

ROOTS & RESILIENCE



BUILDING A FARM & EDUCATION CENTER



A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to share with you Roots Rising's latest and most ambitious project yet: the establishment of our very own Farm and Education Center.

In February 2024, we acquired a 6.5-acre parcel of land in Pittsfield which will be transformational for our organization and Berkshire County. This space will serve as more than just a farm: it will be the heart of our operations, our homebase, and a place to grow food for our community. It is here that we will nurture the next generation of food system changemakers: empowering them with a deep connection to the land, valuable experience for the future, and the essential skills desperately needed by farmers and food producers in our community.

The Farm and Education Center's design is built to adapt to the ever-changing needs of our community. Because of our Youth Crews and Pittsfield Farmers Market, Roots Rising is uniquely tuned into the food security, agricultural, and youth development needs of our community. We know when food assistance needs are increasing, understand the challenges faced by our local farmers, and gather critical insights directly from the teens we work with, which we then integrate into our programs. With flexible infrastructure and a strong connection to the land, our Farm and Education Center is poised to be a resilient source of support for years to come.

However, to fully bring this vision to life, we need your help! We aim to raise \$5 million through our capital campaign. This funding will not only complete the build-out of our farm and facilities by 2026 but also establish a solid foundation for the long-term sustainability of our mission.

Together, we can create a future where food justice, community empowerment, and environmental stewardship thrive.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jessica Vecchia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jessica" and last name "Vecchia" clearly legible.

Jessica Vecchia
Executive Director & Co-Founder
Roots Rising



ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

At Roots Rising, our commitment to community-driven growth is at the core of everything we do. Our journey began with a year-long process of deep farm visioning alongside our Youth Crew teens. Through this collaborative effort, we listened intently to the aspirations of Pittsfield's youth. Their resounding message was clear: they want a space to belong to, a space to connect with each other and the land, and a space that is *theirs*.

Expanding our dialogue, we engaged the broader community. With diverse voices at the table, including Youth Crew alumni, farmers, program partners, funders, and market shoppers, we delved into pivotal questions. What are our shared dreams for this community? How can a Farm and Education Center align with and bolster that vision? And importantly, what obstacles hinder engagement with existing programs, and how can we transform this Farm and Education Center into an inclusive and dynamic resource for all?

The plans laid out here are a reflection of these diverse voices, embodying our shared commitment to creating a Farm and Education Center that truly belongs to everyone.

THE TIME IS NOW!

In the face of some of the most pressing issues of our time, we believe our Farm and Education Center will be a beacon of hope and resilience.



Photo by Stephanie Zollshan for The B

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity remains a persistent crisis, especially in Berkshire County. According to The Greater Boston Food Bank and Mass General Brigham's 2024 study, 1 in 3 Massachusetts adults reports food insecurity. Berkshire County is among the hardest-hit regions, with 45% of households experiencing food insecurity. Rising food costs, the end of pandemic-era supports, and rural isolation have further exacerbated this issue.

- **By dedicating nearly three acres to food production and providing space for food processing and distribution, the Farm and Education Center will increase year-round access to fresh, affordable food.**

CLIMATE CRISIS

The climate crisis is already impacting our food system, with extreme weather events, shifting growing seasons, and declining soil health threatening crop yields and long-term food security.

- **The Farm and Education Center will employ regenerative practices that mitigate climate impact by capturing carbon, reducing emissions, conserving water, and promoting biodiversity—while teaching youth and community members to steward thriving, resilient ecosystems in a changing world.**



FARMLAND PROTECTION

From 1971 to 2016, Pittsfield has lost nearly 2,000 acres of pasture and cropland—a 57% reduction in active farmland. This mirrors both regional and national trends of farmland disappearing due to development and other pressures, threatening biodiversity and food security. And as farmland disappears, its value climbs. Massachusetts now has the third most expensive farmland in the country, averaging \$14,300 per acre in 2024.

