

# Final Feasibility Study – Durham County Farm Campus



## **Executive Summary**

In Spring 2023, the County of Durham in North Carolina (the "Client Team" or the "County") contracted HR&A Advisors ("HR&A") and Andropogon Associates (together referred to as the "Consultant Team") to conduct a feasibility study for the County's "Farm Campus" initiative. Farm Campus consists of four main features: an incubator farm to train new farmers, a food education facility and shared kitchen space for aggregation and processing, a value-added production facility with classroom space, and a healing garden open to the public. The County had envisioned Farm Campus with the mission to empower underrepresented farmers and advance food justice throughout the region. Farm Campus aims to increase opportunities for Historically Underserved farmers. The Historically Underserved (HU) designation, which is referred to throughout this report, is a USDA term which includes farmers in four categories - beginning; socially disadvantaged; veterans; and limited resource. 1 The Consultant Team's scope of work included identifying a suitable site (Workstream 1), prioritizing design elements and phasing (Workstream 2), and assessing implementation considerations, particularly regarding operating costs, governance, and risk mitigation (Workstream 3). The County separately contracted with CoSpero Consulting to conduct community engagement regarding Farm Campus in parallel and coordination with the Consultant Team's work. This final report is informed by the community needs and ideas identified in the community engagement report. Additionally, the Farm Campus Community Advisory Committee provided technical and contextual guidance for the County and the Consultant teams. This final report presents key findings and recommendations from each Workstream, offering a roadmap for the successful development and implementation of Farm Campus over the next decade.

#### **Workstream 1: Feasibility Analysis**

HR&A identified and evaluated viable sites for Farm Campus' location through two phases. First, through a high-level GIS analysis, suitable sites were identified by filtering for descriptive criteria relevant to Farm Campus. Second, using a shortlist of particular sites identified in collaboration with the Client Team, HR&A evaluated and scored each site across a variety of criteria related to Farm Campus' mission and goals. The top-ranking site, located at 308 Orange Factory Road, features suitable soil, water access, and reusable structures. The site also boasts multiple natural resources like ponds and forested areas that provide conservation and recreation opportunities. By December 2023, the Durham County Board of Commissioners voted to acquire the 308 Orange Factory Road Site. The purchased property includes land for a farm campus as well as a nature preserve with trails and recreation to benefit Durham County residents.

#### **Workstream 2: Design and Development Plan**

Through in-depth analysis of the selected site, Andropogon Associates outlined a three-part phased approach to realize Farm Campus' ambitious vision. Phase 1 focuses on essential infrastructure improvements and the establishment of incubator plots. Phase 2 includes upgrading existing facilities and expanding agricultural programming beyond the incubator farm. Phase 3 is the full articulation of the Farm Campus vision, with new construction of a commercial kitchen, event space, and varied recreational amenities. The design and phasing strategy also considers elements of environmental sustainability and climate-resiliency.

#### **Workstream 3: Implementation**

To guide implementation, HR&A developed a governance and operational plan for Farm Campus over its first ten years – the time required to fully implement all programming goals. The plan presumes that the County will serve as the primary owner and operator of the site, hiring staff under Cooperative Extension to help run programming, partnerships, and maintenance as well as appointing a Community Steering Committee who ensures that Farm Campus remains accountable to community members. Initially, Farm Campus staff may share responsibilities with other County programs, but as the site expands, a dedicated team of at least four full-time staff members

<sup>1</sup> USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, <u>Historically Underserved Farmer or Rancher Definition</u>.

will be necessary to manage the complex functions of the Campus. These roles will be phased in over time, aligned with the growth of the site and its programming. Farm Campus staff will work closely with other County departments and community partners, including the Community Steering Committee, to implement and advertise its programs. HR&A developed operating cost estimates for the first ten years of Farm Campus' implementation. These estimates were informed by case studies of comparably programmed initiatives nationwide. HR&A also conducted a high-level risk assessment to identify plausible future scenarios that may compromise Farm Campus' goals, followed by mitigation strategies to proactively defend against those risks.

Farm Campus represents a significant opportunity for Durham County to develop a vibrant agricultural hub that advances food security, racial equity, and environmental sustainability. With the successful acquisition of a site and a clear phased approach in place, the County is well-positioned to activate this consequential development initiative in Durham.

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## **Background**

The initial concept of a Farm Campus for Durham County emerged from ongoing conversations initiated by the Durham County Farmland Protection Advisory Board, along with Durham County Cooperative Extension, the Durham County Open Space Program, and other local stakeholders over several years. The County's overarching vision for Farm Campus is to support a more resilient food system that systemically addresses the root causes of food insecurity by launching the next generation of farmers through increased access to land, infrastructure, and markets for Historically Underserved farmers. Farm Campus aims to be a welcoming, accessible, and empowering space for all participants and visitors. Therefore, community engagement and leadership has been and continues to be a crucial component of all project design and development.

In June 2022, the County was awarded a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production planning grant to conduct a feasibility study for Farm Campus. The County released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the feasibility study in December of 2022 and selected HR&A Advisors and Andropogon Associates in early 2023 to complete this scope of work. This final report summarizes the completed feasibility analysis to evaluate the development of Farm Campus.

## **Workstream 1: Feasibility Analysis**

#### **Methods**

HR&A conducted an analysis to find a range of suitable sites for Farm Campus. To develop an initial shortlist, HR&A looked at County parcels that met particular conditions, using a first round of filtering to select parcels that were zoned for either Residential Rural or Residential Suburban as well as within a 0.5 mile radius of public transportation. Selected parcels were then filtered by their size (greater than 15 acres), current land use description (Vacant Agricultural or Vacant Rural), and their date sold (not past 2021). These criteria were determined based on the priorities that were indicated in our kick-off workshop in June 2023 and in discussion with the Client Team. In August 2023, HR&A presented an initial short list of 10 sites for discussion with the County (Appendix A). HR&A relied on data from GoDurham transit lines and land use data from the Durham County Open Data Portal and utilized ArcGIS Pro to complete this broad-based analysis.

After reviewing our initial scan with the Client Team and surfacing more granular priorities, HR&A refined the list of all sites to a more rigorous shortlist by applying additional criteria specific to the environmental requirements of food production and Farm Campus' other intended programs. This included identifying constraints and program-specific needs on the site, including extreme sloping or encroaching floodplain, parking capacity, water and sewer access, neighborhood adjacency concerns, opportunities for County collaboration, and specific characteristics needed for each of the four elements of Farm Campus that would make the site unsuitable for development and food production.

HR&A used this more detailed set of criteria to create a scorecard to demonstrate the relative pros and cons of the shortlisted sites. HR&A selected a few viable sites from our initial list as well as some preferred sites that the County had hand-selected to review in our scorecards. The scorecards are located in Appendix B. These scorecards were then used to support the case for the Durham County Board of Commissioners to acquire the top-ranking site. HR&A completed four scorecards in total, representing a diversity of sites in regard to scale, location, natural features, price, and suitability for agriculture. These scorecards were presented to the Board of Commissioners at a November 2023 meeting to help evaluate different sites for Farm Campus. HR&A relied on the Web Soil Survey from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as well as data from the Client Team to complete the scorecards. The Consultant Team also conferred with the County's Open Space and Real Estate Division to develop and complete the scorecards and included information they provided from Multiple Listing Service (MLS) data.

#### **Findings**

The highest scoring site (Site #1, 308 Orange Factory Rd.) is 129 acres and features large swaths of arable land. It has on-site water access and a history of agricultural use. Compared to other sites, this site will not require a large amount of clearing and is ready to be farmed. The site includes unique natural features like ponds and forested areas which can be used for recreation or conservation uses and has two existing structures that could be repurposed for Farm Campus use. It is the best positioned site to accommodate all of Farm Campus' programs. The other sites scored lower due to issues related to location in the floodplain, lack of suitable soil for agriculture, and large swaths of forested area that would need to be cleared. The four scorecards are included in Appendix B of this report.

The County shared the scorecards at a presentation with the Durham County Board of Commissioners in November 2023 and received approval to pursue purchasing Site #1. Following a due diligence period, the County successfully acquired Site #1 (now referred to as the "Farm Campus site") at the end of February 2024, solidifying it as the focus of the following work.

### **Workstream 2: Design and Development Plan**

#### **Methods**

Workstream 2: Design and Development Plan (See Appendix C) was led by Andropogon Associates and focused on refining the design elements of each component of Farm Campus as they fit on the acquired site. Andropogon also completed a site tour with the client team to understand the site in more detail. From the site tour, Andropogon noted the scale of the site, condition of existing structure, amount of parking available, and ample opportunities for recreation and conservation.

In two client workshops, Andropogon led the client in discussions to prioritize design elements. Andropogon provided different analyses to understand the ecological, topographic, and other influential conditions of our site. Our discussion in the client workshop included feedback on initial due diligence findings, target audience, programmatic elements, and phasing. Andropogon also shared case studies of similar institutions to illustrate the scale of different operations in comparison to the acquired 129-acre site. The case studies and presentation materials are included in Appendix C.

#### **Findings**

#### **Existing Conditions**

- **Buffers:** The site is located in the Lake Michie/Little River District A Watershed Overlay District which dictates buffer zones of 150' for perennial stream buffers and 50' for intermittent stream buffers. In areas where the overlay does not apply, Andropogon recommends the Neuse River Buffer rules as a best practice.
- **Septic Suitability**: Septic suitability on the east side of the site, including where the main farmhouse is located is "very limited." There are no water or sewer connections on site and no near-term plans for the city to extend into or adjacent to the site.
- Condition of Structures: There are two existing structures on the site: the Main Farmhouse (1979) and the Secondary Farmhouse (1965). The Main Farmhouse is currently habitable with minor plumbing repairs and HVAC updates. The Secondary Farmhouse is currently not habitable but has potential as a storage space and social gathering location. Both houses need updates to provide ADA accessibility. There is also a dilapidated tobacco barn on-site, which should be assessed to understand the feasibility of the renovation for future use.
- **Condition of Existing Dams:** The dam on Pond 2 (northeast corner) requires major repairs. The water level on Pond 4 (northwest corner) should be lowered to prevent water from circumventing the dam.
- **Irrigation:** For irrigation, the Consultant Team recommends using the existing ponds as much as possible, but well water is available if needed.
- **Parking:** In early phases, informal parking can be distributed throughout the site to accommodate incubator farmers. Permanent and consolidated parking areas will be needed for future use.
- **Agriculturally Suitable Soils:** According to data from NRCS, the entire site is mapped as very good agricultural soil. The total area that was in agricultural use at the date of sale is 57.24 acres.
- **Habitat Connectivity:** There have not been any recorded instances of endangered species on the site. Contiguous green space from the southern portion of the site to the publicly owned Eno River and Falls Lake habitat areas creates a regionally significant habitat corridor. The site is home to many beavers, and the County should plan on committing time and money to long-term management efforts.

#### **Programming**

The ideal audience for Farm Campus in its early stages are new and aspiring farmers. In later phases, other types of food entrepreneurs and more seasoned practitioners will be future, more typical users, while an incubator cohort will remain a core demographic of the participants. Farm Campus will deliver programming focused on mentoring, education and training, helping new farmers enhance skill sets that can help them originate and grow agricultural businesses. These operations will not be large-scale commodity crop productions that require

substantial capital investment. Farm Campus, at its early stages, will have an initial focus on fruit and vegetable production and would predictably expand into forest products and broader, more resource-dependent food categories. The acquired site's breadth and richness present opportunities for a diverse, longer-term demonstration of farm yields in addition to education focused plots.

#### **Phasing**

The successful launch of Farm Campus does not require full activation of its complete suite of programming. In fact, Farm Campus will benefit from having a phased approach to development. Andropogon outlined a thoughtful, detailed sequenced initial phasing plan for the range of functional elements that will define a prolific Farm Campus operation. This phased outline staggers uses, audiences, and capital costs throughout the site over a manageable, efficient trajectory of time.

#### - Phase 1: Becoming Farm Campus

Early phase work is focused on safety-related upgrades (i.e. dams, roads), amending soil in certain locations, creating storage space for farmers, and establishing irrigation. The incubator farm is a critical component of Farm Campus programming and training plots (probably around 0.25 to 1 acre per person) are expected to be included in Phase 1. This phase also includes repairs to existing buildings for office use and additional bathrooms/amenities that are needed. The purpose of this phase is to prepare existing features and provide basic infrastructure for the first Farm Campus users. With a focus on opening to the public, some of the infrastructure could be temporary (e,g., port-a-potties, temporary storage, temporary gathering space) and expanded as needed in later phases.

#### - Phase 2: Enhancing/Growing the Campus

In Phase 2, we envision an expansion of agricultural plots and full upgrades to existing buildings. Additional activities like agroforestry, an apiary, and grazing spaces will also likely be implemented in this phase. The main farmhouse could be expanded for kitchen use and indoor programming. Lastly, an outdoor event structure like a pavilion could be used for farmer meetings, workshops, and for educational and recreational purposes outside

#### - Phase 3: Completing the Vision

Phase 3 is likely when the construction of new buildings, such as a commercial kitchen and an indoor event space would be appropriate. Assuming that the other uses of Farm Campus are built out, the healing garden and other natural areas would also come online in Phase 3. The build-out of a large trail system and fishing/paddle recreation opportunities as part of a nature preserve would also happen in Phase 3. Depending on the interests, resources, and capacity of the County and community partners, the healing garden and recreational uses of Farm Campus could come earlier than Phase 3. Enhancements and expansions to parking will be necessary in Phase 3 to accommodate the increase in expected users.

## **Workstream 3: Implementation**

In Workstream 3: Implementation, HR&A developed an implementation strategy for Farm Campus. This implementation strategy consisted of two parts 1) a governance framework and 2) a risk assessment. In the governance framework, HR&A evaluated 3 case studies to determine the County's staffing capacity and operational needs and then developed a phased approach to staffing and program design as well as a 10-year operating expense estimate. The second part of the implementation strategy is a risk assessment. This risk assessment considers various scenarios for the implementation of Farm Campus and related risks that could compromise strategic goals. HR&A proposes high-level strategies to mitigate stated risks.

#### **Governance Overview**

Informed by the phasing and design priorities confirmed during Workstream 2: Design and Development Plan with the Client Team and the findings from CoSpero's community engagement, HR&A outlined a governance framework for Farm Campus operations. The governance framework includes a phased implementation approach, wherein over a ten-year period, we recommend Farm Campus advance through three phases to strategically realize its full vision. Throughout, the County will own, operate, and fund Farm Campus, along with grant sources and possible user fees as appropriate, while project staff and a Community Steering Committee will serve as important community liaisons and accountability for Farm Campus operations. Lastly, these recommendations include opportunities to design an inclusive and sustainable incubator farm program, reduce barriers to participation and recruit diverse participants, and promote long-term success after completion of the incubator program. HR&A's recommendations draw from interviews with three case study farms, input from Andropogon's analysis in Workstream 2: Design and Development Plan and CoSpero's community engagement efforts, in-depth research on comparable operations, and in-house best-practices alignment for governance and implementation guidance.

Workstream 3: Implementation is a design and trajectory plan that includes a recommended governance model, organizational design, and key staffing to lead Farm Campus through implementation, as well as guide long-term operations and maintenance considerations. This governance approach includes a phased breakdown of operating considerations as well as high-level estimations for a 10-year operating budget. In this scope of work, the HR&A team does not infer specific capital expenses and instead lists major capital considerations anticipated for each phase.

#### **Guiding Inputs**

#### **Case Studies**

HR&A reviewed three case studies of projects that share Farm Campus' goals and represent best practices and unique approaches in multi-use community food and agriculture facilities. The three case studies were confirmed with the Client Team beforehand and are as follows: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) Community Farm (Alexander, NC), the Intervale Center (Burlington, VT), and Good Hope Farm (Cary, NC). Tearouts of each case study are available in Appendix E. These particular case studies were selected for their local and/or comparable geographic context to Farm Campus', their similarity in uses that are aligned with the Farm Campus vision, as well as their representation of varied approaches to informative governance and operational structures.

Specifically, the SAHC Community Farm was selected as an example that included many of the multifaceted uses that Farm Campus plans to have, notably the commercial kitchen and demonstration farming sites. The Intervale Center ran the oldest farm incubator program in the U.S., until recently, when it transitioned the program into a farm business services program that offers business planning, financial coaching, and support with land access. As Farm Campus embarks on creating its own incubator farm program, it will be constructive to further investigate Intervale's insights as to why they suspended their program. Lastly, the Good Hope Farm was recommended by the Client Team for its governance structure that highlights partnerships outside of County government, specifically with the non-profit sector. The HR&A team completed interviews with representatives

from all three case studies, as well as with the Triangle Land Conservancy's Bailey and Sarah Williamson Preserve Community Farm (Raleigh, NC), based on it being in the same geographic context as Farm Campus. The recommendations below are also informed by other incubator farms and precedents throughout the country that were presented as part of Workstream 2: Design and Development Plan by Andropogon and identified through additional in-depth research.

#### **Racial Equity**

In addition to the successful operations of the full range of its intended programs, advancing racial equity is a primary, intentional, and fundamental goal of Farm Campus. In the original RFP, the County defined success for Farm Campus as helping build long-term food security and generational wealth, especially for Historically Underserved farmers and other marginalized populations. Therefore, the recommendations in this governance approach are focused on the long-term operational sustainability of Farm Campus and availing opportunities to the furtherance of racial equity, including the promotion of opportunities to participate in educational growth initiatives, entrepreneurial, wealth-building exercises, community leadership, and encourage inclusion of historically marginalized groups in the long-term success of farm campus participants.

