Living Earth CENTER

Growing *for the* Future

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF COMMUNITY, CONNECTION, AND BELONGING



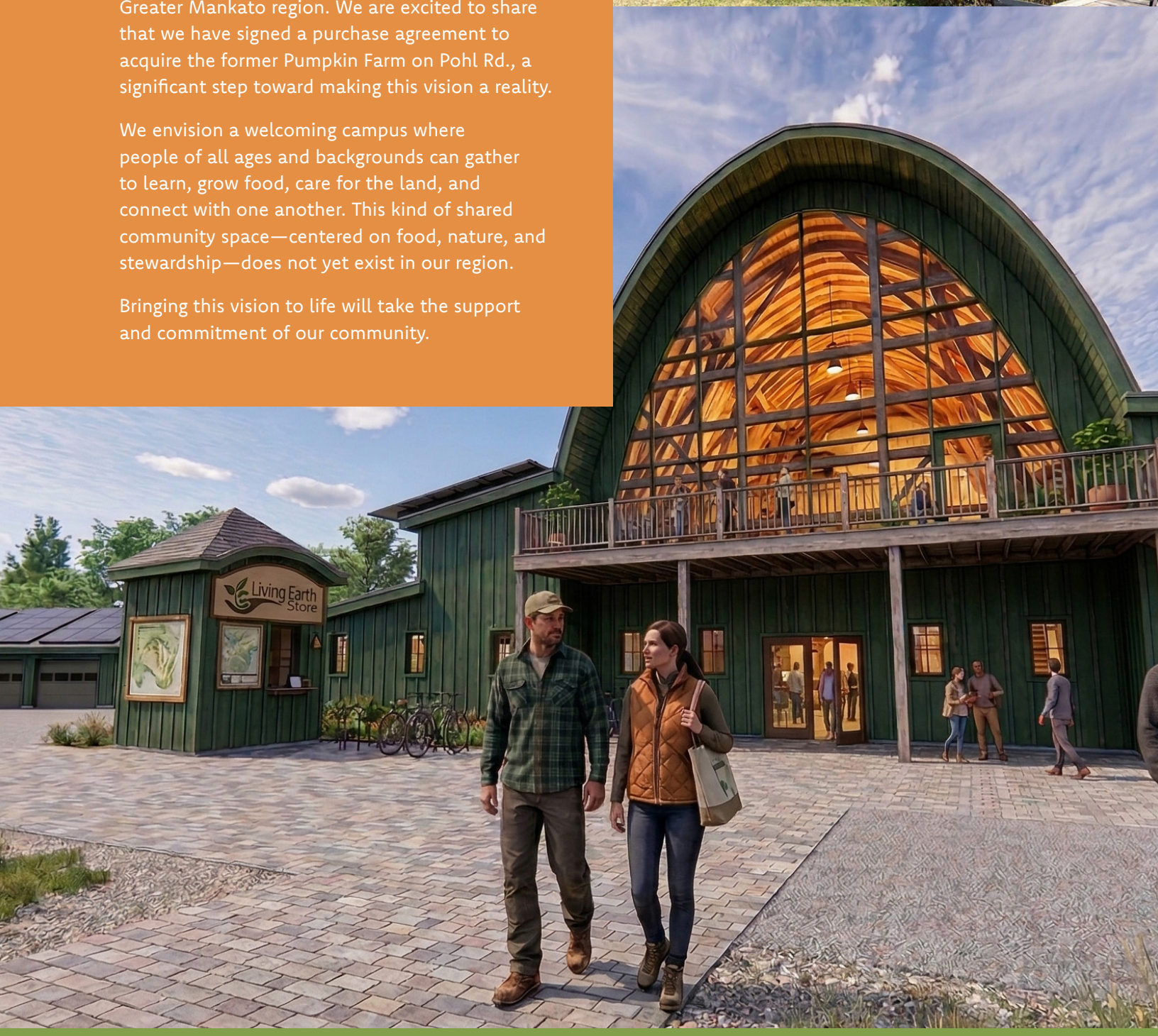
Dreaming for the Future



Living Earth Center is entering an exciting new chapter—one that includes securing a permanent home to serve as a vibrant community hub for the Greater Mankato region. We are excited to share that we have signed a purchase agreement to acquire the former Pumpkin Farm on Pohl Rd., a significant step toward making this vision a reality.

We envision a welcoming campus where people of all ages and backgrounds can gather to learn, grow food, care for the land, and connect with one another. This kind of shared community space—centered on food, nature, and stewardship—does not yet exist in our region.

Bringing this vision to life will take the support and commitment of our community.