- **The Farm and Education Center will preserve farmland and actively engage youth and community members in its long-term stewardship.**

AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE

Due to the seasonal nature of farming, it is difficult for farms to retain skilled labor year to year— particularly in regions like the Berkshires with the high cost of living. Massachusetts was recently ranked by Forbes Advisor as having the second-highest cost of living in the nation.

- **By building affordable on-site apprenticeship housing and offering hands-on training, the Farm and Education Center will help develop a reliable and skilled agricultural workforce.**

A FLEXIBLE OPERATING MODEL

We aim to create a farm with a flexible operating model. Roots Rising as an organization is nimble, bold, and responsive, attributes the Farm will share as well.

With close ties to the community and local farms, Roots Rising has consistently shown our ability to assess local needs and adapt our programming accordingly. Likewise, our Farm and Education Center will be designed to co-evolve its production and programming alongside changing community needs.

Roots Rising's deep roots in the community and commitment to remaining agile and nimble will allow our Farm and Education Center to be a source of support and resilience for both our community and our local food system.



THE MAIN HOUSE

Introducing "The Main House" originally built in the mid-1800s. Once the existing building is renovated, it will house our offices and provide dedicated areas for community gatherings and educational programs. The Main House will be a welcoming space where staff, volunteers, and visitors can collaborate, learn, and connect, supporting the growth and mission of our organization.

IN THE FIELDS

Our main farm fields will be dedicated to vegetable production, ensuring a steady supply of fresh produce for our community. A high tunnel with a climate battery will extend our growing season and enhance our crop yield throughout the year. We believe in smart farming choices and careful cultural controls, guided by natural principles and respect for the land, which will improve soil health and encourage native flora and fauna. This will create a dynamic ecosystem that fosters resilience, reduces our carbon footprint, and positively impacts the natural systems on which we rely.

IN THE FOREST

The forest will be a sanctuary to explore and experience the beauty of the natural world. A walking trail will wind through the forest, where we will focus on restoring native species, promoting biodiversity, and enhancing the health of the ecosystem.

THE SHOP

Introducing "The Shop," designed to meet the practical needs of our Farm and Education Center. The Shop will house essential tools and equipment, provide a space for maintenance and repairs, and serve as a workshop area for various projects. This facility ensures our operations run smoothly and efficiently, supporting the ongoing productivity and sustainability of the Farm.

IN THE GARDENS

The gardens are a multifaceted area designed for inclusive education. Featuring accessible demonstration gardens, a pick-your-own field, and a propagation house, the gardens will cater to all community members, ensuring that everyone can participate and enjoy the space. The four season propagation house will allow us to offer workshops and programs year-round. The gardens will provide hands-on opportunities for visitors to connect more deeply with the land, learn essential gardening skills, and foster a deeper relationship to the food they eat.

IN THE FUTURE

As we grow, we are excited to explore the addition of livestock such as chickens, goats, or sheep. There is the potential to expand onto 4 adjacent acres owned by the city. Leasing this land in the future would allow us to scale our operations.

