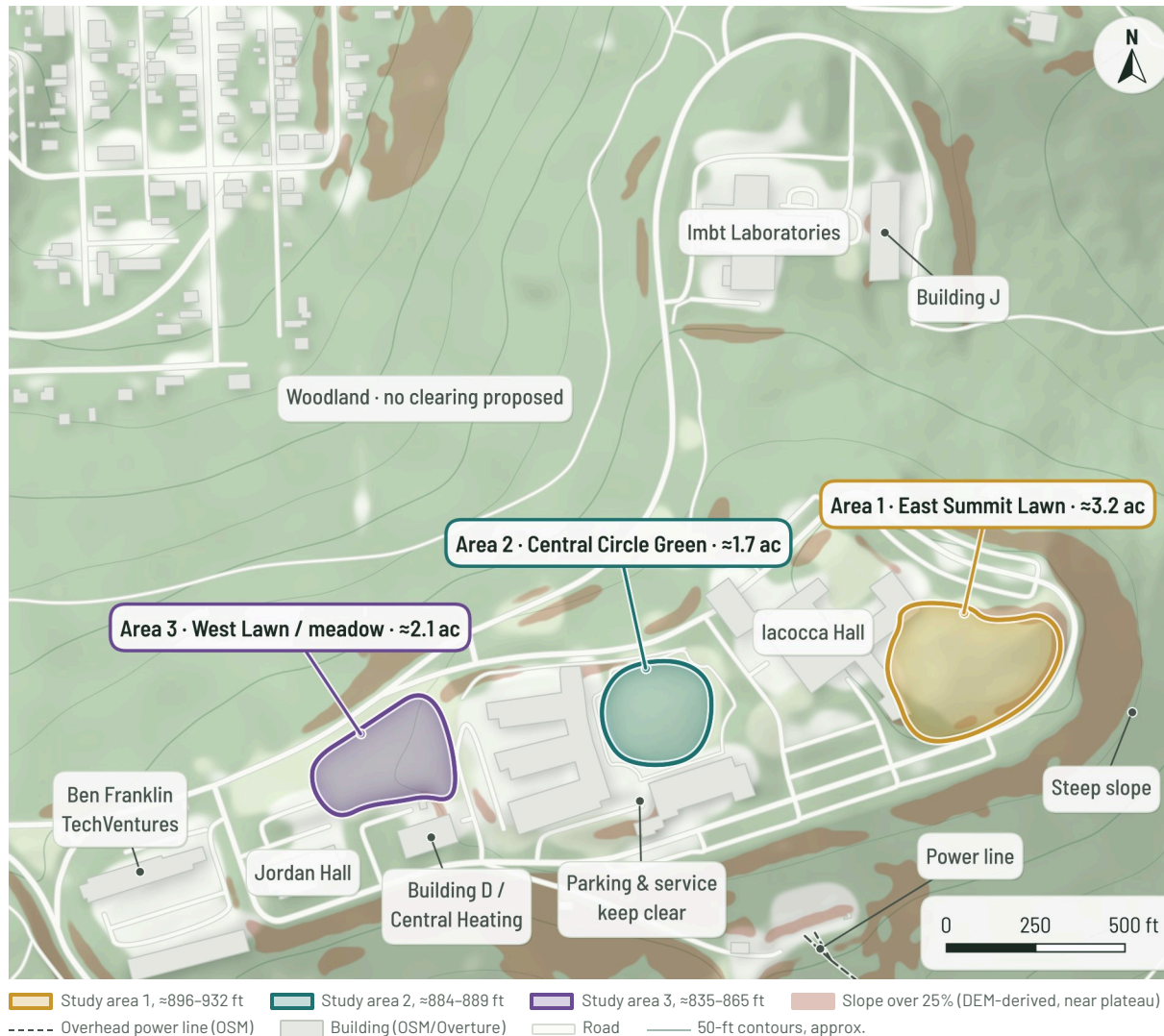


Mountaintop Discovery Gardens

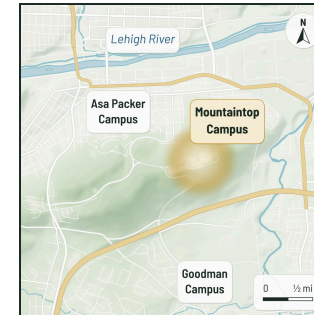
Site context & possible study areas

PRELIMINARY AND UNVERIFIED Study areas, acreages and elevations are desktop estimates from public data. They are not surveyed, are not parcels, and do not imply that any land is available or that there is permission to use it.