While the cases offered in this report reflect similar programming, the case studies themselves were not selected because of their centering of racial equity. The imperative was to unearth examples of successful, high-functioning, best-in-class, governance structures that could be modeled and re-applied for Farm Campus' operational purposes and distinct focus on diverse populations. Interviewees represented in each of the cases were not queried specifically on how their governance structures reflected the attainment of racial equity goals. Instead, it is the notion that the local community stakeholders, residents and impacted practitioners, be the source of anchoring, guidance and thoughtful ideation, in respect to incorporating equitable principles into the ultimate governance structure of Farm Campus and unique context of Durham County. Therefore, HR&A incorporates insights from the extensive CoSpero community engagement discussions, meetings and surveys, reflected in their report regarding opportunities for community leadership. The merits, importance, and additional ideas for implementation of racial equity are included in Appendix D, which lists additional programs that lift up and explicitly center racial equity. An example is Soulfire Farm, among other incubator programs, that focuses explicitly on Historically Underserved farmers. This synopsis informs several key programmatic opportunities and considerations for Farm Campus' incubator farm program design.

#### **Community Engagement Results (See Appendix\_F)**

CoSpero's final report reflects the results of community engagement efforts with Farm Campus' intended community and participants, including organizational and community leaders, beginning & established farmers, community members, aspiring farmers, as well as food/culinary entrepreneurs. The goal of the community engagement process was to identify barriers, interests, and opportunities on the design of Farm Campus. As part of community engagement conducted in 2024, CoSpero collected over 100 survey responses and inputs from almost 60 focus group participants.

Governance recommendations that are derived from CoSpero's report summation, include findings from several thorough instances of community engagement.

#### **Organizational Design**

Organizational form and governance structure should be designed to best allow an organization to deliver its key functions at high capacity. These key functions are based on the activities that an organization has chosen in support of its core mission and values. Farm Campus' established values are to serve as a vehicle for agricultural education, environmental stewardship, and workforce development, uplifting racial equity within each pillar and principle. In concert with these essential values, Farm Campus' key functions, programs, and initiatives are 1) the incubator farm program, 2) a food processing space,3) a commercial kitchen, and 4) the healing garden. These governance recommendations consider each of these development programs granularly, with particular attention to the capacity, expertise, and consistent stewardship necessary to achieve consistent, high level and impactful outcomes. The evolution of the governance structure is phased out over a period of ten years, reflecting the same timeline applied in Workstream 2: Design and Development Plan, with some key functions coming online earlier than others.

As Durham County Farm Campus transitions into the implementation phase, the operation will benefit from having a distinct, clear organizational entity with dedicated staff to oversee the planning, design, construction, and operations of the site. These staff members will be situated in the County's Cooperative Extension. At beginning stages of Farm Campus, Farm Campus staff may have additional responsibilities in Cooperative Extension and in other programs. However, as Farm Campus expands and is implemented to its full capacity, dedicated staff will become necessary to fully leverage the staff's output and human capital.

In the engagement process, community stakeholders emphasized the need for a collective governance structure where community members have opportunities to participate in leadership and decision-making roles. Therefore, a Community Steering Committee, made up of community representatives, program participants, and partner organizations will be responsible for keeping Farm Campus operations and staff accountable to community goals. The Community Steering Committee is essential to ensure that Farm Campus is led by, serves, and remains accountable in an equitable manner, inclusive of historically marginalized communities.

Figure 1 below represents all Farm Campus staff (a total of four new full-time staff members), the Community Steering Committee, and integral parties at the completion of the phased implementation approach, with key positions being introduced before others (to be discussed in more detail later in this section). Figure 2 describes the responsibilities of each of these parties.

**Figure 1. Farm Campus Organizational Chart** 

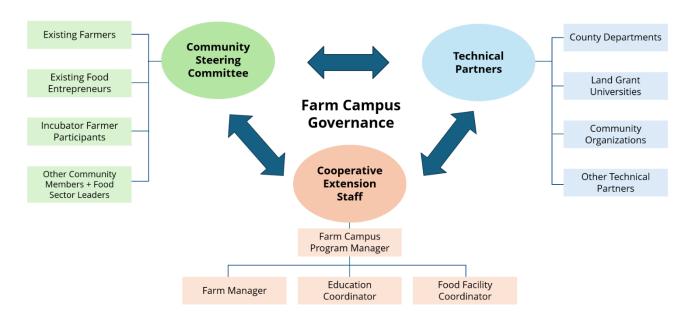


Figure 2. Farm Campus Responsibilities by Entity/Key Position

Entity/Key Position	Responsibilities		

#### Cooperative Extension

Farm Campus staff will be hired through Cooperative Extension.

Cooperative Extension will also provide other operational support as needed to run Farm Campus, utilizing resources and expertise from their existing Durham County staff as well as NC Cooperative Extension Land Grant University partners at NC State and NC A&T.

#### Farm Campus Program Director

- Responsible for driving the vision of Farm Campus forward and managing its overall implementation
- Serve as main liaison with the County, other County departments, and external partners. The Program Director will also be responsible for being a point of contact who can connect Farm Campus participants and programming with organizations doing shared work.
- Convene and be point of contact for Community Steering Committee
- Responsible for major capital fundraising efforts and managing staff at Farm Campus
- Lead branding/marketing for Farm Campus
- Lead Farm Campus staff team
- Lead recruitment of incubator farm participants, focusing on Historically Underserved farmers
- Assist in grant writing and manages overall financial health of Farm Campus
- Assist in curriculum development

#### Entity/Key Responsibilities **Position** Farm Manager Lead site development and farm maintenance Help Education Coordinator develop incubator farm program and curriculum Lead recruitment of incubator farm participants Mentor incubator farm participants through day-to-day support and workshops Coordinate with maintenance staff and field general infrastructure updates Identify opportunities for on-site demonstration and agricultural research projects Education Coordinate and lead volunteers, tours, and school programs on-site Coordinator Liaise with external and internal partners looking to utilize rentable space at the site for programming that aligns with Farm Campus values Facilitate programming at the Healing Garden Support Farm Manager with curriculum development for incubator farm program Support Farm Campus Program Director with Farm Campus messaging and outreach **Food Facility** Responsible for running the value-added production facility, including the Coordinator commercial kitchen space, classroom and teaching space, as well as space for other indoor controlled-environment agriculture Coordinate with incubator farm participants and external guests who want to utilize shared processing infrastructure or commercial kitchen space Conduct outreach to local producers and partners who may want to use the space Develop related programming to expand impact of value-added space

Farm Campus operations will be supported by additional administration staff and capacity throughout Cooperative Extension and the County.

#### **Community Steering Committee**

The Community Steering Committee (Steering Committee) is a cornerstone of community governance for the Farm Campus, ensuring that local voices shape its direction and impact perpetually. Composed of Community Representatives—including incubator farmers, existing farmers, and other food sector leaders—the Committee's primary role is to represent community needs, values, and priorities in informing the full range of Farm Campus activities. They will serve as a crucial liaison to bridge the gap between the community, Farm Campus staff, and the County, ensuring a system of accountability for Farm Campus. The Steering Committee will help inform strategic planning, budget decisions, as well as the ongoing operations & maintenance of Farm Campus. Specifically, the CoSpero report notes that the Steering Committee will be involved in critical decisions such as advising on financial resources, facilitating an efficient evaluation process, and implementing significant programming changes (See Appendix F). The Steering Committee will also play a critical role in community outreach, ensuring that Farm Campus program offerings are advertised to target populations. Through regular meetings with the Farm Campus Program Director and additional stakeholders as needed, the Committee will serve as a conduit for ongoing dialogue with local stakeholders, fostering transparency and accountability in all aspects of the Farm Campus' implementation.

Committee members should be compensated for their time and leadership.

## Entity/Key Position

#### Responsibilities

#### **Technical Advisors**

Farm Campus staff will also rely on technical support from County departments, NC Cooperative Extension, university based staff, community organizations, and external consultants. Technical advisors, including County departments and specialists such as soil and water experts, agricultural agents, and farm practice instructors, will provide essential expertise to address specific challenges and enhance Farm Campus operations.

#### **Potential Community Organizations**

Partnering with aligned community organizations - such as non-profits - could help enhance Farm Campus development and programming. These partners can also help secure diverse sources of grant and donor funds. If applicable, Farm Campus leadership should determine what responsibilities they would feel comfortable sharing with other partners in the latter stages of Farm Campus' implementation (i.e. the Triangle Land Conservancy and its ownership of a parcel adjacent to Farm Campus). Farm Campus should also leverage community leaders and organizations that participated and were involved in the community engagement process, in particular those who aim to provide opportunities that align with and empower existing community work that would elevate the Farm Campus initiative, directly and indirectly.

#### **County Departments**

Farm Campus will need to coordinate with the needs and priorities of other County departments, while maintaining the agricultural focus of the site. A preliminary list of collaborating County departments/commissions with aligned goals are listed below.

#### Open Space and Real Estate Division

The Open Space and Real Estate Division manages public parks, and nature preserves throughout the County. They will be collaborating on the agricultural uses of the site and leading the management of the nature preserve, trails and other recreational uses, and non-agricultural landscapes.

#### Soil & Water Conservation District

 The Soil and Water Conservation District continues to be a valuable resource for technical assistance. In addition to managing the Durham County Agricultural Economic Development Grant Program—an initiative that Farm Campus could engage with and promote alongside similar existing programs—the department, in collaboration with Cooperative Extension, can lead and host a variety of community and farm education opportunities.

#### Department of Equitable Wellbeing

• The Department of Equitable Wellbeing could serve in an advisory and training capacity to advance Farm Campus' racial equity goals and support related communication and outreach efforts.

#### **Operating Estimates**

Figure 3 below provides a high-level set of estimates for anticipated operational costs over the first 10 years of Farm Campus, using the phasing and programming outlined previously by Andropogon in Workstream 2. Costs are broken down by the four primary Farm Campus uses, with staff costs assumed to cover all operations. In Year

1, Farm Campus will need to hire its Farm Manager and invest in start-up costs like permanent and temporary improvements and infrastructure, equipment, as well as miscellaneous costs with anticipated total operating costs of \$271,000. As more program elements come online, Farm Campus will need to hire additional staff and cover operating expenses.

The below operating expenses do not include estimates for the upfront capital investment needed to get the site ready for programming. However, the below estimates note a distinction between upfront costs for certain operational expenses compared to ongoing annual operating costs. Because the exact details of the site are still being planned, there may be unexpected infrastructure and maintenance costs that are not captured below. Staffing estimates are based on salary classifications for comparable positions from Durham County.<sup>2</sup> HR&A applied a 30% to fringe rate to assume benefits after confirming with the client. For other operating expenses, the assumptions are benchmarked on operating expenses shared in conversations with case study representatives, discussed with the Williamson Preserve (a local example), and through extensive research among comparable sites around the country.

**Figure 3: Estimated Operating Expenses for Farm Campus** 

	Phase 1			Phase 2			Phase 3			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Personnel										
Staff Salary	\$53,000	\$123,000	\$126,000	\$183,000	\$189,000	\$194,000	\$253,000	\$261,000	\$268,000	\$276,000
Farm Manager <sup>1</sup>	\$53,000	\$55,000	\$56,000	\$58,000	\$60,000	\$62,000	\$63,000	\$65,000	\$67,000	\$69,000
Farm Campus Program Manager <sup>2</sup>	\$0	\$68,000	\$70,000	\$72,000	\$74,000	\$76,000	\$79,000	\$81,000	\$83,000	\$86,000
Education Coordinator <sup>3</sup>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$53,000	\$55,000	\$56,000	\$58,000	\$60,000	\$62,000	\$63,000
Food Hub/Commercial Kitchen Coordinator <sup>4</sup>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$53,000	\$55,000	\$56,000	\$58,000
Staff Benefits <sup>5</sup>	\$16,000	\$36,000	\$38,000	\$55,000	\$56,000	\$58,000	\$76,000	\$78,000	\$80,000	\$83,000
Farm Campus Program Manager	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$19,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$21,000
Farm Manager	\$0	\$20,000	\$21,000	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$23,000	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$25,000	\$26,000
Education Coordinator	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$19,000
Food Facility Coordinator	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$17,000	\$17,000
Operating Costs										
Incubator Farm	\$203,000	\$146,000	\$150,000	\$155,000	\$159,000	\$164,000	\$169,000	\$174,000	\$179,000	\$185,000
Start-Up Costs - Infrastructure and Equipment <sup>6</sup>	\$110,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Permanent Improvements & Infrastructure	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Contigency	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$(
Operating Costs	\$93,000	\$146,000	\$151,000	\$155,000	\$160,000	\$164,000	\$169,000	\$174,000	\$179,000	\$184,000
Equipment	\$0	\$50,000	\$52,000	\$53,000	\$55,000	\$56,000	\$58,000	\$60,000	\$61,000	\$63,000
Maintenance/Capital Reserve	\$65,000	\$67,000	\$69,000	\$71,000	\$73,000	\$75,000	\$77,000	\$79,000	\$82,000	\$84,000
Misc. (including admin, insurance, contingency funds, etc.) <sup>7</sup>	\$28,000	\$29,000	\$30,000	\$31,000	\$32,000	\$33,000	\$34,000	\$35,000	\$36,000	\$37,000
Food Hub Operating Costs <sup>8</sup>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,000	\$54,000	\$74,000	\$96,000
Commercial Kitchen Operating Costs <sup>9</sup>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,000	\$54,000	\$74,000	\$96,000
Healing Garden Operating Costs <sup>10</sup>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$30,000	\$36,000	\$37,000	\$38,000
Total Expenses	\$256,000	\$268,000	\$276,000	\$338,000	\$348,000	\$358,000	\$522,000	\$579,000	\$634,000	\$691,000
Assumptions		Source								
General Inflation Rate		HR&A Assur								
Staff Benefits Rate	30.0%	Confirmed v	with County							

Farm Campus Acreage Incubator Farm Acreage Healing Garden Acreage 30.0% Confirmed with County 57 WS 2 2 HR&A Assumption

#### References

<sup>1</sup> From estimate of County Extension Program Assistant position (Midpoint Salary)

6 Start-up costs are costs needed to prepare the site for incubator farm participants. It will include construction of basic infrastructure (fencing, dry storage, greenhouse, hoophouse, etc.), fencing, and other essential equipment. This is a lump sum estimate given that details of the site's needs are still up for debate.

<sup>7</sup>On insurance, most incubator programs require participants to have their own insurance (if they are a business), Applicable insurance may include Farm and product liability insurance, workers' compensation insurance, and crop insurance. This is separate from the insurance that Farm Campus may need itself to operate their incubator farm should be consulted with the County legal support). This is a placeholder cost that should be updated depending on the type of insurance Farm Campus would need as an organization.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> From estimate of County Associate Extension Agent position (Midpoint Salary)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> From estimate of County Extension Program Assistant position (Midpoint Salary)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>From estimate of County Extension Program Assistant position (Midpoint Salary)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Assumes 30% fringe rate

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Durham County Government Alphabetical Listing of Classification Titles. https://www.dconc.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/21049/638229402488700000

<sup>8</sup>Given that details about the food hub are still to be determined, this estimate is a lump sum of operating expenses from four North Carolina food hubs published in a study by North Carolina State University. HR&A assumes that the start-up year for the food hub will operate at about 40% capacity. HR&A increases the operating expenses for the food hub by 20% each year starting from the first year of operation.

<sup>9</sup>Given that details about the commercial kitchen are still to be determined, this estimate is a lump sum of operating expenses from four North Carolina food hubs published in a study by North Carolina State University. HR&A assumes that the start-up year for the commercial kitchen will operate at about 40% capacity. HR&A increases the operating expenses for the food hub by 20% each year starting from the first year of operation.

<sup>10</sup>Given that details about the healing garden are still to be determined, this estimate of operating expenses for a large open space from a study by NC State Extension. HR&A assumes that the Healing Garden is 2 acres.

#### Sources

- Incubator Farm estimates from a Feasibility Study for the proposed Loudoun Incubator Farm Projections and the FY 2024-2025 Williamson Preserve Budget
- Food Hub and Commercial Kitchen estimates from "Economic viability of a food hub business: Assessment of annual operational expenses and revenues" (2014, North Carolina State University)
- Healing Garden estimates from "Cost Analysis for Improving Park Facilities to Promote Park-based Physical Activity" by NC State Extension

Based on Workstream 2, the incubator farm portion of Farm Campus will span a maximum of 57 acres. However, to account for site maintenance and preparation of the full 129 acres of the site, HR&A applies assumptions for the incubator farm for the remaining acreage of the site. HR&A assumes an aggregated set of infrastructure, equipment, and contingency improvements to prepare the site for programming. After Year 1, equipment estimates include costs for repairs and maintenance, office supplies, and other equipment. Maintenance and capital reserve costs include any building repairs and maintenance. Given that details regarding the food processing space and commercial kitchen are still to be determined, we have estimated operating expenses against a summation of similar expenses from four North Carolina food hubs.<sup>3</sup> For both the food processing space and commercial kitchen, HR&A assumes that the start-up year will operate at about 40% capacity of the comparable benchmark for operating expenses. HR&A increases the operating expenses for the food processing space and commercial kitchen by 20% each year starting from the first year of operation. For the healing garden, HR&A assumes that a general open space maintenance cost for a space of about two total acres, benchmarked by park facility maintenance costs in North Carolina.<sup>4</sup> All costs are subject to a general annual inflation rate of 3.0%. In consideration of conversations with the Durham County client team, it's been agreed that these expenses assume that Farm Campus will be funded directly by the County. To bolster County funds, Farm Campus can also seek additional funding through local, state, and federal grants, fundraising efforts from non-profit partners and mission driven philanthropic foundations (if applicable), as well as revenue streams available from on-site

#### **Competitive Advantage of Farm Campus**

Currently, Farm Campus is a unique addition to the Durham County agricultural community and its resources. Farm Campus is distinct in its intentional focus on Historically Underserved farmers as well as its ability to offer multiple, integrated, agriculturally centered, community serving functions in one place, including processing, storage, distribution, education, and business support. From the onset of the feasibility study, the Client Team also noted a significant lack of cold storage and processing facilities throughout the county. In the local case studies highlighted in the governance approach, only the SAHC Community Farm provided a value-added space in the form of a commercial kitchen. Participants in the community engagement process were enthusiastic about the prospect of shared kitchen and storage space. They also see a substantial opportunity to utilize shared spaces at Farm Campus for community events such as workshops and classes.

programming (i.e. event rentals, programming, portions of produce sales) to meet operating expenses.