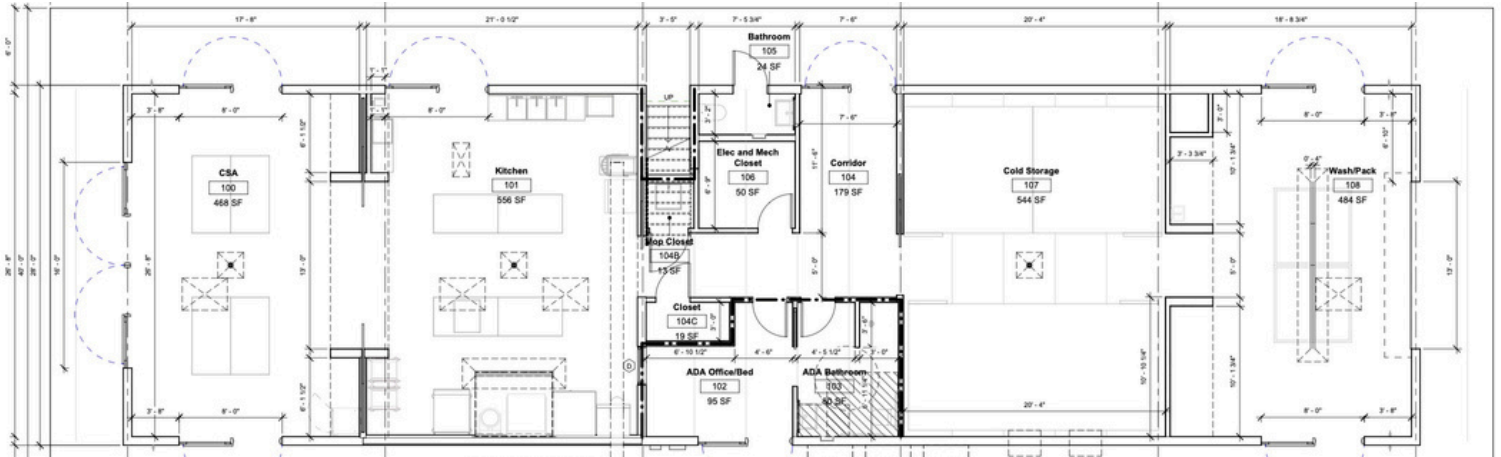




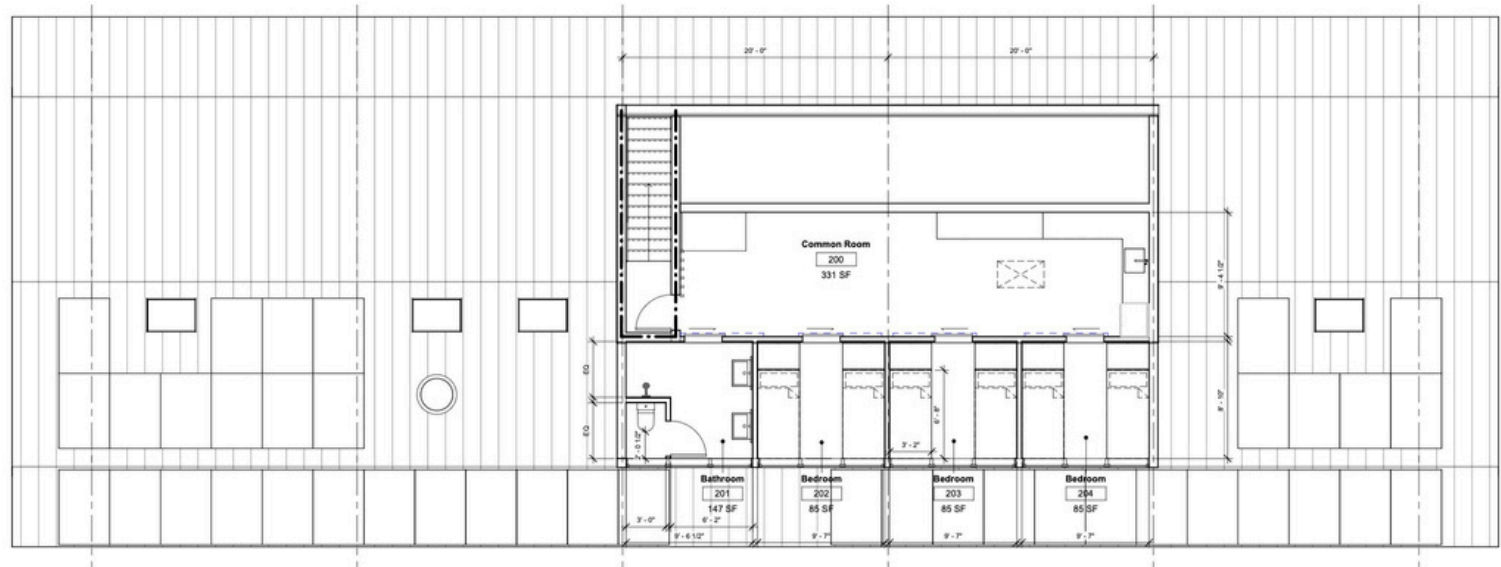
THE CAMPUS

THE HUB

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



INTRODUCING 'THE HUB'

Introducing "The Hub," the dynamic center of activity on the Roots Rising campus. Designed for efficiency and seamless workflow, The Hub will revolutionize our farm operations.

