

Memorandum

Date: August 13th, 2026
To: Policy Board Members
From: MPO Staff
Subject: Community Garden

This memorandum is to update the Policy Board on the Community Garden Grant.

Background

As part of planned improvements to Greenbag Road, the WVDOH will widen the roadway, add sidewalks, and install roundabouts at two underperforming intersections. Unfortunately, this project will displace an existing community garden that serves local residents. To mitigate the loss of the community garden the Federal Highway Administrative allocated \$14,588.51 to the MMMPO. This money was distributed to four different community gardens. These are described below.

Community Gardens

Freedom Fighter's Community Garden

- Morgantown Freedom Farmer's now has three producing gardens that have been funded through this grant: Dorsey Ln, Montrose Ave and Food not Bombs Sabra. 15 volunteers maintain a variety of herbs, vegetables, and flowers. About 30 lbs. of produce has gone to Blessing boxes, Food not Bombs meals and neighbors. They are promoted via Morgantown Mutual Aid Facebook pages and participate in several seed and plant swaps. They look to expand the gardens, offer individual beds and have community gatherings in the upcoming seasons.

Chris White's Community Garden

- The community garden has expanded its outreach through a dedicated Facebook page, WVU's iServe, word-of-mouth, partnerships with local gardening groups, and donations from area plant producers, attracting 2–3 dozen volunteers during its first season. In 2025, a quarter-acre, 10-foot-high deer fence was installed, followed in 2026 by hardware cloth to deter rabbits and other pests, along with woodchips and leaf compost to improve the garden area. The garden's successful soft-opening season included tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, basil, dill, garlic, fruit trees, and two well-received culinary mushroom workshops. Grant funding has additionally supported construction of a chicken coop to provide eggs to volunteers. Volunteers can participate in individual garden plots or communal crops, with produce and other offerings such as garlic, peppers, eggs, and mushrooms shared with the community. Looking ahead, the garden

plans to expand food production, complete mulching and composting, offer canning, pickling, tree-tapping, and mushroom workshops, plant additional fruit trees, and potentially introduce beekeeping as the property continues to grow into a vibrant community resource.

Greenmont Neighborhood Association Community Garden

- The Greenmont Neighborhood Association Community Garden includes 10 raised beds rented and maintained by residents, families, neighborhood groups, and local businesses. The MMMPO Community Garden Grant funding sustained the project by supporting water access, raised beds, and soil. Extensive outreach through neighborhood emails, meetings, social media, and signage resulted in all 10 beds being occupied, involving several dozen residents, children, and at least four households or groups new to the Neighborhood Association. Gardeners have grown a variety of vegetables, herbs, and flowers, including tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, tomatillos, squash, basil, and sunflowers, with produce shared among gardeners, families, neighbors, and local community businesses. The garden has also fostered collaboration and learning among first-time gardeners, encouraged pollinators and biodiversity, and created opportunities for neighbors to share plants, knowledge, and maintenance responsibilities. Looking ahead, the Association plans to explore additional beds, expand native and perennial plantings, improve coordination and education for gardeners, and use soil testing and WVU Extension resources to support another successful growing season.

Scott's Run Settlement House Community Garden

- Scott's Run Settlement House engages the public through social media, its website, and its volunteer database to share community garden updates, recruit volunteers, and promote opportunities for community participation. The garden, funded through the Community Garden Initiative Grant, currently produces tomatoes, squash, pumpkins, and herbs, with cucumbers and zucchini also grown earlier in the season. Fresh produce is made available to community members through the food pantry and other food-access programs, while harvests and distribution are being tracked to better measure the quantity of fresh produce provided. Moving forward, Scott's Run Settlement House plans to expand the garden's purpose beyond food production by offering gardening and food preservation classes that provide community members with practical skills they can use at home. Approximately three volunteers consistently assist with garden activities, while larger volunteer groups periodically support special projects, maintenance, and other seasonal needs.

Attached Presentations

The following attached presentations are as follows:

1. Freedom Fighter's Community Garden
2. Chris White's Community Garden
3. Greenmont Neighborhood Association Community Garden
4. Scott's Run Settlement House Community Garden

Each presentation includes information on public involvement, outreach, volunteers, produce grown, and pictures.