THE IDEA

An accessible garden pairing native Pennsylvania pollinator meadow with edible demonstration beds, an outdoor classroom, a rain garden, compost and rainwater collection. It starts as a **0.5–1 acre pilot** and grows only if Lehigh sees value and suitable land exists.



Where it sits

The plateau is roughly 560–600 ft above the Asa Packer campus, ~1.8 mi by road from the University Center. The existing Lehigh Community Garden is on Goodman Campus, ~2.6 mi by road.

*Approximate; the glow marks the general area.
OpenStreetMap roads, USGS DEM*

WHAT THE DESKTOP REVIEW FOUND

- About **7 ac** of open lawn or meadow in three separate areas (**1** ~3.2, **2** ~1.7, **3** ~2.1 ac). **No contiguous 5–10 ac open site** was found outside the woodland. Largest continuous ground under ~8% slope: ~1.7, ~0.8 and ~0.6 ac (areas 2, 3, 1).
- Lehigh reports converting part of a Mountaintop lawn to native meadow in summer 2021 but does not say where. Satellite data suggest it may be **3** (sharp greenness drop in September 2021, meadow-like autumn colour since) *(to confirm)*. Keep it as is.
- 2** matches Lehigh's "BC Lawn" event venue, listed as the circle outside Building C (500+ capacity); keep it open for events.
- 1**, beside Iacocca Hall at ~900–930 ft, has a gentle terrace that could hold a compact, accessible pilot.

Known constraints

- Lehigh's South Mountain woodland, Forest Park (~760 ac), and a Lehigh lab's 16 long-term forest research plots on Mountaintop: no tree removal.
- Steep plateau edges; city rules on disturbing slopes over 15% *(to confirm)*.
- Power-line corridor to the southeast; keep parking, service and bus operations clear.
- State erosion-control and city stormwater thresholds may apply *(to confirm)*.

Needs Lehigh input

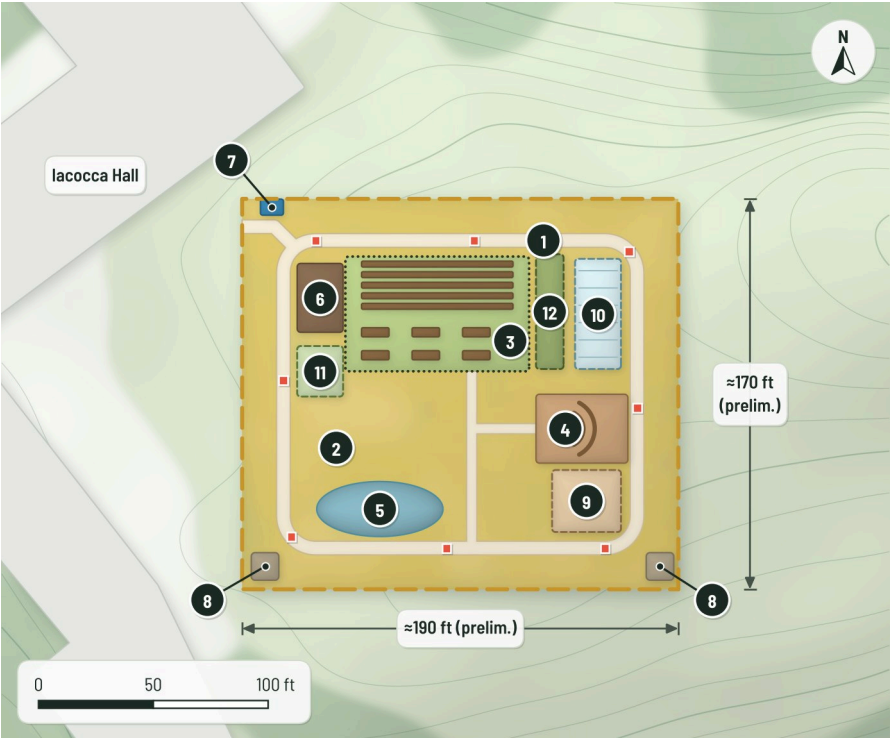
- Is any area earmarked under *Making the Future* (2025), such as its Mountaintop open-space or graduate-housing ideas, or *Transform Mountaintop*?
- Water, power and drainage locations; soil tests before food growing on this former industrial research site.
- Zoning and permits, accessibility review, ownership, upkeep and insurance.