Starting at one end, freshly harvested vegetables from our fields will enter the wash-pack station and cold storage, preserving their freshness. They will then move into our state-of-the-art commercial kitchen, where they will be transformed into value-added products or delicious, farm-to-table meals. The journey concludes at the CSA pick-up area, where community members will receive their produce shares, fresh from the Farm.

Beyond its functional design, The Hub will house educational spaces for workshops and classes, fostering learning and community engagement. It will also provide on-site housing for our apprentices, supporting the next generation of farmers.

The Hub is more than a building: it will be the heartbeat of our campus, embodying the spirit and mission of Roots Rising by connecting the Farm, the community, and the future of sustainable agriculture.

APPRENTICE HOUSING

Roots Rising's Farm and Education Center will be a living, breathing community space where collaboration, education, and shared experiences thrive. Our vision extends beyond the fields: we aim to be a hub for learning, innovation, and connection.

The Farm and Education Center will host an apprenticeship program, providing practical, real-world experience that complements academic studies or prepares participants for professional pursuits. Our apprenticeship program will foster a network of empowered changemakers, poised to be skilled practitioners of regenerative farming and passionate advocates for social change.

Recognizing that access to affordable housing can be a barrier for many eager to participate, building apprentice housing on our farm will ensure equitable and inclusive access to our transformative programs. We are committed to breaking down barriers and fostering diversity within the agricultural community.

COMMERCIAL KITCHEN

The kitchen inside The Hub will be the center for transforming fresh produce harvested from our fields into value-added products such as jams, sauces, pickles, and more. By processing surplus or imperfect produce into shelf-stable goods, we aim to reduce waste and extend the lifespan of our harvest while generating additional revenue streams for the Farm.

The kitchen will be a dynamic space for culinary creativity and education. We envision hosting cooking classes and workshops where community members can learn essential culinary skills, explore new recipes, and deepen their connection to the food they eat. This kitchen will not only enhance the sustainability of our farm operations, but also foster a vibrant and engaged food community.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA)

One of the key components of the Farm is the implementation of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. A CSA allows members to subscribe and receive regular shares of fresh, locally produced food directly from the Farm. Our CSA model will offer flexible pricing options to ensure affordability for all residents, especially those with limited financial means.

To make it convenient for our community, we will offer CSA share pick-ups at both our Pittsfield Farmers Market and onsite at our farm. A beautiful CSA room will stand at the entrance to The Hub.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Eric Zahn Builders:

Their team will lead the construction of the Farm and Education Center Campus, beginning with our two new buildings: The Hub and The Shop. With their decade of experience building in Berkshire County and strict attention to every detail, we feel confident in their ability to execute our vision.

Group Architecture and Urbanism (Group AU):

Bringing together expertise in architecture, urban planning, and sustainable design, Group AU is dedicated to crafting innovative, community-centered spaces that honor both people and the planet. They'll be weaving our shared visions into tangible plans that reflect our values and aspirations.

Regenerative Design Group:

With a deep commitment to ecological restoration and holistic land stewardship, Regenerative Design Group is all about fostering harmony between humans and nature. They'll be listening closely to what the land on our new property is yearning for, working hand in hand with its natural rhythms to create a farm design that is truly in harmony with its surroundings.



Renderings of The Hub by Group AU

PROJECT TIMELINE



ROOTS
RISING



PHASE 1

Community engagement, site design work, land preparation, program development

PHASE 2

Construct The Shop, continued land preparation

PHASE 3

Design gardens, construct The Hub, install climate battery, Prop House and High Tunnel

PHASE 4

Renovate The Main House, expand farm staffing, begin cultivation, market sales

PHASE 5

Explore livestock options, expand cultivation, launch CSA program

INCREASING OUR IMPACT

By our first year of production, we anticipate...