Morgantown Mutual Aid

Freedom Farmers Community Gardens

Community gardens, local produce, food security,
and the case for investing in them.

A cooperative effort with the WVU Center for Resilient Communities, the WVU Campus Garden, the City of Morgantown, the Monongalia County Commission and the MMMPO.



Vacant land, hungry households, willing neighbors

Most neighborhoods already have what a garden needs — underused land, residents who want fresh food, and people willing to do the work.

A garden turns an idle lot into a food source and a gathering place, at a fraction of the cost of most public amenities.



Idle land

Vacant lots, verges, and rooftops sit unused in nearly every ward.

Food deserts here

4 of Monongalia County's 24 census tracts are USDA-designated food deserts.

Ready volunteers

Waiting lists for plots are common wherever gardens already exist.

How a community garden works

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- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|--|
| 01 | Secure the site | A lease or license on public or donated land, typically three to five years. |
| 02 | Build the beds | Raised beds, soil, water access, tool storage, and a shaded gathering area. |
| 03 | Allocate plots | Household plots plus shared beds whose harvest goes to food pantries. |
| 04 | Grow the growers | Seasonal workshops on soil, seed-starting, pests, and preserving. |
| 05 | Share the harvest | Weekly pickups, market stalls, and donations that close the loop. |



What comes out of the beds

Community plots favour crops that are high-value at the grocery store, forgiving for first-time growers, and quick to reach a family's table.

Leafy greens

Lettuce, kale, chard, spinach

Fast, repeat-harvest, and the priciest greens to buy fresh.

Fruiting crops

Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash

The volume crops — one bed can feed a household through summer.

Roots & alliums

Carrots, beets, radish, onions, garlic

Store well, so surplus keeps feeding people past the season.

Herbs & flowers

Basil, mint, parsley, marigold

Cheap to start, draw pollinators, and deter common pests.

A year in the beds

LATE WINTER

Plan & sow indoors

Seed orders, soil tests, tomato and pepper starts under lights.

SPRING

Prepare & plant

Compost the beds, direct-sow greens and roots, open plot sign-ups.

SUMMER

Harvest & share

Peak volume — weekly pickups, market stall, pantry donations.

AUTUMN

Store & renew

Last harvests, cover crops, preserving workshops, tool repair.



One garden, three constituencies



Households

Families growing real food in a county where 21.1% of residents live far from a grocery store.



Neighbors

Older residents and newcomers who gain a weekly reason to be somewhere together.



Food programs

Pantries and meal programs receiving fresh produce in a state where 1 in 6 people faces hunger.

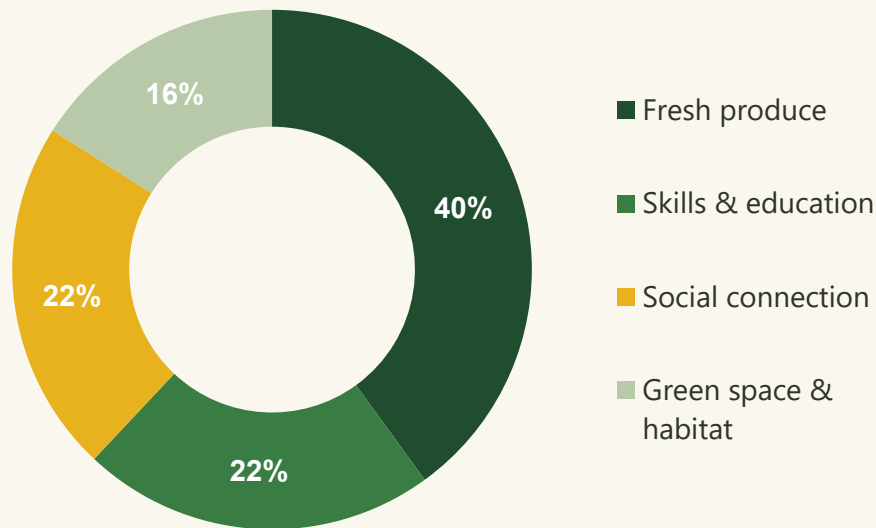


Few investments this size touch food security, public health, green space, and social connection at once.

Where the value shows up

Illustrative allocation of a garden's annual value

Nearby proof: the WVU Campus Food Garden donated nearly 900 lbs of produce to Morgantown pantries in the 2024 season from roughly 425 square feet of beds.



