

# **Town of Underhill**

## **ARPA Funds Use Proposal – PHASE 1**

**Committee/Group/Individual Requesting Funding:** Underhill Central School PTO

**Contact Name:** Sarah Greer

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**Date:** January 6, 2023

**Proposal Name/Brief Description:** Underhill Central School Garden Updates

The goal of this request is to make updates to the Underhill Central School garden. Due to age and neglect because of COVID restrictions, the garden is in poor condition. The requested funding would be used to replace and expand the fencing, replace the raised beds, add top soil, add a hoop house, create outdoor classroom space, and assist in a general pruning/clean up of existing plantings.

**Estimated Cost/Description of Estimate Process** (use the space here and attach additional pages and any supporting documents):

As a preliminary estimate, the UCS PTO anticipates the full cost for this work to be \$22,000. We are in the process of obtaining quotes for the desired work but do not have any supporting numbers to provide at this time.

We have attached three supporting documents:

- Attachment A: Garden project overview and project work scope
- Attachment B: Preliminary sketch of the proposed layout with the enhancements included in this request
- Attachment C: Photos of some of the existing conditions and proposed new equipment

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Please Answer the following questions by marking the answer in the space provided.

#### Benefit to Town of Underhill

Does this proposal	YES	NO	Not Sure
Invest in the town without creating a need for additional or ongoing revenue or expenses? Is this a one-time expense?	X		
Benefit a population that was disproportionately impacted by the pandemic?	X		
Benefit a population underserved prior to the pandemic?	X		
Mitigate and/or help the Town adapt to the effects of climate change?	X		
Improve or create infrastructure for Underhill? Ex. Natural resources, pedestrian access, transportation but not limited to	X		
Align with or impact the goals and priorities of the Town Plan? <a href="#">LINK</a>	X		

Comments:

#### Feasibility of Project

Can this proposal	YES	NO	Not Sure
Be fully planned, estimated and obligated to the Town by December 31, 2024?	X		
Be fully completed and paid for by the end of 2026?	X		
Be used to leverage or match other grants, funds or projects?			X

***Please attach estimates, quotes, drawings, or supporting documents or elaborate in any way you would like. Please note that the ARPA Advisory Committee only recommends projects to the Selectboard and the Selectboard has the ultimate authority to allocate the funds. [17 V.S.A. § 2664](#)***

#### Links and More Information:

**Final Rule – Overview** at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRF-Final-Rule-Overview.pdf>

**Final Rule – FAQ's** at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRF-Final-Rule-FAQ.pdf>

**Specific Information for Town of Underhill** at [https://www.underhillvt.gov/vertical/sites/%7B4E962BB9-B4BB-4504-A3EE-ED54521A1BCE%7D/uploads/Coronavirus\\_Local\\_Fiscal\\_Recovery\\_Fund\\_Overview\\_Presentation\\_06092022.pdf](https://www.underhillvt.gov/vertical/sites/%7B4E962BB9-B4BB-4504-A3EE-ED54521A1BCE%7D/uploads/Coronavirus_Local_Fiscal_Recovery_Fund_Overview_Presentation_06092022.pdf)

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In January 2022, the U.S. Department of Treasury issued an Overview of the Final Rule for the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF), a part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These federal funds were extended to state and local municipalities to address impacts of the pandemic with substantial flexibility on how the funds can be allocated based on the local need to help us build a strong, resilient community and support long-term growth and opportunity.

The Final Rule provides extensive information about allowable spending with greater simplicity and the Town of Underhill took the on time permitted “Standard Allowance”, the most flexible choice; allowing us utilize the funds for “government services.” Unless the treasury has stated otherwise government services are any services traditionally provided by the recipient government.

The Town of Underhill has \$696,228.55 remaining in ARPA funds to spend on eligible activities. These funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026.

### Information and Instructions:

The Town of Underhill has formed an [ARPA Advisory Committee](#) to review and recommend projects to the Selectboard for consideration. The Selectboard of Underhill will consider the recommended projects and authorize spending. Submission of a completed Phase 1 Proposal is your first step to get your project, concept, or idea in front of the ARPA Advisory Committee. This process is intended to be simple and allow for those requesting funds to do so without providing extensive information initially. The first review of Phase 1 Proposal will be November 14, 2022 and after the meeting you will hear from the Committee on the next steps. Only complete applications will be reviewed. They must be received by email, mail or in person (see Links and More Information) and all applications must be type written and not hand written. Assistance is available if necessary.