Sources (accessed 17 Oct 2026). Base-map tones simplified from USDA NAIP imagery, Sept–Dec 2017, as embedded in USGS US Topo 7.5' Hellertown and Allentown East quadrangles (2023 editions). Elevation, contours, shading and slope: USGS NED 1/9 arc-second DEM tile ned19_n40x75_w075x50 (published 2011), NAVD88, approximate and not surveyed. Buildings, roads and power line: Overture Maps Foundation release 2026-09-23.1 (© OpenStreetMap contributors, ODbL; Microsoft ML Buildings; on the locator also Esri Community Maps contributors, CC BY 4.0). Change check: Sentinel-2 NDVI 2018–Oct 2026. Study areas hand-interpreted from imagery (±3–5 m); outlines smoothed for display. Lehigh facts checked via search results (pages not opened directly): campus plan summary (Jul 2025), OSPI Transform Mountaintop, Sustainability 2025 Progress Report, Mountaintop Venues & Amenities, Forest Park Initiative, Brown and White (2 Apr 2026), Lehigh transit pages (Iacocca stop named transfer hub). Linking Area 3 to the 2021 meadow is the author's satellite-based inference.

Mountaintop Discovery Gardens Pilot and long-term vision

ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY Locations, sizes and dimensions are preliminary and unverified. All depend on survey, utility locating, soils testing, accessibility and code review, and site permission.

A Pilot garden ≈0.74 ac scalable 0.5–1 ac · gentle terrace of Area 1, east of Iacocca Hall



KEY

- 1 Accessible loop, 6 ft (≈550 lf)
- 2 Native pollinator meadow & borders
- 3 Edible garden, deer-fenced; 6 accessible raised beds
- 4 Outdoor classroom, 24–30 seats
- 5 Rain garden
- 6 Compost & tool yard, rodent-resistant bins
- 7 Water point: bottle filler + cistern
- 8 Quiet seating (2)
- 9 Shaded picnic area (optional)
- 10 Unheated high tunnel (optional)
- 11 Seed nursery & cold frames (optional)
- 12 Native berry hedge (optional)
- Interpretive signs (8)
- Pilot study footprint

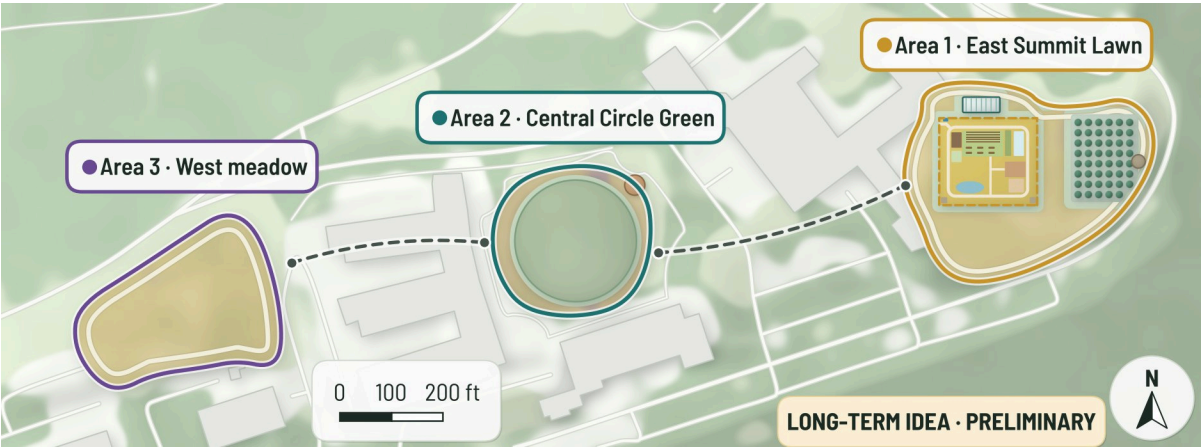
PILOT AREA SCHEDULE (approximate)