What funding builds

Item	What it covers	Type
Site setup	Raised beds, soil, fencing, signage, and a water connection	One-time
Tools & storage	Shared tool library, a lockable shed, and a compost system	One-time
Seeds & seedlings	Season's seed stock plus starts for first-time growers	Annual
Coordination	A part-time garden coordinator — the single biggest driver of survival	Annual
Education	Workshop series, youth sessions, and printed growing guides	Annual

A coordinator is the line most often cut and the one most closely tied to whether a garden is still running in year three.

How we measure it

Beds under cultivation

Share of plots planted and actively tended each season.

Produce harvested

Weight logged at pickup, split between households and donation.

Participation

Active plot-holders, volunteer hours, and workshop attendance.

Reach beyond the fence

Pantry deliveries, free meals and filling up Blessing boxes.

Reporting rhythm

- Harvest logged weekly by plot-holders
- Photo and volunteer-hour record each month
- Short written report at end of season
- Open site visit for funders any time

THE ASK

Support the work

Volunteer, spread the word or fund a build and one year of coordination.
We'll return seasons of produce, a place for neighbors to gather, and reduce food insecurity.



Morgantown Mutual Aid · Freedom Farmers Community Gardens

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Chris White's Community Garden

Address

- 31 Davis Heights Road, Maidsville WV,
26541

Contact Information:

- 304-276-2485
- Facebook- MILF Acres Community Garden

Public Outreach

- Made a Facebook page for the community garden to share information/updates and post events
- Listed the garden on WVU's iServe.
- They have brought in a fair amount of people through word of mouth. They have networked with other community gardening groups in the area and gotten donations from local plant producers.
- We have had 2-3 dozen different volunteers over this first season, with many making multiple visits and becoming regulars.

2025

- Built a quarter acre, 10ft tall, high-tensile wire fence to keep out deer.



2026 Community Garden Progress

- Installed hardware cloth along the lower portion of the fence to reduce rabbit and other pest issues
- Added woodchips and leaf compost throughout much of the garden
- Successful “soft opening” season, despite ongoing mulching and weeding needs
- Established a variety of crops:
 - 24 tomato plants
 - 24 pepper plants
 - 20 cucumber, squash, and pumpkin plants
 - Basil and dill
- Volunteers can choose to:
 - Maintain their own personal garden section
 - Contribute to communal crops

Community Programs & Future Growth

- Hosted two successful culinary mushroom log workshops
- Secured Try This WV grant funding for a new chicken coop
 - Coop will provide eggs for volunteers
 - Construction is nearly halfway complete
 - Expected to be completed in the coming weeks
- Fruit trees established on the property:
 - Peach trees grown from Romney peach pits
 - Apple trees
 - Paw paw trees
 - Plans for juneberry, mulberry, and additional paw paw trees

Harvest & Looking Ahead

- Large garlic crop that roughly doubles in size each year
- Produce and other garden resources offered to volunteers as available, with priority for those who contribute the most volunteer hours
- Community offerings to date include:
 - Garlic
 - Peppers
 - Eggs
 - Culinary mushrooms
- Rabbit issues impacted production this season, but the garden is successfully producing despite these challenges
- The garden is positioned to provide increasing amounts of fresh produce in the coming years

2027 Plans & Garden Expansion

- Complete mulching and composting across the garden
 - Reduce weeds and maintenance needs
 - Improve soil health and growing conditions
- Expand food production as the community garden continues to develop
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- Plant additional fruit trees
- Continue offering culinary mushroom log workshops
- Explore future opportunities for beekeeping