We encourage you send in the completed Phase 1 Proposal as soon as possible so we can work with you and make recommendations or provide feedback prior to completing a complete **Phase 2 Application**. We will respond to completed proposals as we review them in committee. **The deadline to submit Phase 1 Proposal is 1/31/2023.** Final recommendations will be forwarded to the Selectboard by 5/31/2023. The Selectboard then has the authority to decide which projects will ultimately be funded. This timeline is subject to change; however, we would like to have the funds obligated as soon as possible so there is a longer period of time for the projects to come to fruition and to ensure that the money is spent by 12/31/2026.

Submit this completed document by:

Email to: [jsilpe-katz@underhillvt.gov](mailto:jsilpe-katz@underhillvt.gov)

Mail to: Town of Underhill PO BOX 120 Underhill, VT 05489

In Person to: Underhill Town Hall, 12 Pleasant Valley Rd. Underhill

Questions or Assistance: Jennifer Silpe-Katz, 802-899-4434 x 2 or at above email

## **Attachment A: Underhill Central School Garden Project Overview**

The Underhill Central School garden is a school wide resource that provides educational and community building opportunities for all 151 enrolled students. Each class spends time in the garden in the spring, providing every student the chance to plant a seedling. Older grades are given additional responsibilities to help with spring and fall garden activities.

Children are also able to participate in harvesting produce from the garden (as the growing season allows). Not only do they help harvest the fruit and vegetables, but students also get to sample what they grew through a series of “Harvest Days” snacks provided by the PTO. In the past, these snacks have included rhubarb applesauce, zucchini bread, kale chips, pesto, grape jam and tomato sauce.

Although the garden is a great resource, its potential is limited by the condition of some of its key features. The fence is over ten years old and is in poor condition, presenting safety concerns for when children are in close proximity. Several of the raised beds are also over a decade old and have deteriorated significantly. The raised beds are also at a height which is difficult to access for all students. (See Attachment C for existing condition photos.)

The COVID pandemic impacted the garden by restricting volunteer access to assist in annual planting, tend to perennial plantings, and provide upkeep of the main components. This time period of neglect has contributed to the current condition of the garden.

Despite the deterioration during COVID, the garden continued to be an important resource during that time. As an outdoor learning space, it was one of the locations where students could work together. As COVID restrictions lessened, it was one of the first places where students and classes were able to collaborate. Kids love to get their hands dirty and see the tangible results of their work.

The PTO would like to see several improvements made to the garden:

- Fencing: the existing fence needs to be replaced and expanded. It is a safety concern and doesn't encompass all the garden growing areas. We propose to replace the split rail fence with a chain link fence with an expanded footprint. The new fence would encompass the currently fenced area as well as expanding to include the pumpkin patch and fruit tree/bush areas. It would have a large gate for garden deliveries as well as several gates for student and staff access. Although a chain link fence made not be the most aesthetically pleasing option, we feel the children could help improve the appearance with art projects.
- Raised beds: many of the existing beds need to be replaced. Some of the beds have deteriorated to the point that it is hard to distinguish the bed from the grass walking paths. The height of the existing beds also presents an accessibility challenge for some students. The new beds would be higher to provide better access. The higher beds would require additional soil to fill.

- Hoop house: the addition of a hoop house would provide space for early and late season planting and additional covered outside classroom work area. The hoop house would need a wood framed gravel base, similar to the photo in attachment C.
- Outside classroom space: there is existing outside classroom space within the vicinity of the garden that would be refreshed for continued use by all school classes.
- Perennial plantings: existing fruit trees, bushes, and grape vines have been tended to by amateur gardeners and are in need of one time pruning and tending to by more experienced garden professionals.

As much as possible, the PTO would love to see the children and school community participate in making these improvements to the garden. However, we recognize that some of this work requires special knowledge and costly materials. That is why we are requesting ARPA funding. We'd like to see the garden updated so that it can continue to be an important resource and educational environment for our children.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to discussing this project with you further.