About Us

Living Earth Center

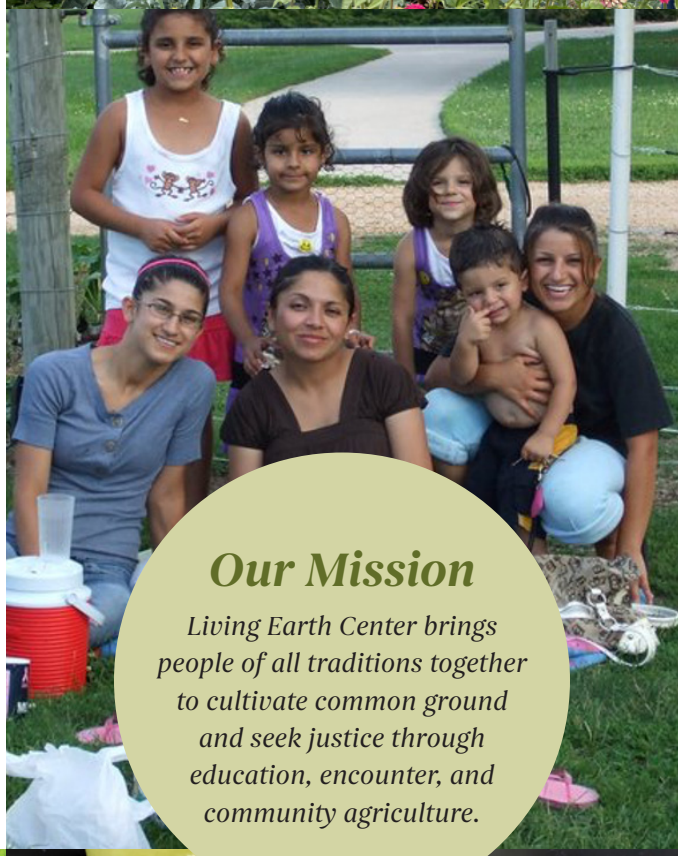
Founded in 2017 by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Living Earth Center (LEC) is a Mankato-based nonprofit dedicated to connecting people to the land—and to each other—through the shared experience of growing food.

Today, LEC operates three community gardens in Mankato and St. Peter, manages the Blue Earth County Community Farm, and runs an Emerging Growers Program that provides land access and support for people entering the local food economy.

Alongside these efforts, we offer youth education, adult workshops, seasonal gatherings, and an annual Earth Conference that inspire learning, skill-building, and community connection.

More than a place to plant and harvest, Living Earth Center is a thriving community hub where relationships grow and people, ideas, and ecosystems flourish.





Our Mission

Living Earth Center brings people of all traditions together to cultivate common ground and seek justice through education, encounter, and community agriculture.





What We Do

Cultivate Access and Opportunity

We provide land access so people of all backgrounds can grow food for themselves and their communities—building connection to the land and greater agency over healthy food choices.

Through our Emerging Growers Program, we help create pathways into the local food economy. With the help of volunteers, we also grow and donate more than 3,000 pounds of fresh produce each year to partner organizations serving neighbors facing food insecurity.

Grow Knowledge and Stewardship

Our *Seed to Sauce* youth program, created with ISD 77 and other youth programs, provides hands-on gardening experiences for more than 1,000 local students each year. Youth plant seeds, learn where food comes from, practice caring for the land, and enjoy the harvest.

Through partnerships with schools and community organizations—including MY Place, Head Start, Early Childhood and Family Education, Loyola Catholic School, and the YMCA—we also offer classes, workshops, and gatherings that inspire environmental stewardship for people of all ages.



Why We Need a New Home

A Garden in Transition

For nearly 30 years, our flagship 2-acre community garden has grown on Good Counsel Hill. With the School Sisters of Notre Dame selling the property, we must now find a new home for more than 120 community gardeners and the programs and gatherings that have long brought our community together. With more demand, our community garden is at capacity and we need to grow!

Room to Grow

Our Emerging Growers Program, launched in 2022 at the Blue Earth County Community Farm, is ready for the next step.

A new site will allow multiple growers to cultivate larger plots—from ¼ acre to 1 acre—creating opportunities to expand production, increase income, and strengthen local food access.

An Accessible Community Campus

Our vision is to transform the Pohl Road property into the Living Earth Center Regenerative Community Campus— a welcoming place for neighbors across the region, including nearby student and low-income communities.

The campus will include:

- Community gardens
- Walking trails through natural areas
- A children's play and garden space
- Greenhouses and year-round growing areas
- A farm stand
- A cottage kitchen
- A free food forest
- A restored *and expanded* historic barn for events, workshops, and programs.

Centrally located and accessible by walking, driving, or bus, this new home will make growing food, learning, and community connection available to more people.





Why the Pohl Road Property

A Rare Gem

The Pohl Road property is a unique 11-acre green space in the heart of Mankato. The land includes agricultural fields, old-growth forest, and a historic 1940s barn—an increasingly rare combination in a growing city.

Protecting this land ensures it remains a place for community gathering, food production, and environmental education rather than future development.

Continuing a Legacy

Purchasing the property will allow Living Earth Center to honor the legacy of the School Sisters of Notre Dame—whose mission of education and care for creation inspired our founding—while building on the current owner's commitment to thoughtful land stewardship and sustainable agriculture.

Expanding Food Access

Living Earth Center is responding to rising food insecurity by expanding our ability to grow and share fresh food.

