



PEABODY COMMUNITY GARDEN

PEABODY CLEAN UP INITIATIVE

ANC 4D COMMUNITY GRANT · CLOSEOUT REPORT

FROM NEGLECTED PERIMETER TO COMMUNITY-TENDED NATIVE GREEN EDGE.

Peabody St NW perimeter · Ward 4 · Washington, DC · May - June 2026

65+
VOLUNTEERS

1,000+ LBS
DEBRIS & GREEN WASTE REMOVED

\$1,459.83
ANC 4D GRANT EXPENDED

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For more than 50 years, Peabody Community Garden has been a volunteer-run, community-governed green space on National Park Service land in Rock Creek Park. Located along Peabody Street, directly across from Paul Public Charter School, the garden's perimeter had become increasingly overrun with invasive growth, litter, and illegal dumping as federal maintenance capacity declined due to budget cuts. ANC 4D funding gave the garden the resources to address this long-neglected public-facing corridor through its first-ever grant award. The project had grown beyond what garden members could reasonably tackle through volunteer labor alone, so grant funds supported site-preparation equipment, volunteer workday supplies, mulch and soil amendments, and native plants and seeds for a new perimeter buffer.

The project launched with a community clean-up on May 2, 2026, during the Ward 4 Spring Clean Up Week. Weather forced us to postpone the event by one week, but participation remained strong. More than 65 volunteers joined the project, exceeding our original goal of 40–60 participants. Volunteers included garden members, neighbors, families, friends, and students from 3 local schools: Paul Charter School, Coolidge High School, and District of Columbia International School.

Together, volunteers removed more than 1,000 pounds of litter, invasive vegetation, green waste, and other debris that made the garden look abandoned. The work included removal of porcelainberry, mugwort, elm seedlings, and mulberry saplings; clearing debris around public signs; addressing areas where rats had been burrowing beneath accumulated material; and improving pathways used by garden members and visitors. Although the clean-up was originally scheduled for 4 hours, volunteers continued working for nearly 8 hours, with new volunteers arriving as others completed their shifts.

Given the scope of this project, the work continued after May 2. We quickly learned that the volume of debris exceeded what could be handled in a single day, so volunteers returned during late May and June for additional clearing, mulching, soil preparation, planting, and debris staging. For the first time ever, the National Park Service provided haul-away support once all the debris/trash was gathered and staged, allowing us to make progress quickly.

The physical improvement was immediately visible. Representatives from the Metropolitan Police Department's 4th District noted improved street sightlines around stop and pedestrian signs after overgrowth and debris were removed. Longtime garden members described the May 2 event as the most successful clean-up workday the garden had hosted!

Unfortunately, once the area was cleared, we found that portions of the soil were heavily compacted, contained extensive tree roots, and could not safely or efficiently be prepared with hand tools alone. Rather than force the original planting plan, the project shifted to phased installation using soil amendments, smaller native plugs, seed, and targeted site-preparation equipment. This allowed the garden to maintain the same project goal while adapting our approach to the site conditions.

The initial native planting wave is now complete, with species including Black-eyed Susan, goldenrod, sunflowers, and other locally appropriate natives. Mulch has helped define the public-facing edge, reduce regrowth, and make the corridor less inviting for dumping. Our goal is to continue planting natives in phases as soil conditions organically improve and the May/June established native plants spread.

Benefits and Impact:

The project benefited more than the garden itself. During the project period, garden membership grew approximately 12%, and Peabody now supports more than 90 active plots. Those plots produce food and flowers, support pollinators and other habitat, and provide opportunities for neighborhood connection throughout the growing season. Improving the garden perimeter therefore protects and strengthens a public space used by gardeners while also improving the experience of students, families, pedestrians, seniors, neighbors, and commuters who pass this bike corridor each day.