Education & Community Programs

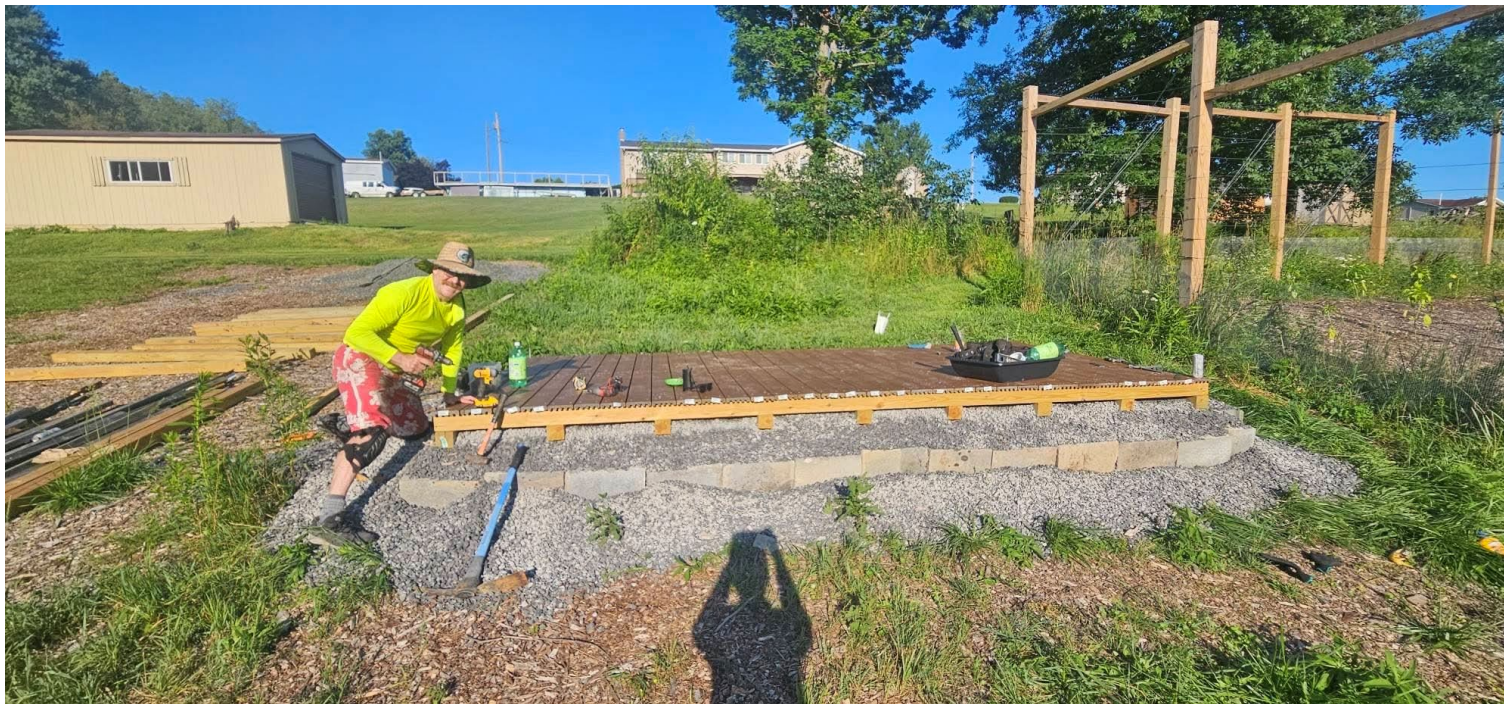
- Offer maple and black walnut tree tapping/syrup production education
- Host canning and pickling workshops as produce becomes available
- Continue expanding hands-on educational opportunities related to gardening and food preservation

Growing a Sustainable Community Resource

- Property includes approximately ½ acre of native wildflower beds
- Increasing emphasis on food production, education, and biodiversity
- Community garden is developing into a large, diverse, and sustainable community resource
- Expect significantly increased food production in the coming seasons

Pictures













Greenmont Neighborhood Association

Address:

- 418 Arch Street, Morgantown, WV
26501

Contact Information:

- GNAMorgantown@gmail.com

Project Overview

- The Greenmont Neighborhood Association Community Garden includes 10 raised garden beds that are rented and maintained by Greenmont residents, families, groups of neighbors, and local business owners.
- The MMMPO Community Garden Grant made this project possible.
- The garden now provides an affordable and accessible opportunity for residents to grow food, including people who live in apartments or who may not have suitable land, water access, or the financial resources needed to establish a garden at home.

