



For Immediate Release

GREEN HOUSE VENTURE COMPLETES DEVELOPMENT OF 3.7 ACRE URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION LABORATORY BUILT ON MoDOT PROPERTY ALONG INTERSTATE 44 IN ST. LOUIS

St. Louis, Mo., September 13, 2024 – What would normally be a simple hill alongside an interstate highway in St. Louis has been transformed into a 3.7-acre educational food production garden and bee pollinator laboratory for elementary students from four schools in the City of St. Louis.

The Green House Venture (GHV) has completed the development of this Embankment Greenway and Terrace Garden, also known as its Classroom Along the Highway, built on Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) land at a cost of approximately \$900,000 and representing Phase 1 of the GHV Campus. This outdoor educational laboratory and growing environment spans 1,700 feet of Interstate 44 roadside embankment along DeTonty Street between Thurman Avenue and 39th Street in the historic Shaw Neighborhood, offering a vibrant ecosystem of indigenous plantings and pollinator gardens located on an underutilized highway embankment.

The Greenway enables students working with scientists to study a variety of food crops and explore the potential for using interstate highway margins to revitalize declining pollinator populations, including butterflies and the native bees that are essential for large-scale agriculture.

“This creative, first-of-its-kind development in St. Louis is a major model for introducing more ecologically diverse and sustainable growing areas along urban highway corridors across the entire country,” said Tom Purcell, President of the Green House Venture. “It also supports our curriculum focus in Bioscience, Urban Agriculture, and Nutrition and Dietetics.”

The St. Louis District of the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) leased the right of way land to the Green House Venture, a nonprofit using educational teachings to show students from nearby charter, magnet, parochial and Christian schools about urban food production. This process first began in 2016.

“We submitted the plan to MoDOT to lease the property and worked on a strategic plan,” Purcell added. “Today there’s a terrace garden, a pollinator recovery habitat with a secure

guardrail, new signage and banners and a painted curb along DeTonty Street green. Kids wear the bright colored yellow vests when they are exploring the greenway.”

“For MoDOT, the question was how do you use right of way on an embankment?” said Tom Blair, MoDOT St. Louis District Engineer. “This is a win-win situation for both Green House Venture and the state of Missouri because with this parcel of land along MoDOT right of way, we don’t have to maintain the land, and in turn, children from the area can use the land to learn about agriculture and bioscience.”

The Greenway includes two main anchors. The Terrace Garden is designed to test safe crop production on unused land along roadways. The Pollinator Recovery Habitat is devoted mainly to research by scientists at St. Louis University working with students from the schools participating in the GHV program.

In the 8,500 square feet of the Terrace Garden that lies at the center of the embankment, students actively plant, cultivate, study, and harvest produce to cook with their families, using recipes and instructions provided by partner Universities.

On June 7, 2024, a new crop of healthy vegetables planted and cultivated by 4th – 6th grade students at the Terrace Garden was harvested by Operation Food Search volunteers as a donation from The Green House Venture. A group of volunteers picked and packed 15 large banana boxes equaling 198 pounds of lettuce, radishes, kale, kohlrabi, chard and other nutritious plants.

Other sections of the Terrace Garden are devoted to studying little known native plants such as rock grapes, scarlet runner-berries, and paw paws. Indigenous nut and berry bushes provide a windbreak around the terraces, which are ADA accessible.

The strategic plan calls for Green House Venture to build a STEM educational center across the street from the educational garden to complete the Green House Venture campus.

“MoDOT has been a great partner in this,” said Purcell. “I think this is an idea that could be used around the state.”

About Green House Venture

The Green House Venture is an innovative STEM education program dedicated to educating and inspiring elementary students to create a sustainable world. Through hands-on experiences in bioscience and urban agriculture, the GHV equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to address pressing challenges in science, nutrition and dietetics, and urban agriculture. The organization aims to make a meaningful impact on the future of education and sustainable practices. For more information about The Green House Venture, visit www.greenhousestl.org or send an email to craig@workman-company.com.

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