



River Trails

SCHOOL DISTRICT 26

To: Operations Committee
From: Ryan Berry
Date: October 6, 2026
Subject: Community Garden Update

Introduction

The River Trails School District 26 School and Community Garden was established in 2012 to develop a network of community gardeners who could grow fresh food for their own enjoyment and use, while also providing students with opportunities to learn how food is grown and encouraging healthy food choices.

Over time, use of the garden by the school has declined, and the garden has not been utilized as an instructional space in recent years. In addition, the physical condition of the garden, including portions of the fencing and garden infrastructure, has deteriorated and requires attention.

Recommendation

Provide the Operations Committee with an overview of the history, current use, condition, and potential future options for the community garden. Following this meeting, the district will further evaluate the available options and return to the Operations Committee in spring 2027 with more detailed information, including financial considerations, and seek a formal decision regarding the future of the community garden.

Background

Historical

The community garden network was designed to foster community connections, increase awareness of the ecological and health benefits of locally grown food, and provide opportunities for gardeners and community members to learn from one another. At its inception, the network included the District 26 garden and two additional community gardens, with members participating in quarterly meetings.

The original community garden was established through donations from district vendors and community members who contributed time, materials, and labor to construct the garden. Gardeners also raised funds and organized educational and training opportunities for members.

At the time, members were expected to participate on a committee and could contribute in areas including garden maintenance, social events and activities, education, community outreach, or donations and fundraising.

Current

The garden currently has 10 members who rent individual plots for \$20 per plot. Three of the current gardeners reside outside the district boundaries. Gardeners are responsible for growing and maintaining their own plots and retain the produce they grow.

The garden has had limited use as an educational resource for the school in recent years. Current gardeners have occasionally raised concerns regarding community members using the adjacent soccer area or interactions among community members. These concerns have not significantly affected the educational environment.

The physical condition of the garden has deteriorated over the past several years, particularly the fencing and other garden infrastructure. Routine maintenance has also been limited.

The \$20 plot rental fee currently collected by the district is used to offset the cost of water provided to the garden.

Community Member Input

On September 28, 2026, the district sent a letter to all current garden members seeking input regarding the future of the community garden. Members were asked whether they would be willing to:

- Volunteer time to help maintain and improve the garden;
- Take a leadership role in organizing and coordinating garden members; and
- Provide financial, material, or other resources to support the garden.

Responses are due October 15, 2026. The feedback will help inform the district's evaluation of the available options.

Analysis of Options

Option 1: Community-Led Revitalization: Community members would take a more active role in revitalizing, organizing, and maintaining the community garden. This could include coordinating volunteers, identifying resources and donations, addressing maintenance needs, and establishing expectations for ongoing care of the space. Under this option, the district would determine the appropriate level of district involvement and support.

Option 2: District Investment and Revitalization: The district would use district funds to repair and improve the existing community garden. Potential improvements could include fencing, garden infrastructure, landscaping, and other necessary repairs. This option would require an initial district investment as well as an ongoing commitment to maintenance.

Option 3: Removal of the Community Garden and Conversion to Green Space: The district would remove the existing community garden and convert the area to maintained green space. This option would require an initial investment to remove the existing garden infrastructure and establish the new green space, but would likely result in lower ongoing maintenance costs than maintaining the community garden.

Financial Impact

Options 2 and 3 would require an initial investment of district funds. Option 1 may require fewer district resources if community members are willing and able to provide significant volunteer labor, materials, funding, and ongoing leadership.

A more detailed cost estimate will be developed as the district evaluates the condition of the existing garden, receives input from current members, and determines the scope of work associated with each option.

Timeline and Next Steps

- October 15, 2026: Current garden members' responses due
- November 2026: Review and evaluate member feedback and determine potential next steps
- December 2026–January 2027: Develop preliminary budgets and scope of work for the options under consideration
- Spring 2027: Return to the Operations Committee with final options, financial information, and a recommendation for consideration

Attachments

[Letter](#) sent to community garden members.