To sustain Farm Campus' competitive advantage in attracting incubator participants, it is imperative that the precise design and operations of the incubator program reflect lessons learned from other, previously executed, best-in-class incubation programs. See more considerations for the incubator program's design under Step 1 in the Implementation Goals section. Lastly, continued community involvement and input are also necessary to effectively inform the incubator farm program and realization of Farm Campus' vision. The program must uniquely fit the community's needs, in alignment with the County's racial equity vision for the project. Farmers who participated in focus groups facilitated by CoSpero emphasized that the incubator farm must include

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "Economic viability of a food hub business: Assessment of annual operational expenses and revenues," North Carolina State University (2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "Cost Analysis for Improving Park Facilities to Promote Park-based Physical Activity," NC State Extension (2015).

supports and resources like mentorship, business planning support, financial assistance, hands-on workshops and demonstrations, and industry partnerships to ensure the success of the program. Recommended next steps related to community involvement and leadership are also laid out in the Implementation Goals section below.

#### **Implementation Goals**

Delivering on the above vision will require careful coordination with other County entities, the acquisition and maintenance of competitively skilled talent, and securing a sufficient operating budget. To realize Farm Campus' ideal governance and organizational structure, the County should focus on achieving the following goals – summarized in Figure 4 and further detailed below. This phased implementation approach prioritizes detailing the phase-by-phase steps within the first two goals, "Site Preparation" and "Develop Incubator Farm Program", as the most significant element for determining Farm Campus' success. In addition to the phasing outlined in Workstream 2, Figure 4 includes a "Phase 0" to reflect the imminent actions already somewhat underway among Farm Campus leadership to organize and align their efforts. Phasing for these goals also reflects the same timing assumptions regarding staffing and programming as included in the Operating Estimates. These implementation goals should be carried out simultaneously, although progress on "Solidify Key Farm Campus Positions" might need to happen first depending on existing capacity of County staff. Opportunities for the Community Steering Committee to provide input and accountability throughout each Phase and noted below when possible.

**Figure 4: Implementation Goals by Phase** 

Phase 0	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
	Site Pre	paration	
Begin site and land preparation efforts. Begin initial community programming.	Continue land preparation efforts, begin development of food facility.	Continue food facility development; open healing garden and other community spaces.	Open all Farm Campus elements, continue land and site maintenance and additional development as needed.
	Develop Incubat	or Farm Program	
Design incubator farm program. Begin with more experienced farmers.	Begin site preparation + recruit first round of participants.	Develop incubator farm curriculum for beginners.	Establish robust programming for both new and aspiring farmers + continued support for program graduates.
	Solidify Key Farm	Campus Positions	
Write job descriptions for Farm Campus Program Director and Farm Manager. Recruit Community Steering Committee members.	Approve positions, interview, and hire.	Write job description and hire Education Coordinator.	Write job description and hire Food Facility Coordinator.
	Foster Coordination wi	th Existing Local Efforts	
Outreach to existing local initiatives + meet with potential partners.	Solidify areas for collaboration and formalize partnerships.	Implement partnerships and programming.	As appropriate, adapt org. structure to incorporate partners.
	Develop Marketing	& Branding Strategy	
Identify and incorporate feedback from community engagement to develop Farm Campus brand.	Implement outreach plan to recruit participants.	Expand outreach efforts based on feedback from Phase 1.	

#### **Goal: Site Preparation**

During Phases 0 and 1, Farm Campus will focus on essential early-stage site preparation to safely onboard the first class of incubator farmers and open to the public. This will include installing temporary infrastructure, such as port-a-potties and handwashing stations, and making basic site improvements like grading pathways, securing fencing, ensuring water irrigation access, establishing functional drainage, and designating parking areas. Farm Campus will also acquire basic equipment necessary for initial farming activities, such as hand tools, small-scale irrigation systems, and starter farming kits. Storage solutions will be simple and temporary, using sheds or shipping containers for produce and equipment. Additionally, Farm Campus will obtain a Farm Number from the Farm Service Agency which will allow them to access additional agricultural programs and resources.

In Phases 2 and 3, Farm Campus will invest in larger infrastructure and capital projects to support long-term growth. This will include purchasing larger farming equipment, such as tractors and specialty vegetable farming tools, and constructing permanent facilities, including bathrooms, greenhouses, and storage quarters for supplies and harvests. These later phases will also involve fully opening all Farm Campus elements, continuing with land and site maintenance, and expanding as needed. The food facility will be further developed, and new community spaces, including the healing garden and natural recreation areas, will open to the public.

#### **Goal: Develop Incubator Farm Program**

The incubator farm is a core component of Farm Campus. Articulating the program design and its commitment to racial equity is a critical, imminent goal.

#### Phase 0: Design incubator farm program

The County has defined the primary audience for Farm Campus to be Historically Underserved farmers as defined by the USDA. Intentional efforts should be made, to reach out to established community organizations who work with target populations, publicize the incubator farm in relevant languages, as well as to involve potential participants in the planning and design of the program. Farm Campus should intentionally address barriers to participation, including transportation to the site, reaching residents of East and South Durham (areas identified in the community engagement as often overlooked), and the unique value proposition of the incubator farm program.

In the design of the incubator farm program, the County should consider how it wishes to answer the questions below to inform what type of incubator farm program they will run.

#### How much farming experience do participants need to have?

As Farm Campus initiates its incubator farm program, it will be beneficial to recruit participants who have prior proven experience with farming. Most incubator farms require participants to have at least some experience with farming and/or agricultural production. Case studies range from 2-5 years of experience, this can be defined by formal or informal agricultural experience). Having more experienced participants allows for a more efficient use of resources, higher success rates, because of accelerated learning, opportunities for peer mentorship, as well as reduced overall risk in the early stages of the incubator farm program. Culturally relevant mentorship was stated as a key recommendation that evolved from community feedback. To reduce financial barriers for participation, mentors should be compensated, when appropriate, for their participation. Lastly, structured onboarding processes should be included to help seasoned mentors and their respective mentees clearly understand their goals, responsibilities and inherent opportunities.

Both Good Hope Farm and Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy Community Farm require that their participants have some agricultural experience and often reject applications if they believe that participants are not ready yet. The application process often requires submitting a business plan. However, it should be assumed that even experienced farmers may need support in drafting the components of a comprehensive business plan. As such, it is recommended that business and technical assistance training be a component of the incubator farm program. Farm Campus can also send prospective participants to a screening or beginner farmer program to get the training that they need before joining the incubator farm program formally.

With one staff person (Farm Manager) responsible for the incubator farm in Phase 1 and 2, it will be beneficial to have early participants who are relatively self-sufficient and independent, needing minimal 1-to-1 support, so that staff resources are not overstretched and consumed. HR&A assumes that Farm Campus will have up to five incubator farm participants with relative autonomy and some experience in Phase 1 of the program. In Phase 2 and 3, once the incubation program is successfully up and running, Farm Campus could consider developing an additional, more hands-on training tract, that would set in motion an accessible method of on-boarding participants with very limited to zero agricultural experience (see Phase 2-3). This curriculum-based program may require additional staff to manage.

CoSpero's report recommends a cohort learning model that features structured programming, sequencing for certification and advancement, as well as opportunities to partner with local higher education institutions to codevelop entry-level coursework for program participants

What are incubator participants allowed to grow at Farm Campus?

The SAHC Community Farm developed a land activity and land use manual, used to distinguish allowable and disallowable uses for incubator farm participants. The HR&A team understands that incubator farm participants will have flexibility in the crops that they choose to grow. Incorporating participants with some farming experience will allow for greater staff capacity to implement other Farm Campus goals, including demonstration projects, connecting with the greater local agricultural market, as well as bringing in volunteers and the public for educational events.

What are participants responsible for? What is Farm Campus responsible for?

The County will be responsible for providing support and resources, including but not limited to farm maintenance, equipment, and infrastructure to incubator participants. Based on the available 57 acres for the incubator farm, Farm Campus leadership should decide what range of acreage they would like to rent out to their incubator farm participants. In case studies, incubator farm participants can farm on anywhere from 0.25 acres (immigrant farmers at the Town of Cary's Good Hope Farm) to 20 acres (the Williamson Preserve's more experienced farmer tenants). See Appendices B through D for additional details on the size of incubator farm plots.

Incubator farm programs nationwide offer a range of different resources to their participants. It is up to Farm Campus to determine which resources and expenses it will provide for participants. These expenses are grouped together in the estimated operating expenses above.

Sample expenses and resources needed for the Incubator Farm include:

- Access to greenhouse/hoop house
- Access to shared farm tools
- Rent
- Tractor access
- Utilities
- Access to farm tools
- Irrigation infrastructure
- Basic field preparation before the growing season
- Access to office facilities

- Marketing, business planning & technical assistance
- Transportation
- Seeds/transplants
- Compost and other soil amendments
- Packaging materials (for sale on-site)
- Farm labor
- Specialized equipment
- Commercial liability insurance

In addition to material resources, Farm Campus should also provide education and training in business planning and development. This could include a series of training courses on how to scale, obtain grants and loans, craft business proposals and feasibility studies, and other constructive tools, methodologies and practices. Community engagement stressed the importance of transportation, need for childcare, diverse learning styles and preferences, as well as expanding education efforts regarding land acquisition processes.

How long will participants stay at Farm Campus?

In case studies, incubator farm participants usually remain in the formal initial incubator program for one to three years. For example, Farm Campus leadership can set a minimum requirement to sign a one-year lease at Farm Campus.

What is the desired long-term relationship between Farm Campus and incubator farm participants? Are there opportunities for participants to build equity?

Early in program design, the County should consider what participants will do after they graduate from the incubator farm program through a post-graduation plan. Community engagement participants also stressed the importance of parallel efforts to preserve farmland throughout the County to ensure the success of diverse farmers. Participants raised concerns that incubator farm participants would not have access to funding and support once they no longer have access to the program's land and other resources. The Intervale Center decided to discontinue its incubator program after realizing the post-program challenges that incubator farm graduates faced including, moving into new plots, building a new customer base, and finding the seasoned industry support they needed to succeed. The Intervale Center decided to shift their program to a general farm business support service and over a protracted period of time have maintained several of their incubator farm participants as permanent tenants.

Without proactive planning, aspiring farmers in Durham County may also face similar issues upon graduation from the incubator farm program. CoSpero's community engagement survey noted that farmers cited land costs, insufficient financial support, slim profit margins, and the high costs of supplies/equipment were major barriers to establishing their start-up businesses. HR&A encourages the County to consider ways to build in long-term, post-incubation planning and support for incubator farm graduates early-on in their program – a point that was also reaffirmed by all case study interviews.

To support long-term opportunities that promote generational wealth as a tenet of racial equity, Farm Campus may consider learning from a version of the agrarian commons model, a variation of a traditional land trust that focuses on community-based land ownership and management to promote sustainable agriculture and equitable access to farmland. Recommended by the SAHC Community Farm, this model operates on the principle that land should be held in common, rather than privately owned, to ensure long-term stewardship and prevent speculative development. Acknowledging that a land trust model may not work for a County-owned and operated site, partnering with a non-profit organization or developing a public trust of farmland (i.e. at a separate location than the Farm Campus site) for incubator farm graduates to use can be an opportunity for farmers to build equity as well as have long-term stability after graduation.

Another consideration is to build opportunities for equity building into the program while farmers are actively participating. The Intervale Center developed the Intervale Farmers Equipment Company (IFEC) to own the shared equipment that they use on their farm site. This model allows farmer tenants to build equity, invest in the maintenance and care of their equipment, and self-manage themselves. A staff member at Intervale has a permanent seat on the board of IFEC.

#### Additional Considerations for Phase 0

While developing the incubator farm program, Farm Campus staff should also move forward with land preparation efforts, design and launch community programming, such as demonstration plots and a farming 101 workshop series, and continue community engagement efforts that build a following, connection to the land and thus a platform to establish brand, reputation and business constituency. Early community programming should start as soon as possible to maintain support and momentum for Farm Campus.

PHASE 1: Prepare for first round of participants

Based on the answers to the above questions, the Farm Manager should develop a detailed program manual that clearly extrapolates expectations, policies, and procedures for incubator farm participants. Based on case study best practices, it is important to have these communicated and agreed upon at the outset of a new participants' tenure on the incubator farm.

In tandem with site preparation efforts, Farm Campus should focus on recruiting its first cohort of incubator farm participants in a robust, holistic and substantive manner. Farm Campus should create criteria to evaluate participants based on how they align with Farm Campus' goals and intentionally recruit individuals who bring diverse perspectives and experiences, proven track records of involvement, interest, and farming sector participation. In both case study interviews and community engagement results, mentorship was highlighted as an essential component for success for incubator farm participants. Farm Campus could recruit both newer and more experienced farmers from diverse backgrounds to pair incubator participants with seasoned, experienced mentors who can guide their mentee's development and help them navigate inevitable challenges and capture unforeseen, but fortuitous opportunities. A best practice model in the profiled case studies, reflects an instance where all aspiring participants are required to have a modest level of experience with agri-business and are required to submit application materials, such as a business plan, to participate in the program. In particular, during the initial stages of Phase 1, having experienced farmers involved in the incubator program can provide crucial support to the Farm Manager, helping to ensure that the program is instructive, professional, informed, runs smoothly and that new participants receive the guidance they need to succeed and that Farm Campus staff are efficiently deployed.

#### PHASE 2: Develop incubator farm curriculum for beginners

In later phases of Farm Campus, the HR&A team recommends that Farm Campus integrate and foster a more beginner-friendly curriculum and program that allows a less experienced population from historically marginalized communities to be under consideration for participation. This recommendation fully considers the substantial resources necessary to educate beginner farmers. Alongside a variety of partners, the Farm Manager and Education Coordinator can work together to develop educational content and hands-on activities to bring diverse learners with limited farming experience to Farm Campus, inclusive of a more hands-on structure. More experienced incubator farm participants from Phase 1 can serve as mentors and foster a supportive learning environment. For example, the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy provides a Farm Pathways program in partnership with Organic Growers School and WNC Farmlink for participants to supplement learning in the program. Farm Campus' incubator program can also draw on the wealth of resources and expertise from Cooperative Extension to offer more hands-on training for beginners. After focusing on design and development of the beginner-friendly curriculum in Phase 2, Farm Campus can launch the beginner program in Phase 3.

## PHASE 3: Establish robust programming for new and aspiring farmers and continued support for program graduates

Upon development and design of a successful incubator program, by Phase 3, Farm Campus will have graduated their first round of participants. Farm Campus should deploy its post-graduation strategy and plan, in collaboration with its local community partners, to connect graduates to resources to continue farming on or apart from Farm Campus.

#### **Goal: Solidify Key Farm Campus Positions**

To acquire new positions, the County should align job descriptions, salary schedules, recruitment and selection, and open requirements (for full-time and part-time employees). Farm Campus should strive to employ a diverse staff that undergoes extensive equity training and is willing to work closely with community organizations under a pre-determined and informed structure. Key positions needed for Phase 1 are the Farm Manager (in Year 1) as well as the Farm Campus Program Director (in Year 2). Later in Phase 2, HR&A recommends the hiring of an Education Coordinator. Lastly, in Phase 3, upon completion of the value-added processing facility, HR&A recommends the hiring of a Food Facility Coordinator. Necessary steps for the County are to write job descriptions for each new position, to obtain approval from the County's Human Resources Division and inclusion

in the budget cycle, and interview and hire candidates. The positions should be publicized through a variety of channels to ensure that a diverse candidate pool applies. Priority should be given to participants who have expressed in the community engagement process that they are interested in leadership opportunities to shape Farm Campus. Recruitment for the Community Steering Committee should also happen in Phase 0 or Phase 1. Prospective members of the Community Steering Committee should be identified by prior participation in community engagement efforts and vetted based on their connections to the local agricultural ecosystem, commitment to racial equity, as well as their ability to reliably provide advisory input to Farm Campus staff throughout the project's implementation.

#### **Goal: Foster Coordination with Existing Local Efforts**

Representatives of case studies based in North Carolina (SAHC and Good Hope Farm) were interested in staying connected to Farm Campus as the project progresses. The Farm Campus site shares an adjacent parcel with the Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC), prompting opportunities for conversations in ways to partner on programming, outreach, and planned operations.

The County should be mindful to bring in select collaborators that have inertia and are already contributing to the sustainable food ecosystem in Durham County. The Client Team expressed caution at bringing in too many partners too early in Farm Campus' development process. However, our case studies reflect that a clearly articulated vision and coordinating structure, bringing in trusted collaborators (if not formal partners) is an effective way to leverage existing expertise, resources, and networks, foster mutual learning, and enhance the overall impact of Farm Campus. Inclusion of the Community Steering Committee, rather than through a formal partnership, may also be another way to collaborate with like-minded organizations.

