declare that they will not sell River Farm to any entity that fails to preserve the historic home and its 27-acre gardens as an open space available to all, the terms under which AHS acquired the property in 1973.

AHS listed River Farm for sale in September, citing ongoing management costs and a decline in fundraising revenue. The organization, which is dedicated to preserving open space, has neither ruled out selling the property for redevelopment nor stated its intention to maintain the property as a public open space. It is accepting bids to purchase the property until Jan. 4, 2021.

AHS — whose mission “blends education, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship with the art and practice of horticulture,” according to its website — acquired River Farm, once owned by George Washington, in 1973 from philanthropist Enid Haupt, with an understanding that AHS would never redevelop the property.

“Thousands of local residents and concerned citizens are up in arms about the threat of losing this natural and historic treasure,” said Alan Rowsome, executive director of the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT), which is leading the Save River Farm

initiative. “We’re working to assemble a financial package to purchase the property, and we need time and cooperation to make that happen.”

The proposed sale and potential redevelopment of the property have resulted in numerous investigations. Virginia’s Attorney General Mark Herring is investigating the details of AHS’s acquisition of River Farm. In the District of Columbia, where AHS is incorporated, Attorney General Karl Racine is also examining AHS closely.

The proposed sale has spurred local political leaders, as well as Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, to join forces to preserve River Farm. “We hold our historic and public spaces in high esteem and need to think twice before selling them to the highest bidder,” said Northam in a letter to AHS on Nov. 20.

As the leader of the Save River Farm effort, NVCT has been working with conservation partners, local governments and private landowners to preserve, restore and steward land in Northern Virginia. The regional nonprofit has preserved more than 8,000 acres in urban and rural areas over the past 25 years. Every parcel of land that NVCT preserves is safeguarded from development forever.

For more information about the effort to save River Farm, visit [saveriverfarm.com](http://saveriverfarm.com).

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**About Northern Virginia Conservation Trust:** NVCT is a regional nonprofit land trust that forever conserves, manages, and advocates for land with natural, historical, and cultural value to Northern Virginia communities. NVCT’s service area includes 2.9 million residents in a fast-growing region that needs more outdoor recreation spaces. For more information, visit [nvct.org](http://nvct.org).