For a volunteer-run garden, the ANC grant functioned as a force multiplier. \$1,459.83 in ANC funding supported materials and equipment that volunteers could not simply donate, while the community contributed the organizing, physical labor, food, water, follow-up maintenance, and long-term stewardship.

One of the most encouraging outcomes was the response from student volunteers. Several high school students stayed through the full workday and remained actively engaged in outdoor, hands-on work for hours. Their participation reinforced the value of creating opportunities for young people to learn outdoors, contribute visibly to their community, and engage with environmental stewardship beyond the classroom. This is a passion area we will continue to explore next year.

Key Project Metrics

- 65+ volunteers participated, 3 local schools represented
- 1,000+ pounds of litter, invasives, and green waste removed
- ~1080 hours of work on the garden perimeter during May and June
- 90+ active garden plots supported by the improved perimeter
- ~12% membership growth during the project period

02 · CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

We were humbled by this experience in many ways, and it left us even more committed to the garden and the community. This project taught us that a successful community workday requires flexibility and contingency planning. Weather, vendor availability, nursery inventory, and actual site conditions can all change quickly. Our original clean-up date had to be postponed because of weather, and plant availability changed throughout the project. Future projects should identify backup vendors, maintain alternate work activities, and build flexibility into both event and planting schedules.

We also learned to survey the project area much more carefully before finalizing a work plan. Because Peabody Community Garden is located on National Park Service land, we could not assume that the perimeter used or maintained by the garden matched actual property or management boundaries. Future projects should confirm boundaries, access points, water sources, equipment access, underground infrastructure, and other site conditions before purchasing materials or beginning work.

Site preparation was more difficult than expected. Once volunteers removed years of accumulated weed growth and debris, we discovered heavily compacted soil and extensive tree roots. Some areas could not reasonably be prepared with shovels and hand tools alone, requiring short-term equipment rental. The lesson was to remain focused on the project goal rather than rigidly following an initial implementation method when site conditions indicate that another approach will be better in the long run.

Plant availability was another challenge. Nursery inventory varied considerably, and the plants available at the appropriate size and quantity depended on both timing and season. We adjusted purchases based on what would have the best chance of establishment. We also discovered that existing garden hoses did not reach portions of the perimeter that historically had not been planted or regularly watered. The garden purchased longer hoses using its own funds so the new planting could be maintained.

Volunteer outreach produced mixed results. We contacted garden members, hundreds of people on the garden waitlist, local schools, churches, and other community contacts. Some responded enthusiastically while others did not respond at all. Future outreach will begin earlier and build on the templates, school relationships, contact lists, and communications materials developed through this project. We would also ask participating garden members to bring a plus “one”, creating a simple way to expand volunteer participation.

We also underestimated the logistics of feeding and supporting a large volunteer group. Water, snacks, and meals became important to sustain the workday, particularly for high school students doing several hours of physical work. Because volunteers stayed at the event much longer than originally planned, future events should budget generously for refreshments and have a backup food vendor available in case the event extends beyond its scheduled end time. Garden members generously purchased bulk snacks, pizza, fruit, and other healthy options. We now have a much better understanding of how much food to budget for future workdays.

Accessibility became a larger consideration than we initially anticipated. A successful garden workday should provide opportunities for people with different physical abilities and should include safe pathways, clear work areas, and places where seniors and other volunteers can sit and rest. Future events will incorporate accessibility and volunteer comfort into the site plan from the beginning rather than addressing those needs during the event.

Large volunteer events also require more site leadership. Two people were attempting to coordinate most of the May 2 event, and several experienced garden members had to step in and help organize teams as the work progressed. While teen volunteers were enthusiastic they often needed clear instructions, several demonstrations, and ongoing direction that most of us were not used to. For future events, we will designate multiple site managers in advance based on tasks, assign each manager a specific work zone across the 1.5 acres of land, and conduct a short leader briefing before volunteers arrive (as well as during and after the clean up event).

