

## Pittsburg: Coming home to help feed the community



Heracio "Ray" Harts, 43, of Dublin, grew up playing in this area of El Pueblo and now he has big plans to grow food on the nearly 2 acre lot where he once ran around as a boy in Pittsburg, Calif., on Thursday, March 2, 2017. Healthy Hearts Institute, a nonprofit designed to bring health and wellness programs to the poor in Contra Costa County's subsidized-housing communities, is rolling out a new website and starting a large community garden and urban farm at here. Harts has plans to start with 10 raised garden beds, a 500 square foot shade structure and an urban farm where crops would be sold to local restaurants. (Susan Tripp Pollard/Bay Area News Group)

PITTSBURG — Heracio Harts grew up near the El Pueblo housing project, and now he's come back to grow vegetables there.

Harts, known by most as "Ray," stands on a 2-acre plot, thick with tall grass fed by recent rains. That rain has also added a layer of rust to an old baseball backstop he said he'll tear out to make room for a community garden behind the El Pueblo main office. It's a main component of the Healthy Hearts Institute, a nonprofit Harts started in 2014 to operate both a community garden and an urban farm to help pay for the enterprise. The urban farm, Harts said, would sell produce — to the school district or restaurants, for instance — to help pay for the garden. The Housing Authority will pay for the water.

Harts hopes that, on April 29, he and a dozen or so other people will be planting the first crops in this garden.