#### **Goal: Develop Marketing & Identity Strategy**

Based on focus group results compiled by CoSpero, the healing garden ranked last in terms of anticipated impact. The incubator farm ranked second-to-last in terms of anticipated impact. Farm Campus may benefit from a refined marketing and branding strategy to make sure that the incubator farm is designed to meet community needs and reaches its desired audience. This marketing and branding should highlight the ways in which Farm Campus is addressing barriers to participation, celebrating diverse communities and identities, and additional ways to get involved with the Farm Campus vision. The community engagement report shared excitement for the unique value proposition of Farm Campus and the opportunity to highlight farm-to-table and local sourcing. Respondents also expressed interest in being involved in the design and co-development of the program. The marketing and branding strategy should be shaped by further community involvement and leadership to try and assess any hesitations regarding the incubator farm and assuage any concerns.

The Program Coordinator at Good Hope Farm, a publicly-owned and operated incubator farm, advised that maintaining funding and support from public leaders requires demonstrating the importance of the site not just to active participants, but also to adjacent departments and members of the public as well. HR&A recommends that early Farm Campus programming should also include events that bring supportive parties and some members of the public to the site to build positive associations and communal experiences. This may look like demonstration sites, workdays for volunteering and community engagement, invitations to subject experts and local community members, as well as smaller plots for community garden opportunities. Through farm tours and other events with partners, the site should serve a larger audience than just those considered to be potential participants. Complementarily, Farm Campus staff can participate in external, off-site programming, such as through local schools, to promote Farm Campus. Communicating the value of Farm Campus to a larger public will help build momentum for future uses and get the word out about Farm Campus.

Given that CoSpero's outreach showed the greatest interest in the uses that will be implemented in later phases than the incubator program – i.e. the commercial kitchen, storage facility– it will be important to sustain and build interest of participants over the long term. Community respondents also expressed interest in being involved in the development and co-design of Farm Campus. These respondents might be great stakeholders to bring into

consideration for the planning and design of both the food processing space and commercial kitchen elements of the program, via the Community Steering Committee.

#### **Risk Assessment**

As a new, ambitious initiative and organizational entity, Farm Campus will invariably face risks that could challenge and disruptively compromise its successful implementation. As determined in coordination with the client team in August 2024, HR&A identified four overarching thematic goals that, if achieved, would constitute the primary markers of success for Farm Campus:

- Agricultural Education: inform and educate all potential users on agricultural systems and science.
- **Racial Equity and Food Justice:** advance positive racial equity outcomes in Durham County and advance opportunities in the agricultural sector for Historically Underserved farmers.
- **Agribusiness Workforce & Economic Development:** strengthen and grow the agribusiness sector and support positive local economic development trends.
- Environmental Stewardship: promote responsibility and respect for environmental systems and spaces.

Reaching these goals will require conscientious, detailed efforts to further plan and implement action items, and track progress. With those considerations cautiously in mind, Farm Campus can benefit from considering a variety of probable, future scenarios that could arise in Durham County within the 10-year implementation timeline, to then consider which risks may arise specific to those contexts and identify mitigation approaches accordingly. As determined in coordination with the client team in August 2024, HR&A identified three such scenarios to consider different contextual risks:

#### Scenario #1: Internal

Recruiting staff at the preferred experience level for Farm Campus in Phase I has taken more time than anticipated, leading to the delayed start of all Farm Campus' programs. The delay, combined with the growing pains of establishing a new office/department, have also hamstrung interdepartmental coordination, leading to some missed opportunities and perception that Farm Campus staff are not sufficiently keyed into related work being done elsewhere within the County. And the first cohort of incubatees, while reporting high levels of satisfaction with the program, are struggling to find the next phase of work for them to further establish themselves in the agricultural industry.

#### Scenario #2: Public/Political

Changing representatives on the County Board of Commissioners has led to shifting priorities among the County's strategic plan, creating more pressure for Farm Campus to accommodate a growing list of uses outside of its original mission. While none of the additional uses are incompatible with Farm Campus' goals, Farm Campus staff feel they are not appropriately equipped to deliver on additional demands for their operations and are concerned about meeting their previous implementation milestones while also accommodating these additional asks. There has also been mounting public pressure from stakeholder groups for Farm Campus to meet its implementation promises, as those engaged during the planning process for Farm Campus feel progress is not happening quickly or transparently enough.

#### Scenario #3: External Context

Durham County continues to face ongoing population growth, driven primarily by young professionals, leading to an increase in housing costs and a net decrease in Historically Underserved residents. Wages have not kept up with the cost of living, and urbanization trends have contributed to the continued decrease of acreage devoted to agricultural use countywide. Corporate investment in real estate has focused on predominantly low-income neighborhoods, contributing to the reduction in affordable

housing opportunities. Economic growth, while increasing County revenues, has widened the racial wealth gap, leading to an increase in frustrated community sentiments around the County's ability to address racial equity outcomes.

Using these scenarios as points of departure, HR&A identified potential risks to each goal and then outlined overarching approaches that Farm Campus staff should consider now to mitigate potential negative impacts from those risks.

Figure 5: Risk Assessment Matrix

Goal / Issue Area	Scenario 1: Internal	Scenario 2: Public/Political	Scenario 3: External Context
Agricultural Education	<ul> <li>Educational programming suffers if hiring compromises subject matter expertise to meet timeline goals</li> <li>Promotional activities in key early implementation phases may be limited or cut, due to delayed onboarding</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Pressures from the         Durham Public Schools         Board of Education shift         the district's overall         educational goals such that         agricultural educational         opportunities are deprioritized</li> <li>Local stakeholder groups         focused on education are         less likely to want to         partner with Farm Campus         due to delayed         implementation</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Pipeline of agricultural workers (i.e. in educational or workforce settings) slows, reducing pool of potential Farm Campus educational collaborators and recipients</li> <li>Urbanization trends lead to higher demand for education focused on urban farming, increasing competition for Farm Campus' programming</li> </ul>
Racial Equity	<ul> <li>Internal staff lack capacity to sufficiently contribute to related racial equity initiatives at the County, making Farm Campus appear less impactful and connected</li> <li>Farm Campus may miss an opportunity for its own staff to be reflective of a racially equitable County agency</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>County commitment to racial equity goals changes thus support for Farm Campus as a racial equity initiative diminishes</li> <li>Farm Campus takes on fewer incubatees to accommodate shifting Board priorities, reducing potential impact</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Shrinking local low income population reduces target applicant pool for incubation program</li> <li>Incubation graduates have fewer local options for post-program employment, reducing program success</li> <li>Widened racial wealth gap puts further pressure on Farm Campus to deliver on racial equity initiatives, contributing to staff burnout</li> </ul>
Agribusiness Workforce & Economic Development	<ul> <li>Incubatees may opt out of the agribusiness workforce if they are not effectively supported by staff to find subsequent work</li> <li>Program outcomes make limited impact on related local and regional economic and workforce</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>County policy reduces incentives for agribusiness-focused initiatives, impacting funding to Farm Campus and its incubatees</li> <li>Stakeholder groups lose confidence in Farm Campus' impact and put</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Diversity and scale of the local agribusiness ecosystem is reduced due to farmers being priced out</li> <li>Agriculture as an element of public economic development policy is down-prioritized and</li> </ul>

Goal / Issue Area	Scenario 1: Internal	Scenario 2: Public/Political	Scenario 3: External Context
	development goals due to limited staff follow-through	support behind other local agribusiness efforts	under-funded, reducing support for Farm Campus
Environmental Stewardship	Limited staff capacity and pressure to file "quick wins" reduces ambitions of environmental stewardship standards	<ul> <li>County adopts more demanding expectations for environmental stewardship that complicate Farm Campus' implementation</li> <li>Local advocates for environmental responsibility do not perceive Farm Campus as an effective practitioner due to slow rate of progress, compromising legitimacy</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Pressures to promote urban growth decrease incentives for County leadership to support best-in-class environmental stewardship standards</li> <li>Growing adjacent real estate developments negatively impact local ecology and resources, impinging upon Farm Campus' ability to deliver on environmental stewardship goals</li> </ul>
Mitigation Approaches	<ul> <li>Promote Farm Campus open positions early, widely, and repeatedly, with support from a PR or recruitment firm, if possible.</li> <li>Leverage local agricultural, educational, and community networks to help advertise and recruit.</li> <li>Ensure County leadership understands that effective, committed staff are fundamental to Farm Campus' 10-year implementation timeline.</li> <li>Pair staff familiar with Farm Campus' history and goals with new hires to advise them as they come onboard.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Collect and disseminate data that demonstrates Farm Campus is meeting its implementation targets.</li> <li>Get support from County Commissioners on key implementation milestones to ensure continuity despite shifting contexts.</li> <li>Fight for early wins and ensure progress is being transparently publicized to gain further support and awareness for Farm Campus.</li> <li>Strengthen connections with prominent community stakeholders to maintain strong voter support for Farm Campus' vision.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Foster positive relationships with neighboring landowners to promote regional approaches to environmental stewardship.</li> <li>Cultivate cross-sector collaborations between agriculture and other locally prominent industries to strengthen economic and workforce development opportunities.</li> <li>Maintain a strong presence in local educational institutions.</li> <li>Ensure Farm Campus is built into Countywide environmental planning goals to prevent compromising due to development pressures.</li> </ul>

#### **Conclusion**

Farm Campus is committed to a bold and viable vision for advancing agricultural education, reducing food insecurity, and fostering agribusiness workforce development. This feasibility study confirms that the project is feasible and well-positioned to deliver significant benefits to a wide variety of audiences, including community members, aspiring food entrepreneurs, and existing stakeholders in the food sector. With a thoughtfully phased implementation plan over the next 10 years, Farm Campus can effectively manage risks, scale operations, and maximize its impact over time.

The acquisition of the 129-acre site at 308 Orange Factory Rd. provides an ideal foundation for Farm Campus. The phased development strategy will allow Farm Campus to gradually expand its programming, infrastructure, and community engagement, ensuring that it remains adaptable and resilient. To achieve long-term success, in its early years, Farm Campus must prioritize site preparation, building staff capacity, and partnerships with community stakeholders, especially the Community Steering Committee. Early wins and activating the site for the public throughout its implementation will be key to building momentum and securing continued support. Ultimately, Farm Campus has the potential to become a regional and national model for sustainable agriculture, equitable food systems, and environmental stewardship. Farm Campus can serve as a transformative resource to drive positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes for Durham County and beyond.

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A: Workstream 1 Deck**



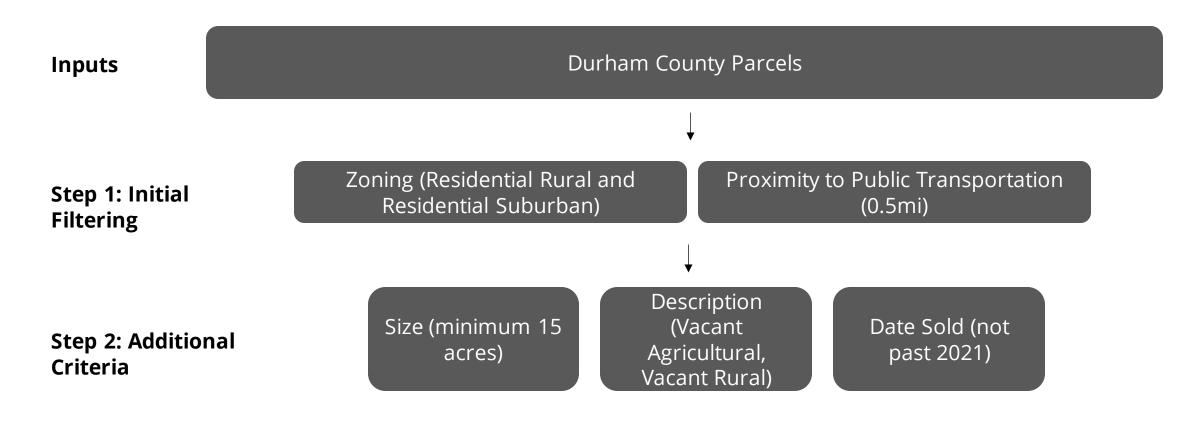
## Durham County Farm Campus

**Parcel Selection for Site Visit** 

August 22, 2023

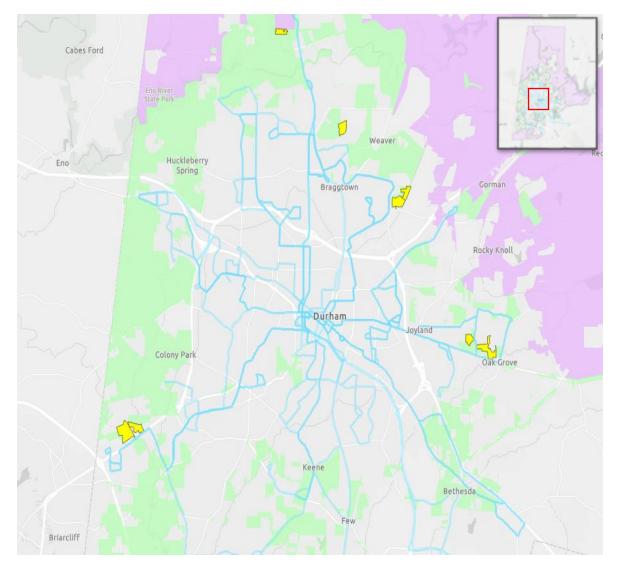
## **Site Selection Methodology**

We identified parcels that were zoned in districts favorable to agricultural use and within a 0.5 mile buffer of a bus stop. From that selection, we looked at additional criteria related to size, date when it was last sold, and its current land use.



## **Results**

We identified 10 sites that are > 15 acres, were not sold in the past 2 years, and had a land use description of vacant agricultural or vacant rural. Two sites were removed as they are slated for imminent residential development.



Parcel ID	Total Acreage	Owner
177713	28.531	THORNTON CAROLYN I EST
140106	31.509	COUNTY OF DURHAM
183002	19.309	AHMADI NIMA
206066	68.319	DURHILL LLC
197788	51.067	TRIANGLE GREENWAYS COUNCIL
158922	21.253	4GIG LLC
160453	37.056	KP DURHAM LLC
159852	24.256	CITY OF DURHAM

#### **LEGEND**

Rural Residential (RR)	
Rural Suburban (RS-20)	
GoDurham Bus Route & Stops	
Selected Sites	

## **Proposed Short List**

HR&A will focus our site visit on the following parcels, pending further discussion with the client.

Parcel ID	Total Acreage	Address	Owner	Description of Land
177713	28.531	4711 DANUBE LN	THORNTON CAROLYN I EST	Semi-Forested Vacant
140106	31.509	4702 DURHAM CHAPEL HILL BLVD	COUNTY OF DURHAM	Semi-Forested Vacant
183002	19.309	306 OAK HILL DR	AHMADI NIMA	Semi-Forested Vacant
206066	68.319	4802 DURHAM CHAPEL HILL BLVD	DURHILL LLC	Semi-Forested Vacant
197788	51.067	3553 WAKE FOREST HWY	TRIANGLE GREENWAYS COUNCIL	Semi-Forested Vacant
158922	21.253	221 CHANDLER RD	4GIG LLC	Semi-Forested Vacant
160453	37.056	2400 E JONES PARK DR	KP DURHAM LLC	Semi-Forested Vacant
159852	24.256	1482 MAPLEWOOD DR	CITY OF DURHAM	Semi-Forested Vacant

## **Appendix B: Workstream 1 Scorecards**

## Farm Campus Scorecard | Site #1 Score: 73/83

#### **Site Summary**

Parcel Number	#187907
Address	308 Orange Factory Rd, Durham, NC 27712
Total Acreage	128.97
Listed for Sale	No
Estimated Sale Price	N/A
Zoning	87% PDR (Planned Development Residential), 12% CC (Commercial Center)



#### **Talking Points**

- This 129-acre site features large swaths of arable land with on-site water and a history of agricultural use. Unlike the other sites for consideration, much of the land is already clear and ready to be farmed.
- The site features unique natural features (ponds, woodland) in addition to meeting the agricultural needs of Farm Campus.
- The site's ample size and its location convenient to downtown are ideal for both the Farm Campus vision, but also suitable to other County needs.
- The site is located within the Urban Growth Boundary and previous development of infrastructure on the site suggests feasibility of additional development on the site.
- Located in North Durham, this site features attributes that allow for positive collaborations with the County and related organizations. It is adjacent to a parcel owned by the Triangle Land Conservancy and could accommodate both recreational and conservation uses.