Community Outreach and Participation

- Before the growing season began, they announced that garden bed applications were available through several of the Greenmont Neighborhood Association's established communication channels. This included:
 - Multiple emails to our neighborhood email list of more than 100 people
 - Discussions at three monthly neighborhood association meetings
 - Several reminders to members
 - Posts on our Instagram account, which has several hundred followers

Community Outreach and Participation

- Placed a sign on the garden gate with the Greenmont Neighborhood Association's email address.
- All 10 beds are occupied. While there are 10 beds, the garden involves far more than 10 people. Most beds are shared among members of the community.
- At least four of the participating households or groups had not previously been involved with the Greenmont Neighborhood Association. The garden has therefore also helped introduce new residents to the association and encouraged broader neighborhood participation.

Food Grown and Shared

- Tomatoes and cherry tomatoes
 - Cucumbers
 - Peppers
 - Tomatillos
 - Squash and other vining vegetables
 - Basil and other herbs
 - Sunflowers
 - Pollinator-friendly flowering plants
- Most beds with established tomato plants have produced or are on track to produce at least 50 tomatoes per bed, with some producing considerably more.
 - Across the garden, we estimate that around 100 tomatillos have been produced, and herbs such as basil have been harvested consistently throughout the growing season.
 - Cucumbers have also been especially productive; one bed alone produced at least 20 cucumbers within a roughly two-week period.

Food Grown and Shared

- Produce has been shared among the families and groups maintaining each bed, as well as with friends, children, and nearby neighbors. Some gardeners have also shared excess produce through relationships with local community businesses.
- A local neighbor donated several dozen plants during the first few weeks the garden was open. These were left near the front of the garden and developed into an informal plant exchange where garden renters and passing neighbors could take plants. Several beds now contain vegetables that began with these donations.
- The garden has also encouraged cooperation among participants. When one renter was away for approximately one-month, other gardeners divided the responsibility of watering, maintaining, and harvesting that bed until the renter returned.

Additional Community Benefits

- Many of the participants are first-time gardeners, so the garden has also become a shared learning experience. Gardeners have exchanged advice, helped manage one another's plants, and learned how much space certain crops require.
- The flower-focused bed and the native and perennial plants near the front of the garden have attracted pollinators and promoted biodiversity. The native and perennial plants have been especially successful because they generally require very little hose watering and are primarily sustained by rainfall.

Future Plans

- Exploring whether additional raised beds can fit within the existing garden space
- Expanding native and perennial plantings along the garden borders
- Coordinating some crops among multiple beds to use the available space more efficiently
- Continuing to include flowering plants that support pollinators
- Improving support and education for first-time gardeners
- Lottery for a fair selection process for next growing season

Future Plans

- Tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, and other vining plants grew much larger than many participants expected. Greater coordination may allow gardeners to concentrate some crops in designated areas while creating more room for other vegetables and herbs.
- We will also need to determine which soil amendments should be added before the next growing season. We plan to use the WVU Extension soil-testing program again to help guide those decisions. The Extension group has also discussed helping our members with seed starting before the next growing season, which could make gardening more affordable and help participants begin planting earlier.













SCOTT'S RUN SETTLEMENT HOUSE

Address

- 750 Fairchance Rd

Contact Information:

- info@srsh.org

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & PARTICIPATION

- We engage the public through our social media pages, website, and volunteer data base.
- These platforms allow us to:
 - Share community garden updates
 - Recruit volunteers
 - Promote opportunities to participate
 - Connect community members with garden and food-access opportunities

WHAT THEY ARE GROWING

Current Crops

- Tomatoes
- Squash
- Pumpkins
- Herbs

Earlier in the Growing Season

- Cucumbers
- Zucchini
- Tomatoes
- Herbs

Community Impact

- Fresh produce is distributed through our food pantry and other food-access programs.
- We are tracking harvests and distribution to better quantify the amount of fresh produce provided to community members.

EXPANDING GARDEN EDUCATION

- Our goal is to expand the garden's role as a community learning space.
- Use produce grown in the garden for gardening and food preservation classes
- Provide community members with practical, hands-on skills
- Help neighbors learn how to:
 - Grow fresh food at home
 - Preserve their harvest
 - Make the most of fresh, locally grown food

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Current Volunteer Support

- Approximately 3 volunteers consistently assist with garden activities.
- Larger volunteer groups also participate periodically.
- Group volunteers help with:
 - Garden maintenance
 - Special projects
 - Seasonal tasks
- Goal: Continue building volunteer involvement and community participation in the garden.