Our experience with the National Park Service also provided an important lesson. Persistent, constructive follow-up matters. Once NPS could see the scale of the problem, the volunteer commitment, and our willingness to stage the debris for removal, the agency found a way to help. Future projects on public land should establish clear roles with the relevant agency early, document needs, continue communicating, and demonstrate that community volunteers are prepared to fulfill their part of the partnership. Taken together, these lessons give Peabody a practical playbook for future workdays: survey the site first, confirm agency roles, identify backup vendors, recruit more site leads, plan for accessibility, and budget adequately for volunteer support.

Perhaps the strongest measure of success is that garden members and volunteers want to do this again! Peabody Community Garden plans to organize another community workday in the fall using its own resources. Because of the ANC4D-supported project, we now have tested outreach materials, better knowledge of the site, stronger agency relationships, trusted vendors, clearer volunteer-management practices, and a repeatable implementation model.

The grant therefore supported more than one clean-up. It helped Peabody Community Garden build the knowledge, tools, relationships, and community momentum needed to continue stewarding this public space long after the grant period ends.

03 · INVOICE STATEMENT

Completed Invoice Statement		
Item	Actual Cost	Description
Bob Cat equipment rental - ACL Inspects, Heavy-duty tiller rental, Fuel surcharge - ACL Inspects	\$575.00	Rental equipment for site clearing, soil preparation, and equipment fuel costs.
Supplies – Ace Hardware	\$116.39	Cleanup and volunteer workday gloves that can be reused.
Mulch & Soil Amendments – ACL Inspects	\$352.00	Mulch and amendments for perimeter soil preparation.
Native Plants and seeds – American Native Plants & BonaTerra	\$376.83 + \$56.98	Native plants and seeds for phased native garden installation.
TOTAL SPENT	\$1,477.20	
TOTAL - ANC 4D GRANT FUNDS EXPENDED	\$1,459.83	100% of grant award

The ANC 4D grant funds were fully expended in support of the Peabody Clean Up Initiative. Funds were used for site-preparation equipment, volunteer workday supplies, mulch and soil amendments, and native plants and seeds. Final documented project expenses totaled \$1,477.20, slightly exceeding the \$1,459.83 grant award; the remaining \$17.37 was covered with non-grant funds.

The total project value was significantly greater than the grant amount because it does not include the many hours of donated volunteer labor used to plan, organize, execute, and continue the cleanup and planting work. Garden members and community volunteers also contributed food, water, follow-up care, and other support. In addition, the garden absorbed certain unforeseen project costs, including longer hoses needed to water newly planted areas and other incidental expenses that arose during implementation.

Receipts and invoices supporting the grant expenditures are included as a separate attachment, with the final budget line items summarized above.

Budget Adjustment. The final spending mix also differed somewhat from the original materials-focused budget because actual site conditions became clear only after the initial cleanup. Once volunteers removed accumulated debris and invasive growth, we found heavily compacted soil, extensive roots, and areas that could not reasonably be prepared with hand tools alone.

To keep the project moving toward the same approved goal, Peabody Community Garden used grant funds for short-term site-preparation equipment (not labor), including a Bob Cat, heavy-duty tiller, and associated fuel. These costs supported clearing and soil preparation for the same Peabody Street native-buffer project described in the original grant application.

To offset this unplanned equipment expense, project signage was created without using ANC grant funds. No ANC funds were used to compensate garden staff or volunteers.

The project purpose did not change; only the implementation method changed in response to actual site conditions. The adjustment allowed the garden to complete essential site preparation while keeping the full grant focused on the approved cleanup, restoration, and native planting work.

04 · PHOTOS (Before and After)



BEFORE: Litter, dumping, broken materials, around the garden



BEFORE: The long Peabody Street corridor before cleanup and soil preparation.



AFTER: The long Peabody Street corridor in progress.