#### **Scorecard**

Potential Point Value	Sitewide Considerations	Site #1 Points	Notes
WATER/SEWER ACC	CESS	ı	
10	On public sewer, no major extensions required	0	Site is not already hooked up to the public sewer system
5	Soils are supportive of septic field at capacity needed	5	Located within Urban Growth Boundary, previous development suggests feasibility for likely demand
DISQUALIFYING	Not on city sewer and soils pose major limitations	N/A	
TRANSPORTATION		I	
5	Within 0.5-mile radius of current bus line	0	
3	Within 20 minutes of downtown (from Downtown, non-rush hour)	3	Approximately 20-minute drive/10 miles away from Downtown Durham
1	Between 20-45 minutes from Downtown	0	
2	Accommodates estimated parking demand	2	In Durham County, for Agriculture uses, anything greater than an acre requires 1 parking space per site + 1 per 1,000 SF enclosed floor area. Site contains ample acreage to construct additional parking if needed
NEIGHBORHOOD I	MPACTS		
2	Site does not pose any adjacency concerns	2	Adjacent uses would likely be amenable to Farm Campus
5	Site has positive adjacent uses	5	Adjacent land is owned by the Triangle Land Conservancy could position Farm Campus for potential partnership
COUNTY COLLABO	RATION	ı	
3	Size supports other county functions	3	Site features (forested areas, trails) suggest possible collaborations with Recreation and Conservation uses (for example, 4-H activities, potential for accessible public recreational fishing space, etc.)
3	Location supports other county functions	3	Located in Northern Durham County, where a gathering space for County purposes is needed

5	Site can accommodate an event/meeting Space (100+ capacity)	5	Large size can accommodate an indoor or outdoor meeting space
INCUBATOR FA	RM		
7	50 acres or more of arable land	7	According to Web Soil Survey records, nearly all land is suitable for agriculture. 42% of the land is "Farmland of statewide importance" and 46% is "prime farmland". There is minimal flood risk in 95% of the parcel.
5	35-50 acres of arable land	0	
2	25-35 acres of arable land	0	
0	Less than 25 acres of arable land	0	
5	Usable land does not include major slopes that would require extensive grading	5	
5	Site will not require clearing large woodlands	5	Large enough site that woodlands can be conserved/repurposed into different use and still have sufficient arable land
7	Includes water source for irrigation	7	Four ponds and streams on site
4	Previously used for agriculture	4	Previously used for agriculture
5	Ready for agricultural use	5	No noted remediation or development for agriculture required
COMMISSARY/F	KITCHEN + POST-HARVEST FACILITY		
2	Existing Infrastructure that can be repurposed/adapted to meet Farm Campus needs	2	Site has two existing structures (Residential) of 2,764 square feet
HEALING GARD	EN		
2	Conservation Value	2	Existing forested woodland could be conserved
2	Adjacent to Planned Trail	2	Cabin Branch Creek Trail not located in parcel, but just beyond Snow Hill Rd on the Southern side
2	Recreation potential - site supports additional community recreation	2	Ponds and existing forested area are prime recreation opportunities
2	Water features for recreation	2	Ponds for recreation

OTHER			
2	Other program opportunities	2	Existing natural partitions that could be leveraged to separate organic/non-organic agriculture or to separate different Farm Campus uses
TOTAL		73	Total possible points: 83

# Farm Campus Scorecard | Site #2 Score: 25/83

### **Site Summary**

Parcel Number	#160453
Address	2400 E Jones Park Drive, Durham, NC 27704
Total Acreage	37.06
Listed for Sale	No
Estimated Sale Price	N/A
Zoning	100% IL (Industrial)



## **Talking Points**

- This 37-acre site is a vacant industrial site located within the Urban Growth Boundary and surrounded by light retail, industrial uses, and a single-family residential community. Outreach will be necessary to communicate and understand any adjacent community concerns.
- The site is in an easily accessible location, within a 0.5 mile radius of a GoDurham Transit stop, and is a 12-minute drive from Downtown Durham.
- The site may have woodlands/forested area that have conservation value, and the eastern border of the site lines the Ellerbe Creek. The site may be suitable for complementary uses for Farm Campus, provided they do not require significant acreage.
- However, the amount of arable land on this site does not meet the minimum requirements of Farm Campus. Half of the site is located in a floodplain and not suitable for agricultural purposes.
- There are no existing buildings on site and/or known history of agriculture on the site.

## **Scorecard**

Potential Point Value	Sitewide Considerations	Site #2 Points	Notes
WATER/SEWER ACC	CESS		
10	On public sewer, no major extensions required	0	Awaiting confirmation
5	Soils are supportive of septic field at capacity needed	0	Awaiting confirmation
DISQUALIFYING	Not on city sewer and soils pose major limitations	N/A	
TRANSPORTATION	1	1	
5	Within 0.5-mile radius of current bus line	5	Within a 0.5 radius of a GoDurham bus stop
3	Within 20 minutes of downtown (from Downtown, non-rush hour)	3	Approximately a 10-minute drive/less than 5 miles away from Downtown Durham
1	Between 20-45 minutes from Downtown	0	
2	Accommodates estimated parking demand	2	In Durham County, for Agriculture uses, anything greater than 1 acre requires 1 parking space per site, and another 1 per 1,000 square feet of enclosed floor area. The site appears to have an existing driveway that could accommodate parking and could be expanded to accommodate more.
NEIGHBORHOOD I	MPACTS		
2	Site does not pose any adjacency concerns	0	It is not clear if the residential community on the West side of the parcel will be supportive of agricultural uses. Nearby retail and industrial may have incoming traffic and additional needs that could impact accessibility to the site.
5	Site has positive adjacent uses	0	
COUNTY COLLABO	RATION		
3	Size supports other county functions	3	More natural site features can be used for recreation or conservation uses
3	<u>Location</u> supports other county functions	3	Located close to Downtown Durham, could serve as a convenient location

5	Site can accommodate an event/meeting Space (100+ capacity)	0	Small size unlikely to accommodate an indoor or outdoor meeting space
INCUBATOR FAI	RM		
7	50 acres or more of arable	0	
,	land	U	
5	35-50 acres of arable land	0	
2	25-35 acres of arable land	0	
0	Less than 25 acres of arable land	0	About half of the parcel is located in a floodplain. There are only 18 acres located outside of the floodplain.
			According to Web Soil Survey records, 60% of the site contains soil that is frequently flooded if not protected. The remaining proportion of the site is comprised of soils that are classified as "Farmland of statewide importance" or "Prime farmland".
5	Usable land does not include major slopes that would require extensive grading	5	Aside from flooding risk, the majority of the site does not feature major slopes that would require extensive grading.
5	Site will not require clearing large woodlands	0	The majority of the site is covered by woodlands/forest.
7	Includes water source for irrigation	0	No ponds on site. The Eastern edge of the parcel is Ellerbe Creek. Unsure if suitable for irrigation but could be a potential partnership.
4	Previously used for agriculture	0	No indication of prior agricultural use. The site's most recent land use is vacant industrial.
5	Ready for agricultural use	0	The site would require clearing before agricultural use.
COMMISSARY/K	(ITCHEN + POST-HARVEST FACILITY		
2	Existing Infrastructure that can be repurposed/adapted to meet Farm Campus needs	0	The site has no existing infrastructure that can be repurposed.
HEALING GARD	EN		
2	Conservation Value	2	Part of the existing forested woodland could be conserved. Additionally, Ellerbe Creek on the east side of the parcel could be a potential public space.
2	Adjacent to Planned Trail	0	

2	Recreation potential - site supports additional community recreation	0	
2	Water features for recreation	2	Recreation potential along the Ellerbe Creek (depending on whether proper floodplain protection allows for safe recreation).
OTHER			
2	Other program opportunities	0	
TOTAL		25	Total possible points: 83

# Farm Campus Scorecard | Site #3 Score: 37/83

### **Site Summary**

Parcel Number	#183002 <sup>5</sup>		
Address	306 Oak Hill Durham, NC, 27712		
Total Acreage	19.31		
Listed for Sale	Yes <sup>6</sup>		
Estimated Sale Price	\$2,000,000		
Zoning	100% RS-20 (Residential Suburban)		



### **Talking Points**

- Because of the limited size of this property, this site may be suitable for Farm Campus on a smaller scale. Most of the property is not located in the flood plain and all soil on the site is suitable for agriculture.
- There is a parcel located inside of this site. The two parcels have different owners, and coordination would be needed to ensure that both owners would be willing to sell the parcels or form some other agreement to allow Farm Campus to operate. Otherwise, Farm Campus would not be suitable on this
- The site is surrounded by a developed residential community, which would require additional outreach to understand how neighbors would interact with the future public and private uses of Farm Campus.
- In photographs and satellite maps, there is a small creek running through the site. However, its recreational or other applications are unclear.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Parcel #183006, which features a single-family home, is located in the center of this parcel. Each parcel has a different owner. Additional research should be done on the relationship between the two parcels to identify whether consolidation is possible.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> As of October 24, 2023, the site is listed as active for sale on Remax and Fonville Morisey.

## **Scorecard**

Potential Point	Sitewide Considerations	Site #3	Notes
Value		Points	
WATER/SEWER AC	CESS		
10	On public sewer, no major extensions required	10	Real estate listing states that some utilities are available onsite. Need to confirm which ones.
5	Soils are supportive of septic field at capacity needed	0	
DISQUALIFYING	Not on city sewer and soils pose major limitations	N/A	
TRANSPORTATION			
5	Within 0.5 mile radius of current bus line	0	No bus distance within 0.5 walking radius of the site.
3	Within 20 minutes of downtown (from Downtown, non-rush hour)	2	Approximately 7 miles from Downtown. Under traffic conditions it may exceed 20 minutes.
1	Between 20-45 minutes from Downtown	0	
2	Accommodates estimated parking demand	2	In Durham County, for Agriculture uses, anything greater than 1 acre requires 1 parking space per site, and another 1 per 1,000 square feet of enclosed floor area. The site contains ample acreage to construct additional parking if needed.
NEIGHBORHOOD I	MPACTS		
2	Site does not pose any adjacency concerns	0	The neighborhood includes several residential communities. Additional outreach may be needed to understand community impacts.
5	Site has positive adjacent uses	0	
COUNTY COLLABO	PRATION		
3	Size supports other county functions	0	Site is limited in size and may not be able to accommodate additional County uses
3	Location supports other county functions	3	Located in Northern Durham County, where a gathering space for County purposes is needed
5	Site can accommodate an event/meeting Space (100+ capacity)	0	Site is too small to accommodate a large event/meeting space
INCUBATOR FARM	I		ı

7	50 acres or more of arable land	0	
5	35-50 acres of arable land	0	
2	25-35 acres of arable land	0	
0	Less than 25 acres of arable land	0	This site does not meet the minimum size for Farm Campus arable land. This site features 16 acres of land that is not located in the floodplain.  According to the Web Soil Survey, all soils on this
			site are "prime farmland" or "Farmland of statewide importance." 25% of soil on the site may need additional drainage or protection from flooding to be arable. This site may be suitable for Farm Campus on a smaller scale.
5	Usable land does not include major slopes that would require extensive grading	5	Site does not feature extensive slopes or grading
5	Site will not require clearing large woodlands	0	Site is primarily undeveloped and would require clearing woodland/forested area
7	Includes water source for irrigation	7	Crooked Creek runs through the site. Unsure if suitable or usable for irrigation
4	Previously used for agriculture	0	No prior history of agriculture
5	Ready for agricultural use	0	Would require clearing of the site prior to use
COMMISSARY/KITO	CHEN + POST-HARVEST FACILITY		
2	Existing Infrastructure that can be repurposed/adapted to meet Farm Campus needs	2	If collaboration between the two parcels is possible, then the existing residential building of 3,546 square feet within parcel #183006 may be useful
HEALING GARDEN			
2	Conservation Value	2	Existing forested woodland could be conserved
2	Adjacent to Planned Trail	0	
2	Recreation potential - site supports additional community recreation	2	Possible recreational usage of Crooked Creek
2	Water features for recreation	2	Possible recreational usage of Crooked Creek
OTHER	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		
2	Other program opportunities	0	

TOTAL	37	Total possible points: 83

# Farm Campus Scorecard | Site #4 Score: 36/83

## **Site Summary**

Parcel Number	#194156 (South parcel) #194157 (North parcel)
Address	702 Virgil Road, Durham, NC, 27703 (South) 618 Virgil Road, Durham, NC 27703 (North)
Total Acreage	48.85 total acres #194156: 27.24 acres #194157: 21.61 acres
Listed for Sale	Yes
Estimated Sale Price	\$2,315,570
Zoning	100% RR (Rural Residential)
Price	



## **Talking Points**

- These two adjacent sites each feature a single-family residential home, and the site is already connected to sewer and water services. However, the rest of the site is a forested area that would need to be cleared for development.
- This site is located in Eastern Durham and is not accessible by public transit. It is the furthest in distance from Downtown Durham out of the four Scorecard sites.
- The majority of the site is not located in the floodplain. However, most of the soil on the site is not suitable for agriculture, leaving only about 15 acres of recommended arable land.
- The site does not have significant on-site water features, conservation value, or recreation potential compared to the other sites.

### **Scorecard**

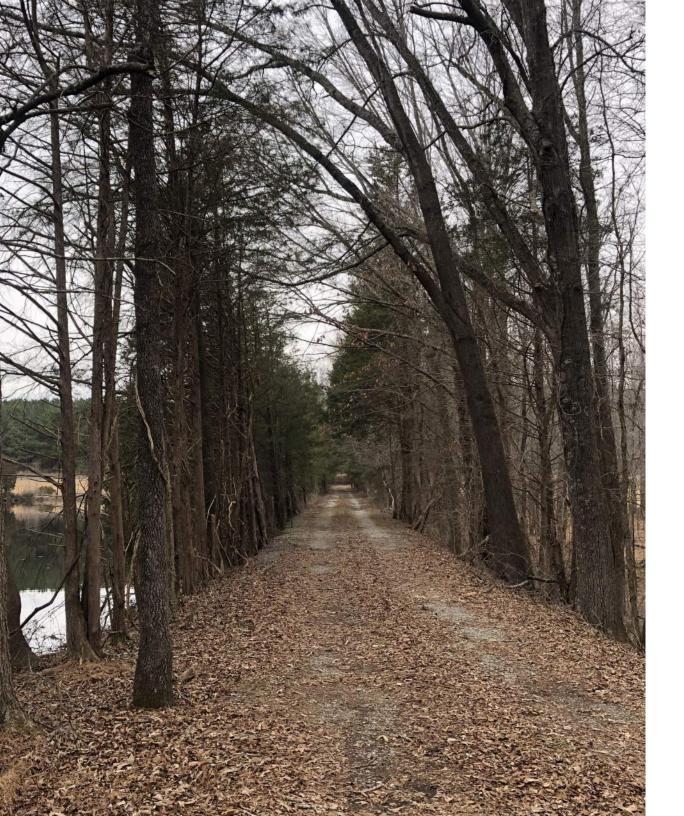
Potential Point	Sitewide Considerations	Site #4	Notes
Value		Points	
WATER/SEWER AC	CESS		
10	On public sewer, no major extensions required	10	The listing stated that conventional sewer/septic are available on site. There is also a well on site. <sup>7</sup>
5	Soils are supportive of septic field at capacity needed	0	
DISQUALIFYING	Not on city sewer and soils pose major limitations	N/A	
TRANSPORTATION			
5	Within 0.5-mile radius of current bus line	0	
3	Within 20 minutes of downtown (from Downtown, non-rush hour)	0	
1	Between 20-45 minutes from Downtown	1	Site is approximately 10-13 miles away from Downtown Durham, depending on the route taken
2	Accommodates estimated parking demand	2	In Durham County, for Agriculture uses, anything greater than an acre requires 1 parking space per site + 1 per 1,000 SF enclosed floor area.  Assemblages of sites contains ample acreage to construct additional parking if needed
NEIGHBORHOOD	MPACTS		
2	Site does not pose any adjacency concerns	2	Adjacent parcels are mainly forested; some neighboring sites feature a single-family residence on part of the parcel.
5	Site has positive adjacent uses	0	
COUNTY COLLABO	PRATION	<u> </u>	1
3	Size supports other county functions	2	The size of the site supports additional uses that could be appropriate for other County functions.
3	Location supports other county functions	0	County has expressed the need to have a county meeting space in the northern part of the County. The site is located in the eastern half of the County.