Attachment C: UCS Garden Photos (Existing and Proposed)

Existing Garden Conditions:



Deteriorated garden bed



Deteriorated garden bed





Deteriorated garden fence



Donated raised beds needing new wood panels





Deteriorated garden fence



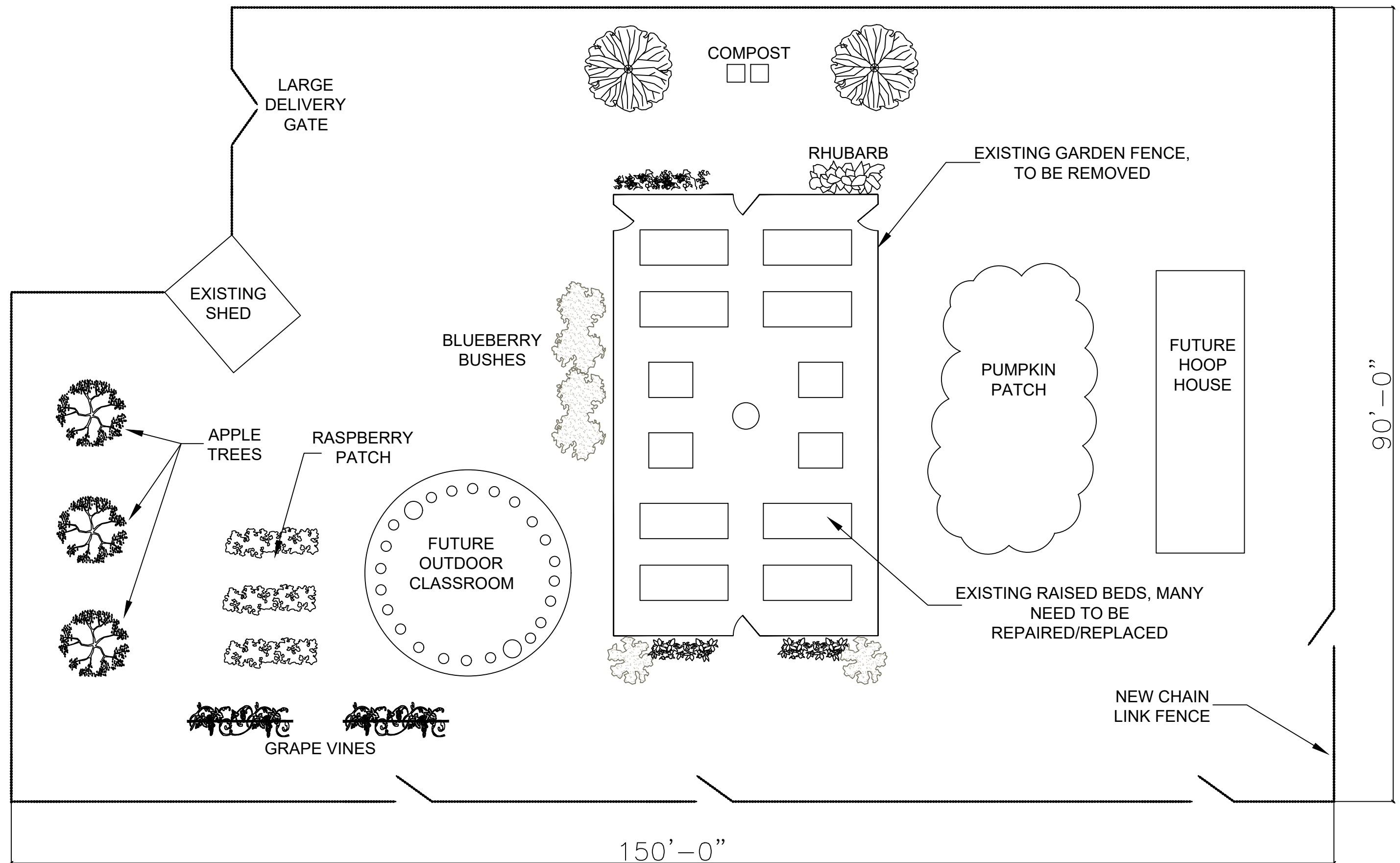
Deteriorated garden bed



**Proposed New Equipment:**



Hoop house with base



UNDERHILL CENTRAL SCHOOL GARDEN IMPROVEMENTS	Drawn By:	SG
	Date:	12/02/22
	Scale:	3/32" = 1'-0"
	Sheet No:	SK-1