4,500+

More community
members served

5X

More learning
opportunities

16X

More volunteer
opportunities

1.5X

More employment
opportunities

400%

Increase in
program revenue



COMMUNITY TO FARM

At Roots Rising, we believe in the power of connection and hands-on experiences. By bringing the community to the farm, we aim to create a vibrant, inclusive space where everyone can learn, grow, and contribute.



Youth Crew
worksite



Apprenticeship
program



Volunteer
days



Community
workshops



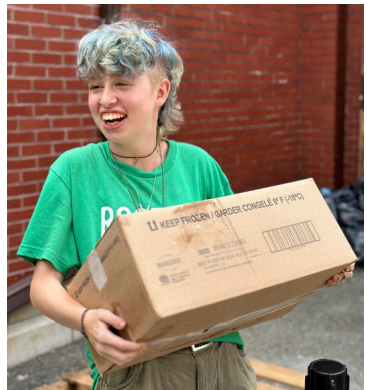
Farm to school
programming



Farmers market
sales



CSA
memberships



Food pantry
donations

FARM TO COMMUNITY

Our commitment to community engagement extends beyond our farm's borders. By bringing the farm to the community, we ensure that everyone has access to fresh, nutritious food and the opportunity to participate in our mission.



LAND & LAUNCH

\$840,000

Purchase of property
Site design work
Land preparation
Parking
Utility lines
Farm equipment
Installation of Prop House and High Tunnel
Build out of The Shop

BUILD & BLOOM

\$3,400,000

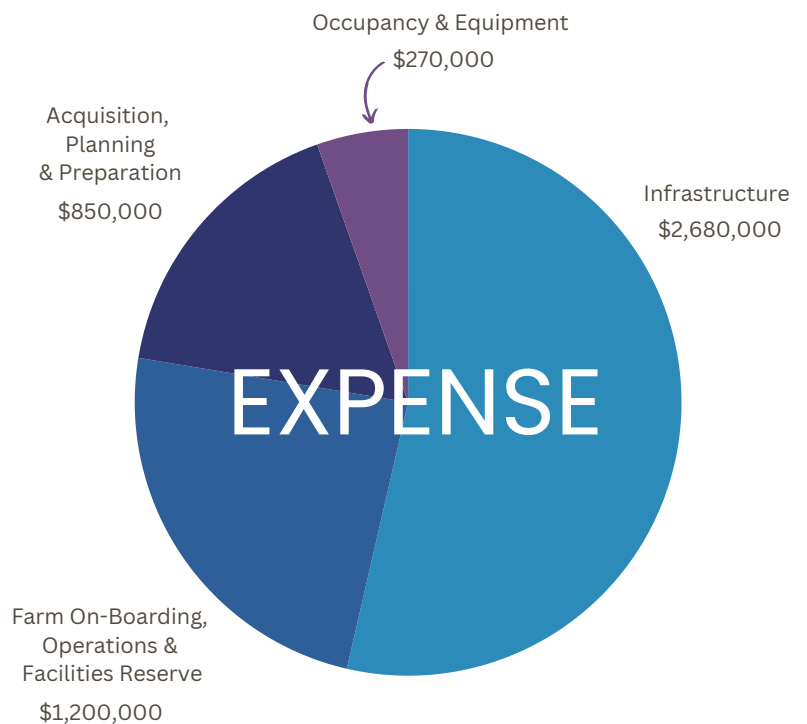
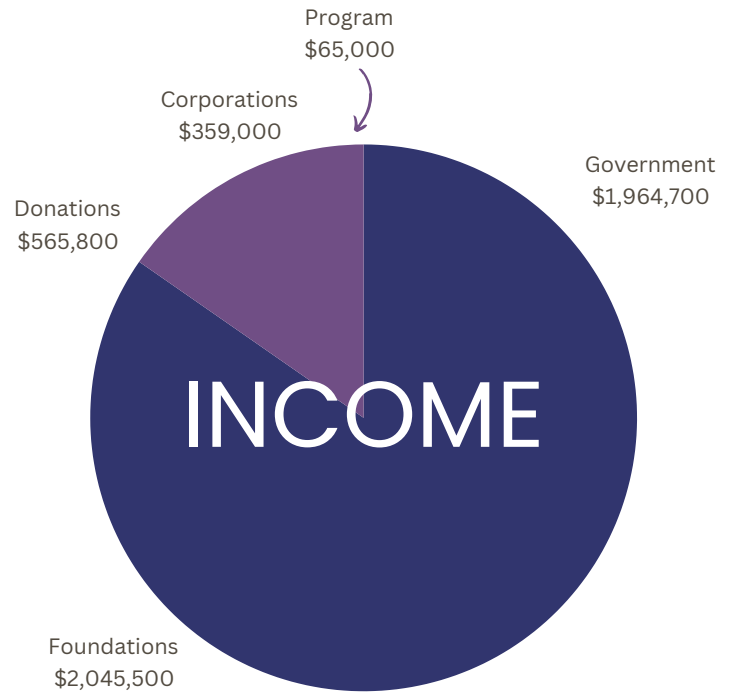
Architectural design
Engineering
Farm fencing
Climate battery in High Tunnel
Tool shed
Compost
Irrigation
Build out of The Hub
Renovations to The Main House