FEATURE	PRELIM. SIZE	\$Q FT
Required		
Meadow & borders, incl. mown margins	—	≈18,400
Edible demonstration garden	≈80 × 50 ft	≈4,000
Accessible loop & entry	6 ft wide	≈3,450
Secondary paths	4–5 ft wide	≈450
Outdoor classroom	≈40 × 30 ft	≈1,200
Rain garden	≈55 × 24 ft	≈1,040
Compost & tool yard	≈20 × 30 ft	≈600
Quiet seating (2) · water point	≈12 × 12 ft each	≈360
Optional		
High tunnel · picnic shade · berry hedge · seed nursery	20 × 48 ft tunnel	≈2,810
Total pilot footprint	≈190 × 170 ft	≈32,300 (≈0.74 ac)

Preliminary dimension guidelines (for accessibility and code review)

- Accessible routes 6 ft clear, target ≤5% running and ≤2% cross slope, firm and stable; secondary paths 4–5 ft; ≥4 ft aisles and 5 ft turning space at accessible beds.
- Accessible raised beds about 24–30 in high; deer fence about 8 ft; about 10 ft clear service access shared with the loop.

B Long-term vision ≈6 ac across three areas the low end of the 5–10 ac target · dashed: links along existing walks, to confirm

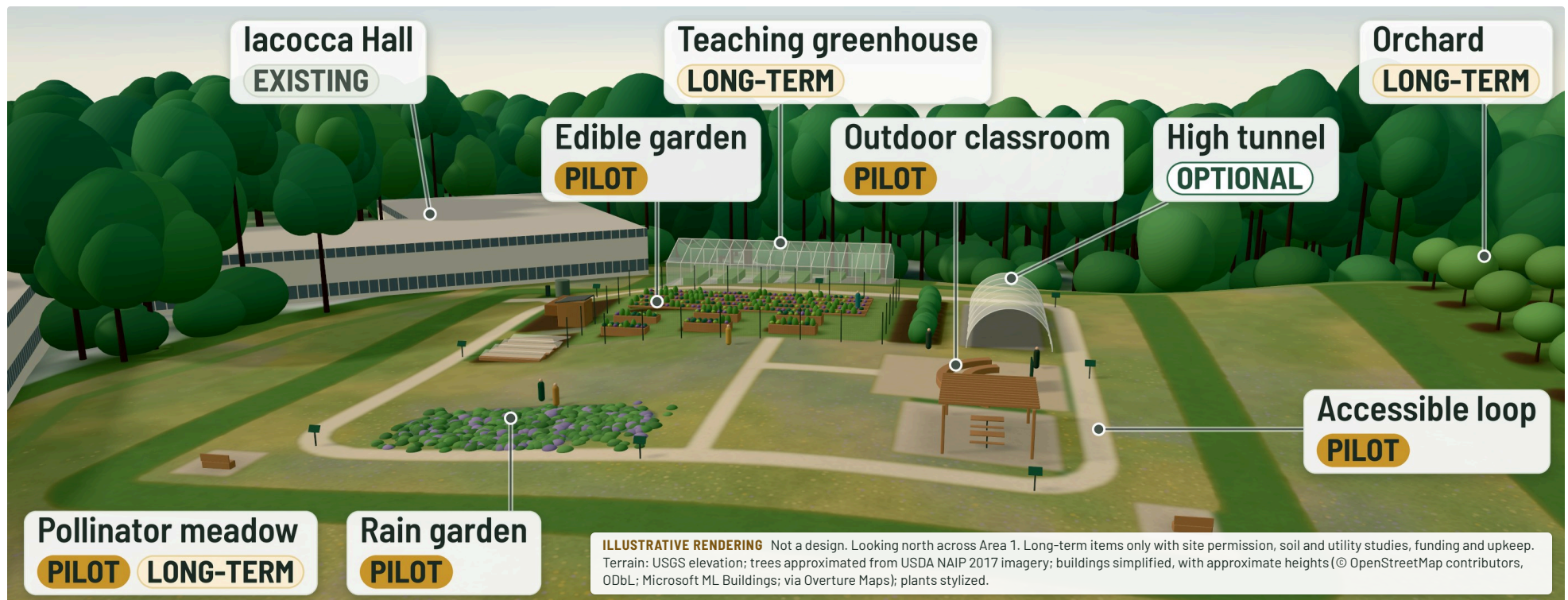


PILOT VS. LONG-TERM VISION

	A · PILOT	B · LONG-TERM VISION
Size	≈0.74 ac (0.5–1 ac)	≈6 ac of garden across Areas 1–3, plus ≈1 ac event lawn kept
Adds	Meadow, edible beds, loop, classroom, rain garden, compost, water point	Orchard ≈0.5 ac (~47 trees), teaching greenhouse ≈30 × 72 ft, summit meadow ≈1.3 ac, pollinator edges at Area 2, interpreted meadow at Area 3
Fit	Appears to fit Area 1's gentle terrace	Only if Lehigh releases at least two areas; 10 ac would require clearing woodland, which is not proposed
Earthwork	Target under 1 ac of disturbance	Phased so each phase stays within permit thresholds (to confirm)
Timing	Years 1–2	Years 3–10, after the pilot is reviewed, and only with site permission, studies, funding and upkeep

Mountaintop Discovery Gardens

Illustrative view and next decisions



WHY IT MATTERS

Sustainability

- Native meadow and hedgerow habitat for pollinators and birds, building on the 2021 meadow pilot Lehigh has reported.
- Less mowing where lawn becomes meadow.
- The rain garden and cistern slow runoff and reuse rainwater for drip irrigation.
- Compost closes a small food-waste loop. There is no lighting by default, so night skies and wildlife are undisturbed.

Learning & community

- Outdoor classroom beside Iacocca Hall's teaching and lab spaces.