 $<sup>^7</sup>$  Source: https://triangle.paragonrels.com/publink/default.aspx?GUID=d194b9c6-78b3-47ac-a692-00dfeaa09060&Report=Yes

5	Site can accommodate an event/meeting space (100+ capacity)	5	The site is large enough to accommodate a large meeting space.
INCUBATOR FARM	Л		
7	50 acres or more of arable land	0	
5	35-50 acres of arable land	0	
2	25-35 acres of arable land	0	
0	Less than 25 acres of arable land	0	This site does not meet the minimum size for Farm Campus arable land. This site features about 15 acres of land that feature soils that are classified as "Farmland of statewide importance" or "Prime farmland."
			The majority of the site is not in the floodplain and suitable for development. This may be considered as a viable Farm Campus site if the other uses besides the incubator farm are expanded.
5	Usable land does not include major slopes that would require extensive grading	5	The site does not feature extensive slopes or grading.
5	Site will not require clearing large woodlands	0	Site features would require clearing woodland/forested area to make sufficient farming area available.
7	Includes water source for irrigation	7	There is a well on-site.
4	Previously used for agriculture	0	No indication of prior agricultural use.
5	Ready for agricultural use	0	Requires clearing woodland to be ready
COMMISSARY/KIT	CHEN + POST-HARVEST FACILITY	1	
2	Existing Infrastructure that can be repurposed/adapted to meet Farm Campus needs	2	There are 2 residential buildings on site (896 square feet building on #194156 and 1,792 square feet on #194157)
HEALING GARDEN	N		
2	Conservation Value	0	
2	Adjacent to Planned Trail	0	
2	Recreation potential - site supports additional community recreation	0	

2	Water features for recreation	0	
OTHER			
2	Other program opportunities	0	
TOTAL		36	Total possible points: 83

# **Appendix C: Workstream 2 Summary Report**





**DURHAM COUNTY FARM CAMPUS** FEASIBILITY STUDY

## **WORKSTREAM 2 SUMMARY REPORT**

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I. EXISTING CONDITIONS

II. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

III. PROGRAMMATIC & LAND USE **OPPORTUNITIES** 

IV. PHASING RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL SITE ANALYSIS

APPENDIX B: SCALE COMPARISONS

APPENDIX C: LOCAL PRECEDENT IMAGERY

APRIL 4, 2024

PREPARED BY:

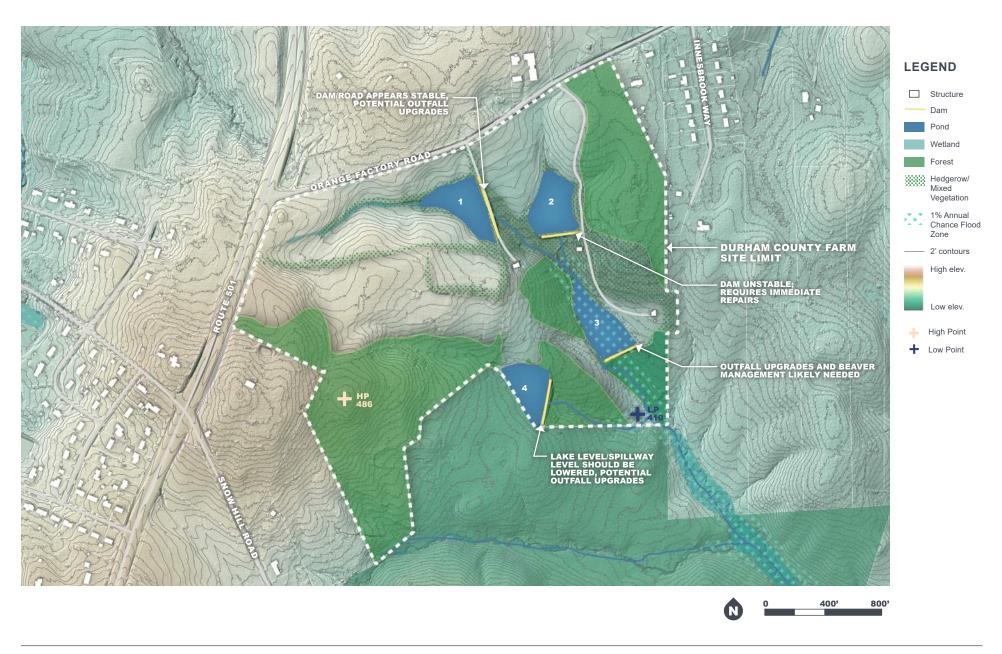
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IN PARTNERSHIP

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# EXISTING CONDITIONS | ECOLOGICAL



# EXISTING CONDITIONS | AGRICULTURAL



# **DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS | SUMMARY**

Based on site analysis data compiled in GIS by the design team, on-site observations, and documents provided by Durham County, the following is a list of design considerations that will impact the form and phasing of the development of a farm campus at the chosen site.

These findings are based on Durham County's desired program and target user for the Farm Campus, in addition to the opportunities and challenges presented by the chosen site. It is important to note that the program priorities and target user could change based on the findings from the County's community engagement efforts, which were ongoing at the time of this report production.

This list is not meant to be an exhaustive documentation of all considerations, but rather a starting point to help organize the program within the site and inform preliminary budgeting and phasing.

### **Water Quality Regulations**

- For streams, the M/LR-A (Lake Michie/Little River District A)
  Watershed Overlay District dictates:
  - » 150' perennial stream buffer (measured on each side, from top of bank)
  - » 50' intermittent stream buffer (measured on each side, from top of bank)
  - » Buffer comprised of natural, undisturbed vegetation
  - » Grading for buildings, etc set back 10' from buffer

- » Exceptions for:
  - Driveway/road crossings, with minimal disturbance
  - Recreational trails
  - Stormwater control measures, if necessary
  - Septic drain field repairs, if necessary
- » Lakes or ponds shall receive the same buffer as the stream to which it is connected at the point of initial connection.
- » Applies to any activity which has hydrological impacts on a riparian buffer, including building permits; with no disturbed area minimum
- Waterways between ponds 1, 2, and 3 are assumed to be Waters of the US (blueline streams), regulated by USACE.
- A state/federal permit may be required for repairs to dam on pond 2 and any additional crossings.
- Buffers from surrounding off-site wetlands likely encroach onto the site, but if a forested condition is maintained, this should not pose a problem.
- In areas where the M/LR-A Overlay rules do not apply, the design team recommends abiding by the Neuse River Buffer Rules as a best practice, although they do not apply to existing agricultural uses. These call for:
  - » 30' forested buffer along streams/ponds
  - » 20' additional buffer of planted (agricultural uses are acceptable) beyond the forested buffer

# **DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS** | RIPARIAN BUFFERS



## **DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS** | SUMMARY

### **Septic Suitability**

- Septic suitability on the east side of the site, including the main farmhouse, is "very limited". This should be considered with any proposed expansions of the septic system.
- The proposed location for the future building is within the "somewhat limited" septic zone.
- There are no water or sewer connections on site and no near-term plans from the City to extend into or adjacent to the site.

### **Condition of Structures**

- 1979 House (main) habitable with HVAC, needs minor plumbing repairs
- 1965 House (secondary) not currently habitable, stripped down to studs due to water damage
  - » Potential to reconnect electric lines
  - » Good structural bones
  - » Potential storage use in the near term, potential longterm use as farm manager's house; potential use as a social space for farmers
- Upgrades to provide ADA accessibility to both houses will be necessary and could require significant improvements.
- The dilapidated tobacco barn should be assessed to understand feasibility of renovation for future use.

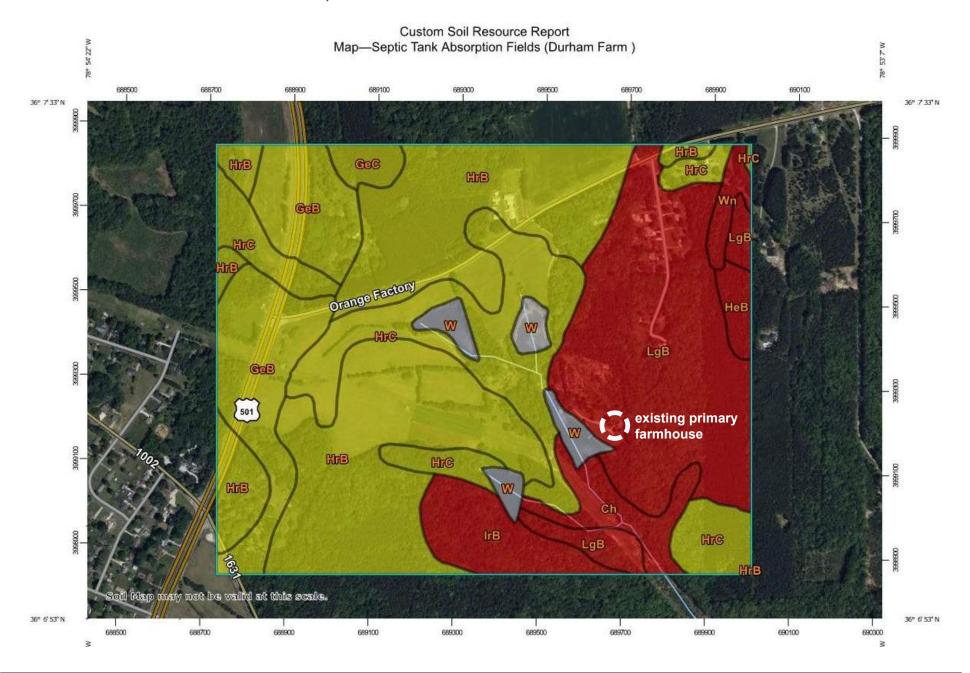
### **Duke Utility Right-of-Way Corridor**

- Size of utility corridor depends on voltage of lines
  - » 230k volt = 90 to 125' corridor; 500k volt 180' corridor
- Duke can clear anything at any time that they deem unsafe
- Fencing restrictions
  - » Min. 25 ft from pole
  - » Can cross at 30 to 90 degrees, need 16' wide gate
  - » Parallel fencing must be outside row, 25 ' from pole
- No sheds, hardscape, water valves, or hydrants
- Grading restrictions
- Roads/driveways can only cross at 30-90 degrees, none within 25' of pole
- Parking allowed, but no drive aisle within 25' of pole
- Plantings
  - » No plants within 25' of pole
  - » 20' clearance for vehicle throughout length of row
  - » 7' max height for shrubs, grasses
  - » No trees in the wire zone (varies by voltage)
  - » Small approved trees species outside wire zone

### **Condition of Existing Dams**

- Pond 2 dam needs major repairs; could be a major expense
- Water level should be lowered on Pond 4 to prevent water from circumventing the dam.

# **DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS | SEPTIC SUITABILITY**



# **DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS** | SUMMARY

#### Stormwater

- 6% impervious limit for the M/LR-A Watershed Overlay District
- This should not pose any major restrictions to anticipated development intensity/uses, especially if pervious pavement systems are used.

### Irrigation

- Fields can be irrigated with well water and/or water collected in ponds on site. However, irrigating with pond water only is recommended as a best practice to minimize water table impacts.
- Water quality in the ponds is unknown, but no major contaminants are expected to be present. The pond water may need some minor adjustments for pH, conductivity, etc.
- The precise locations of the existing wells on site are yet to be determined.

### **Parking**

- In early phases of development, informal parking can be distributed throughout the site to accommodate farmers; consolidated parking can be located around main farmhouse.
- Permanent, somewhat consolidated parking areas will be needed for future expanded uses (commercial kitchen, trailheads, etc).

### **Agriculturally Suitable Soils**

- Recent agricultural production of hay has likely left some soils depleted, but the entire site is mapped by NRCS as very good agricultural soil.
- Upland portions of the existing fields are mapped as 'Prime farmland' (best), while fields closer to the streams are mapped as 'Farmland of statewide importance.' This may suggest that upland soils are more fertile, but both are considered good soils for agricultural use. On-site testing will provide additional clarity.
- Area in agricultural use at date of sale: 57.24 acres

### **Endangered Species/Habitat Connectivity**

- To the knowledge of Durham County and the design team, there have not been any recorded instances of endangered species on the site.
- Expansion and protection of mature, moist, rich hardwood forests would provide habitat for Monotropsis odorata (Sweet Pinesap), a rare plant species found in similar environments in the region.
- Contiguous green space from the southern portion of the site to the publicly owned Eno River and Falls Lake habitat areas creates a regionally significant habitat corridor.
- The site is home to a large number of beavers, and the County should plan on committing time and money to longterm management efforts.

# **DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS** | EXISTING SITE PHOTOS









### PROGRAMMATIC & LAND USE OPPORTUNITIES

### PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES

### Who will the Farm Campus serve?

- First and foremost, new and aspiring farmers; food entrepreneurs (likely in a later phase)
- BIPOC community members and others who have traditionally faced barriers to farming.
- Partnerships with local schools and community organizations will be critical for recruiting farmers and engaging volunteers.

## What will the Farm Campus provide?

- Programmatic focus on developing skill sets that are valuable for farmers starting a business from scratch (low-input/capital, no large-scale commodity crops)
- Early focus on row crops; forest products, etc to come later
- Opportunity for long-term demonstration/educational features (such as orchards) as campus is built out
- Typical farmer plot size: .25 to 1 acre per person

## When/how will the Farm Campus become operational?

 Early improvements should focus on safety-related upgrades (dams, roads), amending soil as needed, creating storage space for farmers, establishing irrigation, creating flexible office/classroom space, providing gathering spaces, and building hoop house/greenhouses.

### EARLY PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES

#### **Farm Field Locations**

- Focus early farming efforts in fields that are easily irrigable with existing ponds and near existing roads, such as areas south and west of the secondary house.
- Farm plots in the NE fields would be easily accessible and visible from the road.

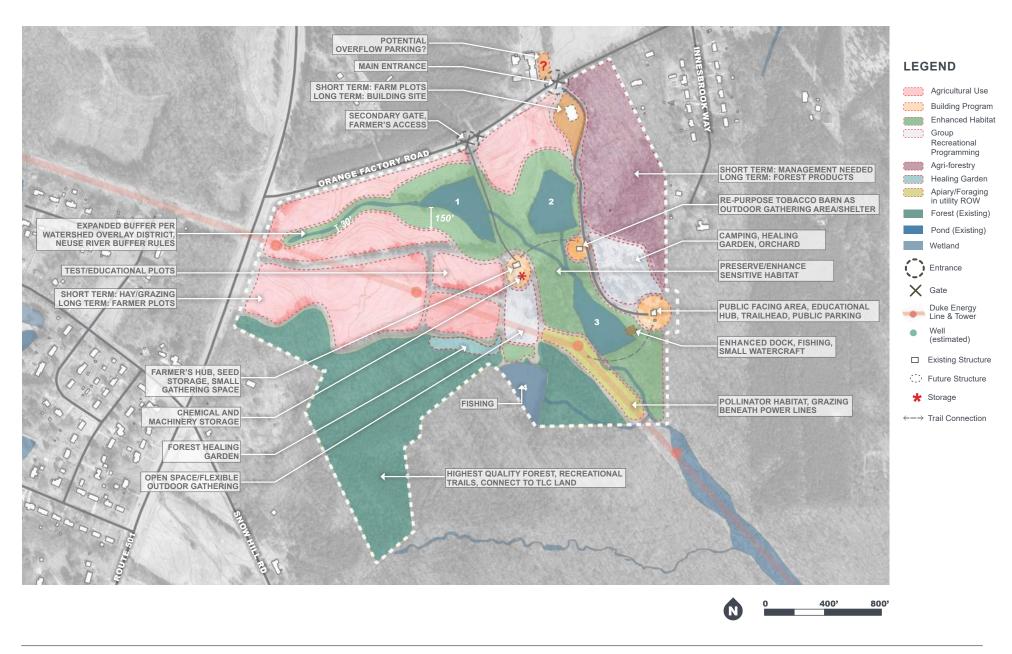
### **Social Spaces**

- Main farmhouse serves as a public-facing hub; can be used for office/meeting space immediately; kitchen used for farmers' meals and light food processing (cutting/prep space while secondary house comes online, deep freezer)
- Secondary farmhouse serves as a more private working/ gathering space for farmers to connect with each other
- Additional pedestrian/cart paths can be built over time to connect the two houses.

### **Storage**

- Additional separated storage (both temporary and permanent) could be added in clearing southeast of secondary house (for tractor, chemicals, etc).
- Main house could be used for dry storage immediately/ temporarily.
- Secondary house could be used for dry and cold storage once it is renovated.

## PROGRAMMATIC & LAND USE OPPORTUNITIES



# PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES | PHASING

Day One		Later		Much Later
1 <	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	3	• • • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • 5
Soil-amended fields  Irrigation	Potable water connections, hose bibs (upgrades to existing)	Functional bathrooms at second house	Larger/additional greenhouses	Specialized food processing/ production equipmer
Bathrooms at main	Composting toilets beyond existing in	Permanent parking	Commercial kitchen	Freezer storage for food products
Parking at main house, pull-off areas along	houses  Dry storage	Agri-forestry production	Fishing (could build out infrastructure over time)	Loading dock
roads Tools/equipment (and	Covered space for informal gathering	Trails (primarily for farmer use)	Cold storage	Additional indoor gathering space,
associated storage) Office/classroom	Greenhouse/germination chamber	Upgraded security and fencing	Healing garden/ contemplative space	office space
space in main house  Basic security/	Chickens, minimal grazing	Modest farm stand (weekdays)	Trailheads (parking, signage)	Energy production space
fencing	livestock for land mgmt	(weeklaaye)	Aquaculture, hydroponics	Expanded parking area
Post-harvest production space (cutting, cleaning)			Permanent covered outdoor program/class/ performance space	Wifi access (fields)
ADA accessibility				

# PHASE 1 | BECOMING A FARM CAMPUS



- First-phase agricultural plots
- Dam/water level repairs/changes
- Basic upgrades to main farmhouse for office use, bathrooms, classroom/small gathering space
- Secondary house upgrades for dry storage use
- Minor parking enhancements (gravel, signage)
- Temporary parking along existing entrance road
- Buffer enhancements



# PHASE 2 | ENHANCING + GROWING THE CAMPUS



- Expanded agricultural plots
- Full upgrades to secondary house
- Additional storage near secondary house
- Additional upgrades to main farmhouse for expanded kitchen use, outdoor programming
- Trail and dock improvements
- Tobacco barn restoration
- · Agri-forestry production
- Apiary/grazing under power lines



0 400' 800'