In 2024 alone, LEC donated 3,000 pounds of produce to local food shelves and community programs. We also provide garden scholarships so anyone can grow food regardless of their ability to pay.

Acquiring the Pohl Road property will allow us to significantly expand garden space, food preservation, and donations—bringing healthy food closer to neighborhoods near campus housing, lower-income communities, and a major bus route.

Environmental Stewardship

For more than 50 years, the Pohl Road land has been well cared for. The current owners have preserved woodlands, prairie, and wetlands even as surrounding areas developed. We'd like to continue the legacy of being good stewards of property.

Protecting this rare urban green space will support biodiversity, climate resilience, and community education through regenerative agriculture, nature trails, and hands-on learning about healthy ecosystems.

A Place for Community

Living Earth Center's gardens foster belonging, connection, and wellbeing. Gardeners from many backgrounds grow food side by side, build friendships, and experience the physical and mental health benefits of connecting with nature.

With expanded partnerships with local school districts, childcare and other organizations, the new campus can broaden learning and growing opportunities throughout the region.

A Vibrant Third Space

In a world that can feel increasingly fragmented and isolating, the Living Earth Regenerative Community Campus is building something rare: a true third space where anyone can feel genuinely welcome. Here, neighbors become friends, families reconnect with the land and with nourishing food, and people of all backgrounds discover a deeper sense of purpose and belonging — exactly when the world needs it most.


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Our Vision: Growing in Phases

Phase 1 — Seed Phase

SECURE THE POHL ROAD PROPERTY AND STABILIZE EXISTING STRUCTURES.

Purchasing the Property $1,853,600

Includes the property appraised price, plus closing costs, appraisal, property survey, environmental studies, and legal fees.

Barn Roof & Septic System $75,000

To prevent further deterioration of the historic barn, an immediate roof replacement is needed. The property's septic system also requires an upgrade.

First-Year Operating Expenses $20,000

Covers one year of utilities, property taxes, and basic maintenance (mowing, weeding, upkeep) for the property.

Costs of Campaign $155,100

Project management and consulting fees, fundraising consultant fees, staff time, overhead, printing, and postage to run the campaign.

Phase 1 Total: $2,103,700

Thanks to the generosity of early supporters, LEC has raised, been pledged, or received in kind over $2,400,000. Phase 1 is fully funded, with the surplus going to Phase 2.

Phase 2 — Sprout Phase

TRANSITION GROWING OPERATIONS AND OFFICE SPACE TO THE NEW PROPERTY WHILE EXPANDING PROGRAMS.

Growing Onsite $122,875

Landscaping, fencing, irrigation, moving, machinery, equipment, portable restrooms, security/lighting, and part-time staffing to prepare the land for growing.

Barn Preservation..... $422,000

Foundation repair, structural engineering fees, electrical updates, and the work needed to bring the historic barn into full working order.

City of Mankato Annexation..... $371,200

Covers back assessments, the annexation fee, connecting to city sewage, added parking, a required traffic study, stormwater management, wetland reporting, and civil engineering fees tied to bringing the property into city limits.

Farm House to Office $270,000

Converts the existing farmhouse into LEC's office and meeting space, including ADA-accessibility updates, a new furnace, asbestos abatement, and contingency funds for furnishings and technology.

Costs of Campaign $165,600

Project management, fundraising consulting, staff time, overhead, printing, and postage to carry the campaign through this phase.

Phase 2 Total: $1,351,675

Phase 3 — Bloom Phase

TRANSFORM THE LIVING EARTH CENTER INTO A VIBRANT YEAR-ROUND COMMUNITY DESTINATION— A HUB FOR FOOD GROWING, REGENERATIVE LEARNING, GATHERING, AND CONNECTION.

Our Final Phase Is Still Taking Root

Shaped in collaboration with our staff, volunteers, gardeners, Emerging Growers, community partners, and neighbors, the vision — and its costs — will evolve with the voices and needs of the community it serves. Based on partner feedback so far, we envision a space that will include:

- A restored *and expanded* historic barn for events, workshops, and conferences
- A commercial kitchen to be used for educational workshops, events, and public use
- Public walking trails through prairie, woodland, and wetlands
- Expanded community gardens
- Indoor and outdoor learning spaces
- A free food forest
- Innovative sustainability projects such as rainwater catchment and composting systems
- Deep-winter greenhouses and year-round growing spaces
- A farm stand featuring locally grown produce
- A children's garden and nature play area






PRODUCE PACKING KITCHEN
RAINWATER COLLECTION
RIVIAN


Living Earth CENTER


VISITOR INFORMATION & FARM SHARE PICK-UP



This Dream Is Ready to Grow

WILL YOU HELP MAKE IT REAL?

Your support will help Living Earth Center create a permanent home where people can grow food, care for the land, learn and build community for generations to come.

MAKE A GIFT

Online:
livingearthcentermn.org

By Mail:
Living Earth Center
1603 N. Riverfront Dr.
Mankato, MN 56001
Please note “Grow for the Future” on your check.

Contact:
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Living Earth CENTER

Growing for the Future
Rooted in Community