1,000+ LBS

LITTER, GREEN WASTE & INVASIVES

8*

HOURS OF CONCENTRATED WORK

3 SCHOOLS

STUDENT GROUPS JOINED NEIGHBORS

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

NEW DATE! MAY 2

SPRING CLEAN UP WEEK 2026: BONUS CLEANUP

SAT, MAY 2 | 9:30 AM - 1 PM
PEABODY COMMUNITY GARDEN (6025 9TH ST, NW)

Join **Peabody Community Garden** to clean and transform the Peabody garden edge with native planting, litter cleanup, and community care. Enjoy snacks and pizza courtesy of the event hosts.


Peabody Community Garden

This event is part of a week of cleanups from April 11 - April 19 + bonus cleanups. Join one or all, and collect prizes and build community along the way.

Details and RSVP at springcleanupweek.com.

*The May 2 garden-day invitation created by Erin Palmer used to recruit neighbors and volunteers through Spring Clean Up Week. *Although the event was originally scheduled for four hours, the work continued for nearly eight hours, with new volunteers arriving throughout the day as others completed their shifts.*

PROJECT OUTCOME

1,000+ pounds removed from the site.



THE SCALE OF THE CLEAN-UP WAS VISIBLE. NPS MADE 2 TRIPS TO HAUL EVERYTHING.



FOLLOW-THROUGH: Volunteers continued moving mulch and clearing the perimeter to make the garden more accessible to all visitors.



SITE PREP: With debris removed, volunteers could begin preparing the compacted soil.



MID-SUMMER BLOOM

Goldenrod and sunflowers establishing along the edge.



EARLY ESTABLISHMENT

Smaller native plugs and Black-eyed Susan beginning to establish.



DEFINED PATH

Mulch creates a clear, maintained edge and helps discourage dumping.



Peabody Community Garden in full summer growth - more than 90 member plots producing food, flowers, habitat, and neighborhood connection.

Improving the perimeter creates a more welcoming interface between a thriving neighborhood resource and the wider Ward 4 community, while establishing a healthier, lower-maintenance native buffer for the future.



PEABODY COMMUNITY GARDEN CLEAN UP DAY

Earth Month 2026



May 02, 2026



THANK YOU, ANC 4D

Peabody Community Garden extends its sincere thanks to Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4D for supporting the Peabody Clean Up Initiative. The grant helped transform a neglected, dumping-prone corridor into a community-tended green edge while bringing dozens of neighbors together in the process.

Special thanks to the 65+ volunteers, family, and friends who contributed their time and energy, with a shout-out to Paul Charter School, Coolidge High School, and District of Columbia International School for sending committed student volunteers.

The National Park Service supported several debris pickups, and garden members contributed food, water, and help that kept the work moving.

WHAT COMES NEXT

The initial planting wave is complete. Peabody Community Garden will continue building the native buffer in phases as the amended soil settles and plants establish, creating a more resilient and welcoming Peabody Street edge over time.

THANK YOU, ANC 4D + OUR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Earth Month 2026 - Recap



PEABODY COMMUNITY GARDEN

EARTH MONTH CLEANUP

MAY 2, 2026
with support from DC's
Spring Clean Up Week initiative

 **65+**
**VOLUNTEERS,
FAMILY & FRIENDS**
including students from our
local community

 **1,000 LBS**
CLEARED AND REMOVED
of weeds, litter,
and other debris

✓ Completed initial phase
of Peabody's native planting

Thank You!

To every volunteer who showed up, rolled up their sleeves,
and helped make Peabody Community Garden
a cleaner, greener place for all.

 **SPECIAL THANKS**
to **ANC 4D**
for sponsoring
this project.

 **THANKS TO 65+ VOLUNTEERS,
FAMILY AND FRIENDS**
with shout out to
• Paul Charter School
• Coolidge High School
• District of Columbia
International School
for sending committed volunteers!

 **TOGETHER, WE GROW A STRONGER COMMUNITY.** 

Official Earth Month Clean-Up recap shared with Peabody Community Garden members and volunteers.