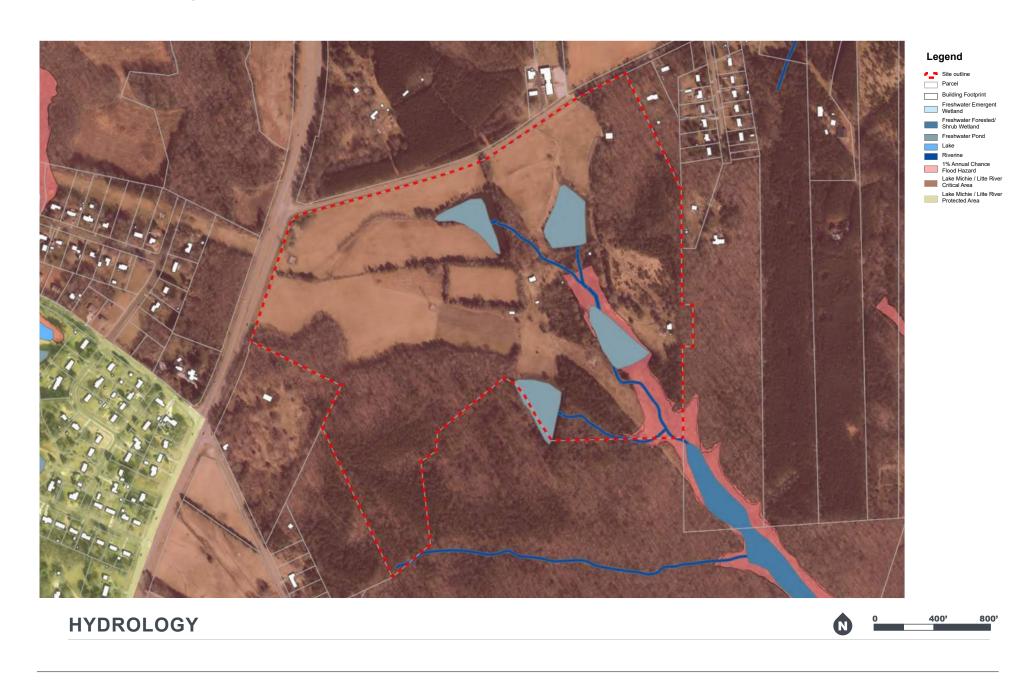
# PHASE 3 | COMPLETING THE VISION

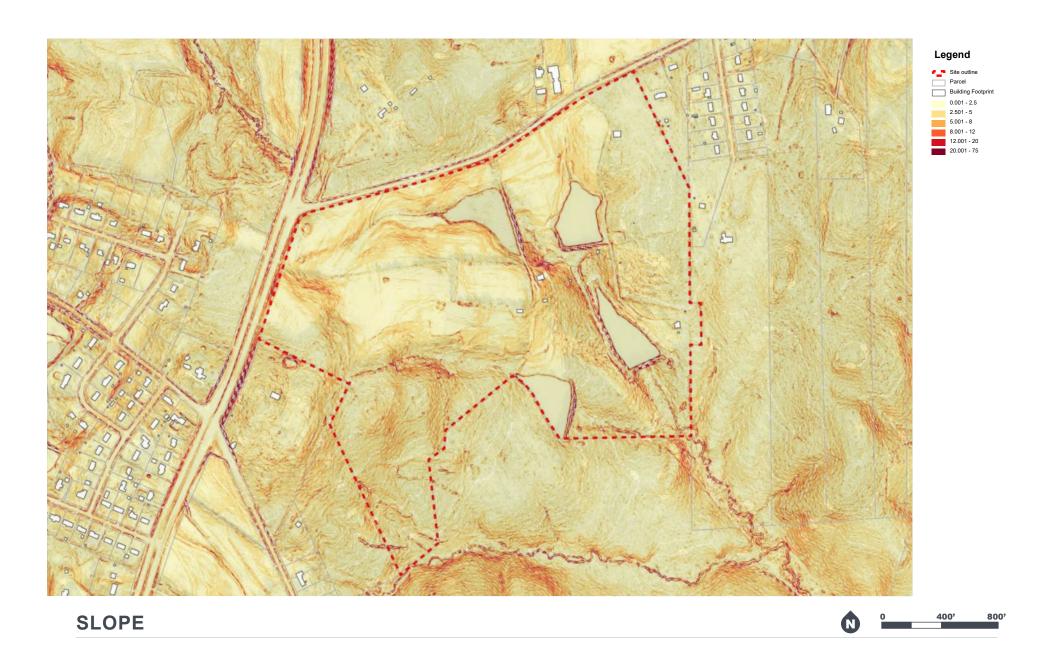


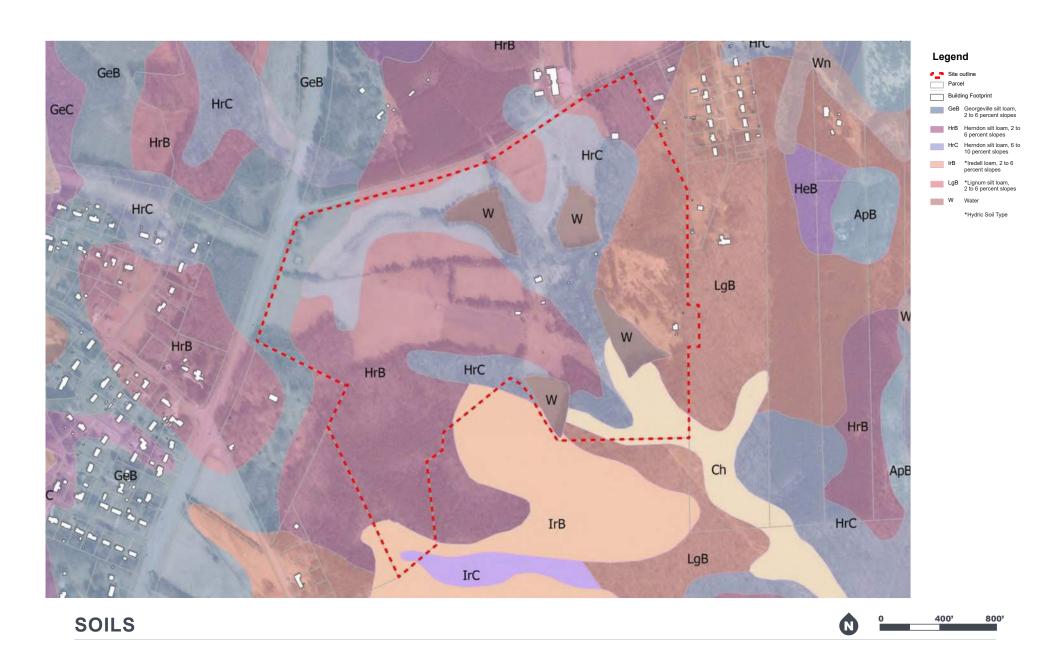
- New building construction (commercial kitchen, loading dock, event space)
- Expanded and upgraded parking
- Healing garden(s)
- Full trail system buildout, including connections to TLC and regional network
- Fishing/paddle opportunities

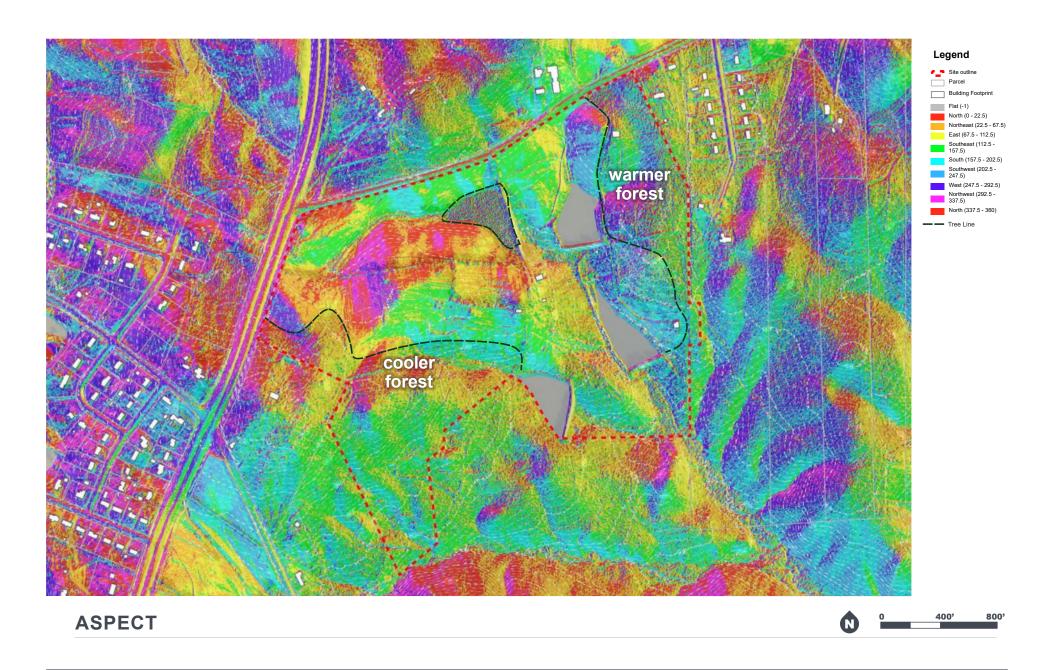


# APPENDIX A | ADDITIONAL SITE ANALYSIS









# APPENDIX B | SCALE COMPARISONS



#### PARCEL SIZE

82 acres

#### APPROX. AREA IN PRODUCTION

1 acr

#### SITE FEATURES

Parking area, 2 green houses, arbor/shade structure, trailer/

#### **ABOUT**

Food produced on the Campus farm is used in Duke University facilities, as well as sold through a CSA. Classes are held at the farm, where students learn and farm as part of their course work. Full and part time staff, as well as student and community volunteers, work on the farm.

**DUKE CAMPUS FARM** 





PARCEL SIZE 26 & 123 acres

#### APPROX. AREA IN PRODUCTION

8 acres

#### SITE FEATURES

Crop fields, greenhouses, barns, market building, pastures, pond

#### **ABOUT**

Transplanting Traditions Farm seeks to support food sovereignty, farming education and preservation of cultural traditions among refugee and immigrant communities. The farm is located within the Elinor Irvin Nature Preserve, owned by the Triangle Land Conservancy.

TRANSPLANTING TRADITIONS FARM





#### PARCEL SIZE

2 parcels, 16 & 65 acres

#### APPROX. AREA IN PRODUCTION

16 acres

(Estimate based on aerial imagery. Includes fields, farm buildings/structures, & driveways.)

#### SITE FEATURES

Crop fields, greenhouses, barns, market building, pastures, pond

#### **ABOUT**

The farm focuses on building food access and security for lower resourced communities, including distribution of food at food pantries, and education in farming and related skills. Inter-Faith Food shuttle food recovery & pantry were founded in 1989, while agricultural initiatives began in 2009.

INTER-FAITH FOOD SHUTTLE FARM





### **FARM SIZE**

492 acres

### SITE FEATURES

Crop fields, greenhouses, livestock barns, multiple buildings and research units, 17k SF pavilion with office, conference, research and lecture space, separate student & community farm.

### **ABOUT**

The University Farm is a working farm, with a wide range of field crops, livestock, research and educational uses. The farm is used for research and education by NC A&T students and faculty, as well as Cooperative Extension research and training.

### NC A&T UNIVERSITY FARM



### APPENDIX C | LOCAL PRECEDENT IMAGERY



- Open air, timber pavilion, with brick patio and picnic tables
- Approximately 20'x20'
- Constructed as part of improvements funded with \$10,000 grant



**BRIGGS AVE COMMUNITY GARDEN** 



- Waterfront pavilion & outdoor classroom
- Approximately 25'x25'



**DPS HUB FARM** 



- 750 SF timber pavilion with outdoor classroom space for 20 people, secure storage space
- · Design build project by NC State



WEST POINT ON THE ENO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER



- Local examples Duke Health Healing Gardens
- Elements labyrinth, contemplative spaces, quiet paths
- Character spaces for individual/small groups vs community, in the woods vs adjacent to main house





**HEALING GARDENS** 

DURHAM COUNTY FARM CAMPUS / WORKSTREAM 2 SUMMARY REPORT

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# Appendix D: List of Farm Incubator Programs focused on diverse populations

HR&A acknowledges that the three case studies profiled in Workstream 3 of this report do not have an explicit focus on racial equity in terms of their program design and outreach. HR&A assembled a list of programs that intentionally recruit diverse participants or work with brand new farmers to complement the recommendations listed in Workstream 3.

- Agricultura Network (Albuquerque, NM): Agricultura Network is a cooperative of small-scale farmers in
  the South Valley of Albuquerque dedicated to building a sustainable and equitable local food system. The
  network provides training, technical assistance, and marketing support to farmers, with a focus on
  regenerative agriculture practices and food sovereignty. Through its CSA (Community Supported
  Agriculture) program and partnerships with local institutions, Agricultura Network increases access to
  fresh, locally grown produce while creating economic opportunities for farmers. The organization also
  advocates for policies that support small farmers and equitable food systems.
- **Soulfire Farm (Petersburg, NY):** Soulfire Farm runs a Black and Latinx Farmers Immersion (BIPOC Immersion) designed to equip BIPOC individuals with the skills needed to start and sustain their own farms. The program includes hands-on farming experience, workshops on regenerative agriculture, and support in business planning and marketing.
- Urban Growers Collective (Chicago, IL): Instead of an incubator program, the Urban Growers Collective
  provides hands-on training in urban agriculture production and cooperative business models for
  individuals who are just beginning their farming education and are ready to contribute to the food
  system. It is not designed for individuals who are looking to lease land to activate or expand an existing
  farm operation.
- Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust: This organization is governed by a collective leadership board that practices shared decision-making processes. The Trust's Land Network Services Program provides technical assistance for members to access land throughout the Northeast. They also work with landowners who want to redistribute their land to BIPOC land stewards and farmers. They also have a Black Land Stewardship Program that provides educational subsidies and community gatherings to help Black farmers in the Northeast thrive and access land. Another notable program is their Reparations Program, where they are securing permanent land for BIPOC communities across Vermont and matching potential land stewards with donated land.
- **Groundswell Farmer Training Program (Finger Lakes Region, NY):** Cohort-based program where BIPOC farmers visit host farms and attend education sessions focused on vegetable production, livestock farming, and the social and environmental impacts of agriculture. Acknowledging their mainly white leadership in the organization, Groundswell has an advisory committee of nine representatives that was focused on centering the voices of BIPOC farmers and community members. The advisory committee helps keep the organization accountable to community participants as well as to making progress on their equity statement that was developed by their Staff, Board, and Equity and Accountability Committee. In 2021, Groundswell successfully ran a pilot program with 5 aspiring growers to reduce barriers to farming and land access.
- Athens Land Trust Williams Farm Incubator Program (Athens, GA): The Williams Farm Incubator
  Program is a two-year apprentice program that provides access to land, training and resources to BIPOC
  beginning farmers as well as veterans. This program provides opportunities for diverse farmers to sell at
  established farmer's markets and wholesale partners year-round. To reduce barriers to access, in the first
  year, farmers are expected to commit to 12 hours of farm work each week and will be paid a stipend for
  their time. In the second year, incubator staff are committed to identifying additional sales outlets for
  incubator farmer participants.

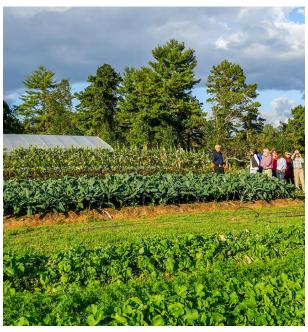
### **Appendix E: Workstream 3 Case Studies**

### Case Study #1: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) Community Farm (Alexander, NC)

**Takeaway:** Leveraging grants and partnerships can support the development of multiple uses of a site, from an incubator farm program to a commercial kitchen.

Size: 140 acres

**History:** Most of the property (~103 acres) was donated in 2010. The previous landowners wanted to see the property sustainably managed, used for farming, and provided as an educational asset to the community. SAHC later purchased adjoining acreage, bringing the total to 140 acres at this



Source: SAHC

**Mission:** The SAHC Community Farm seeks to demonstrate that conservation and management of natural resources can go together with productive farming.

**Owner/Operator:** Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy is an organization that works to conserve the unique plant and animal habitats, clean water, farmland, and scenic beauty of the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee.

**Staffing/Operations:** The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy has a total of 21 full-time staff. However, only about 3-4 work on the Community Farm, with two fully dedicated staff (Farm Manager and an Events Coordinator).

**Funding:** SAHC's Community Farm is funded in part by grants from The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (for Beginning Farmer Success – Farm Pathways to Long-Term Land Tenure), a cost-share grant from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and a Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant.

### **About the Incubator Farm**

The Incubator farm is a 100-acre site that is comprised of mixed woodland, pasture and a level row crop field. As part of the program, SAHC provides access to land, infrastructure, equipment, and technical support for a nominal monthly fee.

Participants can spend up to five years in the program and are required to have at least two years of farming experience. Farmers also can receive training through SAHC's Farmer Education Workshop series. Their Farm Pathways partnership with Organic Growers School and WNC Farmlink provides access to the year-long "Farm Beginnings" farmer training program, as well as land-seeking assistance for participants to continue farming after the program.

### **Current Tenants**

- Blazing Star Flowers is a small flower farm and floral design studio serving the Asheville area with sustainable flowers and lush, garden-inspired arrangements.
- Black Trumpet Farm produces specialty mushrooms and naturally grown forest products for local farmer's markets, restaurants, and select wholesalers.

### **About the Community Farm Kitchen**

SAHC's Community Farm Kitchen can be used by participants in the Farm Incubator Program and other local producers to create value-added products. Shelf-stable products such as sauces and canned goods can help farmers extend their market season and enhance economic stability. Currently, a local producer uses the space to create a line of hot sauces.

### **Educational Programming**

The site hosts an innovative Farm Incubator Program in tandem with public educational opportunities. The Community Farm also has two agroforestry projects onsite—a Silvopasture Project, started in 2023, and a Food Forest in 2024. Other innovative projects at the farm site include a 25-acre stream restoration project, native shortleaf pine reforestation and bird habitat management, farmer education workshops, a community value-added kitchen, a hiking trail, Scottish heritage breed cattle, and more. The Community Farm also brings volunteer groups from organizations and schools out on the site for workshops and restoration projects.

### Case Study #2: Good Hope Farm (Cary, NC)

**Takeaway:** Demonstrates how a publicly-owned and operated site can partner with surrounding non-profits.

Size: 29 acres

**History:** The site has been a historic family farm since the 1910s. The farm has been in production for over 100 years and was owned by the A.M. Howard family for most of this time. The Town of Cary purchased the site in 2008. The farm is currently leased by Piedmont Conservation Council.