- Student-run biodiversity monitoring: pollinator counts, bird surveys, iNaturalist.
- Food-growing practice, volunteer days and interpretive signs for visitors.
- Four-season use: high-tunnel growing, standing seed heads and winter bird habitat.

PHASING (indicative)

Phase 0 0–6 months

Lehigh review; confirm area, utilities, soils, accessibility and permit path; name a sponsor; baseline biodiversity survey.

Phase 1 Year 1

Pilot core: meadow preparation and dormant-season seeding, accessible loop, edible beds, compost, rain garden, signs.

Phase 2 Years 2–3

Optional items (high tunnel, picnic shade, seed nursery, berry hedge); review pilot use and upkeep.

Phase 3 Years 3–6

Only with site permission, studies, funding and upkeep: orchard, summit meadow, Area 2 edges, Area 3 interpretation.

Phase 4 Years 5–10

Only with site permission, studies, funding and upkeep: teaching greenhouse as a separate capital project with utility service.

UPKEEP (proposed split)

- Student garden club + faculty advisor:** beds, harvest, volunteer days, monitoring.
- Program home,** for example the Office of Sustainability, which manages the existing Lehigh Community Garden with a gardener steering committee: scheduling, volunteers, outreach.
- Facilities / grounds contractor:** mowing edges and trails, hardscape, water tie-in; snow clearing of the loop or a seasonal closure.
- Paid summer intern(s)** to cover the summer break.
- Pests:** deer fence, enclosed rodent-resistant compost (no meat or dairy), integrated pest management.
- Winter:** meadow left standing until a late-winter mow; season extension in the high tunnel.

DECISIONS FOR LEHIGH

- Is a Mountaintop garden compatible with *Making the Future and Transform Mountaintop*? Could any of Areas 1–3 be considered?
- Who would sponsor and own the garden, and who maintains it year-round?
- Water and power availability, soil testing, and the accessibility approach.
- Pilot scope (0.5–1 ac) and footprint; where the 2021 meadow is, and how the BC Lawn and that meadow should be treated.
- Funding route for the pilot and a cost estimate prepared with Facilities.
- Permit and delivery path: city zoning and stormwater, state erosion-control thresholds, Facilities-engaged designers and contractors.
- Whether the ≈6 ac long-term vision is worth a further study.