GROW & GO

\$760,000

Farm operations during build-out and
initial year of production
Facilities reserve fund

\$5 MILLION



SUPPORT OUR VISION

Monetary and in-kind gifts can be pledged and paid over the duration of our capital campaign from 2024 to 2026. Donor levels will be based on the total contributions made during this period.

All contributions are tax-deductible.

VISIONARY

\$100k+

Changemaker benefits plus:

Opportunity for a spokesperson to give address at Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Name displayed on Founding Donors Wall

Opportunity to dedicate a tree

CHANGEMAKER

**\$50k–
\$99K**

Catalyst benefits plus:

Invitation to VIP thank you dinner

Name listed on Ribbon Cutting Ceremony press release

Donor spotlight on social media

CATALYST

**\$25k–
\$49K**

Partner benefits plus:

VIP invitation to the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Business logo on campaign e-blasts

Hyper-linked business logo on campaign webpage

PARTNER

**\$10k–
\$24K**

Builder benefits plus:

Business name on campaign e-blasts

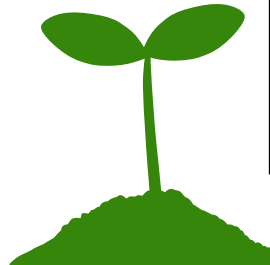
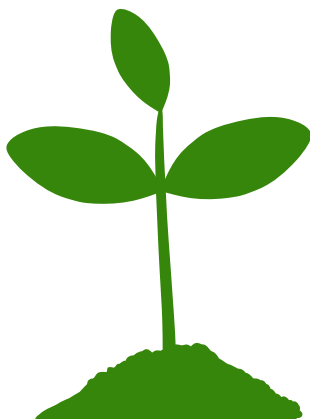
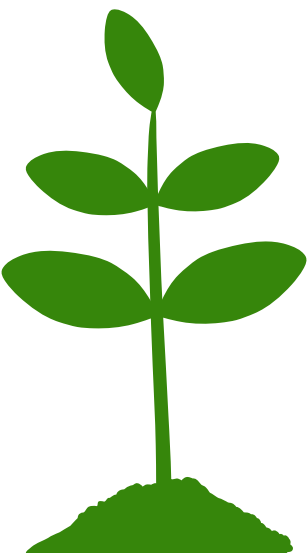
Hyper-linked business name on campaign webpage

BUILDER

**\$1k–
\$9K**

Business name on campaign webpage

Group donor spotlights on social media





THANK YOU

CONTACT US

RootsRising.org
 RootsRising413

413-344-0816
info@rootsrising.org