**Mission:** The goal of Good Hope Farm is to honor Cary's agricultural heritage while increasing the community's access to farmland and bringing local, healthy food to the community.

Owner/Operator: Town of Cary (Owner) and a non-profit collaborative of four organizations (Piedmont Conservation Council, The Conservation Fund, Conservation Trust for North Carolina, North Carolina Community Development Initiative).



Source: Town of Cary

### **Staffing/Operations:**

Piedmont Conservation Council (PCC) holds an eight-year lease with Cary that delineates project management responsibilities for both parties. PCC also employees a farm manager who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the incubator farm. The three other nonprofits (the Conservation Fund, North Carolina Community Development Initiative, and Conservation Trust for North Carolina) support the project with funding and collaboratively employ one project manager to handle grant writing, marketing, and related strategic planning duties.

The town of Cary supports the project with a project manager that handles infrastructure installation and renovations, provides city programs and services at the facility (municipal water, electric service, curbside garbage collection) and executes the lease.

### **Programming:**

- Incubator farm
- Farm Stand
- Demonstration Garden
- Volunteer Workdays
- **Educational Programming**
- Community Garden
- CSA Produce Box

### **Funders/Partners:**

- Wake County Soil and Water Conservation District
- WithersRavenelCivil & Environmental Engineering Firm
- The Pentair Foundation
- Triangle Community Foundation
- New Belgium Brewing Company
- UNC REX Health Care
- Whole Foods Market
- Partners for Places
- La Farm Bakery

### **About the Incubator Farm**

Good Hope Farm licenses up to two acre-plots to new and expanding farmers, with all necessary equipment and infrastructure available on site. The farm features a demonstration garden and offers agricultural and nutritional educational programming.

### **Current Tenants**

Currently, there are seven tenants on-site who lease anywhere from 0.25 to two acres of land. All participants have existing agricultural production knowledge. Many participants are immigrants and bring knowledge of gardening and agriculture from their homeland. Equipment access is shared, and an example of shared equipment at the Good Hope Farm is listed below:

Equipment available for 0.25 acre plots:

- Walk-behind tiller
- Small tool storage and hand tools
- Hand-pushed seeder
- Mower and weed eater

### Equipment available for 0.5 acre plots:

- Walk-behind tractor with tiller
- Full-sized tractor with front-end loader
- 30' x 65' high tunnel
- Washing and packing station
- 8' x 8' walk-in cooler
- Small tool storage and hand tools
- Hand-pushed seeder
- Mower and weed eater

### **Case Study #3: Intervale Center (Burlington, VT)**

Takeaway: Demonstrates the need for continued services and support after participants leave the incubator farm program.

Size: 360 acres, 170 acres for incubator farm

**History of the Property:** Former city dump, garden supply store established a nonprofit to support community cleanup

**Mission:** Strengthen community food systems that sustain farms, land, and people

Owner/Operator: Intervale Center, a 501c (3) non-profit organization

**Staffing/Operations:** In total, there are 23 staff at Intervale. Their Farm Business Program includes three dedicated staff, two Farm Business Specialists and one Farm Business Director. Their Food Hub includes a Food Hub Manager, Community Food Production Manager, as well as a Food Access Manager.

### **Programming:**

- Farm Business Planning & Coaching
- **Technical Assistance**
- Land Access Support
- **Business Planning**
- Food Hub
- Conservation Nursery
- **Events & Tours**

### **About the Incubator Farm**

Intervale was home to one of the oldest farm incubator programs in the nation. Farmers could lease land at subsidized rates for three to five years. Older incubator farmers served as key mentors on-site. Their program always had a mix of incubator farmers and long-term tenants. Usually, a third of the land was for incubation and the remainder was for long-term tenants. Farm staff didn't have extensive formal agriculture training and would only accept incubator participants who were ready to start their own agricultural businesses and had some training. Intervale would provide shared equipment, water, and infrastructure. In 2007, they created the Intervale Farmers Equipment Company to manage the shared equipment. Intervale owns 30% of the equity, with farm tenants owning the remainder. This helps farmers build equity and be empowered to take care of and manage their own equipment.

In 2018, the Intervale Center ended its formal incubator program to focus on farm viability work and provide business planning and land access support to new and seasoned farmers across the state. The reason why they decided to shut down their program is because many of the farmers that graduated from their program struggled after moving farms. Land tenure and access was the biggest challenge that they faced in addition to challenging tasks like building up soil, lacking capital for infrastructure investments, and attracting a new customer base.



Source: Intervale Center

The Intervale Center continues to lease land to seven, more permanent organic farm tenants. They usually sign a 10-year lease with their tenants. They have focused their resources on business planning and financial coaching for farmers. They also offer extensive support for farmers to access farmland through Vermont LandLink and other resources.

### **About the Food Hub**

The Intervale Food Hub operates a whole and direct-to-consumer program, serving as a link between producers and customers. In 2015, the Food Hub expanded to focus on institutional distribution. In 2023, they closed their retail operation and changed focus to food access and connecting local farmers to markets.

### **Racial Equity**

Among the three interviews, the Intervale Center was the only organization that talked explicitly about their efforts to prioritize BIPOC businesses, as well as their collaborative fundraising model to move money into Black and Brown-owned organizations. Although not highlighted throughout their programming, their Strategic Plan from 2024-2028 mentions a goal to audit programs from a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion lens.

### **Appendix F: CoSpero Community Engagement Report**

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT











JULY 202





Cooperative Extension

Prepared in partnership with

COSPERO CONSULTING

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Durham County | 2024 Farm Campus Report

# A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

The idea of **Farm Campus started with a conversation**, a discussion among community members who thought Durham could do better to provide opportunities for farming and food entrepreneurship to flourish in our county. The COVID crisis added greater urgency to this conversation as increased family economic stress, health impacts, and supply chain weaknesses widened existing food access gaps throughout Durham and beyond. These concerns, coupled with escalating land prices due to rapid development, which make it difficult for farmers to acquire land; aging, experienced farmers nearing retirement; and inadequate representation of Black and Brown farmers, provided additional motivation to find a way to take a step forward.

We knew that any next step must **center the needs, interests, and desires of community members, who may have been left out of previous conversations**, including those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), young adults, women, immigrants and refugees, and many others. Additionally, we needed to learn from other communities, models, and research to understand what might (and might not) work well for our Durham community.

To start this exploration, Durham County Cooperative Extension pursued and received a USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production (UAIP) grant to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study to create a strong community engagement foundation. Over the past six months, we sought to **create intentional learning opportunities** to hear from community members, prioritizing and uplifting individuals who Farm Campus aims to serve, with a specific focus on hearing from voices who have been historically underrepresented in decisions that directly impact their community.

The learning and engagement process included gathering insights from the community through a comprehensive survey - an approach backed by the success of similar projects nationwide. Subsequent steps included convening focus groups to explore potential Farm Campus programming and operational strategies, culminating in this report that elevates community-driven recommendations, informs the total feasibility study, and provides a springboard for further discussion.

As the conversation continues, we move forward with the knowledge that Durham County has secured nearly 130 acres of land to provide a home for a Farm Campus. Farm Campus will be uniquely positioned to help meet stated community needs through increased access to land, infrastructure, and business training and support for new and beginning farmers and food entrepreneurs. While this report does not include everyone we need to reach and it does not tell us everything we need to know, it is a good start to understanding how we can **work together to support and strengthen the next generation of Durham farmers and build a more prosperous future for sustainable agriculture in our community.** 



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The Durham County Farm Campus aims to be a welcoming, accessible, culturally affirming, and safe space that promotes sustainable agricultural practices, environmental stewardship, food access, equity, and economic prosperity.

While Farm Campus is charged with tackling the root causes of food insecurity, its approach requires robust collaboration among all stakeholders in the food value chain. This initiative is envisioned as an integrated partnership with Durham County Cooperative Extension, Durham County Farmland Protection Board, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, community-based organizations, and City and County government.

### **FARM CAMPUS COMPONENTS**





Land, tools, equipment, and education provided free of charge to increase the number of farmers and availability of food

### **Shared Kitchen Space**



Commercial kitchen space, teaching kitchen, and learning environments to support existing culinary entrepreneurs

### **Post-harvest Food Education Facility**



Education on food safety, food handling, and storage offered to increase access to free education

### **Healing Garden**



Community-accessible outdoor spaces ready to support community members connecting with the land and nature

Grounding in core values is essential for creating a meaningful and sustainable long-term impact. Durham County is committed to continuing to anchor all processes, systems, and practices in these communitycentered values.

### **INCLUSIVE COLLABORATION**

Prioritize inclusive collaboration by actively involving community members in decision-making processes, ensuring diverse voices and perspectives are represented and valued in shaping the program's activities and direction at every step in the process.



### **SHARED LEADERSHIP**

Invite community members into leadership roles and responsibilities to foster a deep sense of ownership and agency, encouraging everyone to contribute their unique skills and knowledge to create a more vibrant and resilient ecosystem.



### **EQUITY-CENTERED PRACTICES**

Center equity in every aspect of Farm Campus, including equitable access to resources, fair representation, and intentionally creating an environment where participants feel welcome, respected, and supported.



Deep commitment to caring for the land by employing practices that promote soil health, water health, biodiversity, sustainability, and regeneration.



# **KEY MILESTONES**

2016

The <u>Durham County Farmland</u>
<u>Protection Board</u> establishes the
Farm Campus Working Group

2021

Durham County hires its first County Food Security Coordinator

2023

Durham County executes contracts with two consulting firms to support the Farm Campus Feasibility Study

2011

Durham County collaborates with sister counties to help launch the <a href="Piedmont Food Processing Center">Piedmont Food Processing Center</a>

2020

Farm Campus Working Group identifies the need for feasibility study to examine partnerships, priorities, and phasing

Durham County hires its first

<u>Agricultural Extension Agent for Small</u>

Farms & Local Foods

2022

Durham County <u>secures a grant</u> with the USDA to conduct a Feasibility Study of Farm Campus

2024

Durham County <u>secures around 130</u> <u>acres of land</u> for Farm Campus

Robust community engagement efforts and community learning commences by consulting firms with community members

# ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



### **OUR APPROACH**

In January 2024 CoSpero began community engagement work by analyzing various artifacts shared by the Cooperative Extension. These artifacts included the history of farming and food systems in Durham County and North Carolina, the current state of farming at the state and local levels, and prior community engagement and food-related work completed in Durham, collectively magnifying a holistic story of the local food landscape, the community demand, and the rationale for a Farm Campus.

The first phase of community engagement began in late February 2024 with a county-wide survey targeting aspiring, beginning, and established farmers, food entrepreneurs, and community partners to gather feedback on Farm Campus' components and surface common barriers experienced by farmers and food entrepreneurs. To maximize and ensure diverse participation, the Farm Campus team distributed the survey through email, social media, and printed materials to local leaders. More than 100 Durham County community members responded. However, despite meeting the overall engagement target, responses from our primary target audiences—aspiring and beginning farmers and food entrepreneurs—were notably limited.

In May 2024 CoSpero conducted in-person focus groups across audiences to better understand the community's priorities for Farm Campus' programming, operations, and leadership. Aspiring and beginning farmers and food entrepreneurs were further represented in focus groups, elevating their experiences and helping to shape the recommendations presented in this report. All focus group participants engaged in a short closing survey to rate the impact of Farm Campus' components and offer suggestions on how Durham County can prioritize accessibility and inclusivity while involving the community in the ongoing development of Farm Campus.

# UNITED IN PURPOSE.





# SURVEY RESPONSES

- 43 Organizational/community leaders
- 36 Beginning & established farmers
- 13 Community members
- 11 Aspiring farmers
- 09 Food/culinary entrepreneurs

## FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- 19 Organizational/community leaders
- 17 BIPOC farmers
- 09 Future farmers
- 08 Food/culinary entrepreneurs
- 06 Beginning & established farmers

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

From the engagement onset, the County Extension team and Farm Campus Advisory Group established learning objectives to identify barriers, interests, and opportunities for feedback on initial Farm Campus design concepts. These learning objectives, outlined below, guided the engagement process, with stakeholder responses serving as insights to both build on Durham's local food system's existing strengths while also highlighting the gaps Farm Campus can help bridge alongside essential partners. Insights surfaced are summarized in the sections that follow.

It's important to note that the food value chain is ever-evolving and requires continued innovation and dedication. These learning objectives will require continued exploration to ensure that Farm Campus is responsive to the needs of the local food system.

### **EXPLORE COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS, NEEDS, AND INTERESTS**

- Assess community desire in accessing farmland, farming infrastructure, and shared kitchen or commissary spaces
- Identify educational and training needs in agricultural practices, farm operations, and business development
- Determine preferences for the types of crops and products farmers wish to grow or produce
- Gauge enthusiasm for the currently envisioned Farm Campus components
- Profile interested community members

### **ENVISION COLLABORATION, INSTRUCTION, AND TRAINING**

- Surface assistance needed for new farmers to start their farming journey
- Develop strategies for Farm Campus to reduce disparities and obstacles for local community members
- Explore approaches for Farm Campus to offer ongoing culturally appropriate technical support, become a more inclusive community hub, and honor its diverse community, cultural heritage, and identity
- Define essential job skills needed in the local food industry
- Explore organizational structures or operating models that ensure Farm Campus is led by, serves, and remains accountable to marginalized communities
- Clarify desired community involvement in the upcoming design phases of Farm Campus

# INSIGHTS



# NSIGHTS | GOVERNANCE & STAFFING

### **1** LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- Stakeholders emphasized that if Durham County desires to build trust with the community and effectively serve BIPOC and other underrepresented groups, it is crucial to address power dynamics by pursuing a collective governance structure to elevate community members to leadership and decision-making roles, including board memberships and paid staff positions.
- Several individuals expressed an interest in staying involved in the development of Farm Campus, with some showing interest in taking on leadership roles.

### 2 RESOURCING

- Many believe hiring dedicated roles such as Farm Manager and Community Liaison should be a top priority when launching Farm Campus operations.
- Food entrepreneurs were also interested in having access to a managing point of contact who can answer questions and concerns regarding shared spaces and connect them to other entrepreneurs and organizations that can support their continuous learning.
- Community leaders and organizations desire transparency in funding, and effective, timely communication. They believe these aspects are crucial for establishing trust and attracting and retaining community partnerships.
- Concerns were raised by community leaders and organizations regarding Farm Campus potentially diverting resources from smaller, local organizations with similar initiatives, such as the work that they themselves are striving towards.
- Most leaders and organizations expressed keen interest in contributing to Farm Campus. When questioned about factors encouraging their commitment, they highlighted the importance of being compensated for their contributions and expertise.

99

This project would work best if it had full support of community members ... it would be most successful if community members helped to lead the efforts.

99

Ongoing relationship building with trusted groups who are connected to individuals that are usually not aware of this [should be prioritized]. Do not make this into another low-hanging fruit project.

### **1** BARRIERS TO ADDRESS

- Farmers have observed that traditional methods of passing down farming practices and land are becoming outdated, with fewer generational farmers and even fewer within BIPOC communities.
- BIPOC farmers' distrust in government systems has deep roots, stemming from historical injustices such as government land seizures, unfair treatment, tax issues, lost land records, highways dividing Black communities, displacement, unkept promises, gentrification affecting Black neighborhoods, and the existence of food deserts.
- Residents of Fast and South Durham often feel overlooked when it comes to receiving support, despite these areas having many community members in need. The population is predominantly regions Hispanic/Latinx.
- Concerns were expressed about the inaccessibility of Farm Campus to many due to its location not being reachable by city transportation.
- Farmers, who had previous experience with other incubator farms, showed less enthusiasm for the incubator farm program at Farm Campus, citing worries about attrition and long-term career sustainability if the program lacks selection criteria for participants.
- Farmers strongly believe that significant efforts are required to prepare the pipeline of farmers well in advance of their introduction to the incubator farm program. This preparation was deemed essential for retention and to initiate exposure to agriculture in traditionally unreached communities.

Farm Campus should I focus on eliminating the barriers that small farmers and businesses, especially those of color, face. Acknowledge the systemic barriers that oftentimes were intentional at local and state levels, work on fixing those internal systems that still keep those folks from succeeding. Classes and mentorships are great, but if the systemic barriers aren't addressed. then those measures won't do the good that folks want them to.

### **2** MESSAGING AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Future farmers emphasized that Instagram, Facebook, and other digital forms of content, like an updated website and newsletters, would be the best way to reach a young generation of farmers. School and community presentations offering motivating, relatable, and optimistic tones for the future of agriculture were also named as ways to energize young future farmers to participate in Farm Campus.
- Several BIPOC farmers shared that their drive to start and persist in farming stems from profound reasons, such as loss due to illness and a passion to provide food for their families and community, and that it would be important to understand empathetic motivations of future farmers.
- Some found the messaging surrounding Farm Campus to be unclear. The name did not clearly indicate its purpose, descriptions of its components did not resonate with people, and there was uncertainty about its intended audience.
- Many shared their excitement about the unique value proposition that could be showcased, farm-to-table and local sourcing, which is highly valued in the Durham area. Future farmers suggested highlighting the farm-to-table process in demonstrations and promotional material for Farm Campus.

99

Learning how to grow food, for ourselves, to me is meaningful. I guess it's more important now to do it for yourself.

99

You have to find internal motivations and personal connections to stay the long haul even when it [farming] doesn't go the way it should.

### **3** PROGRAM OFFFRINGS

- Both food and farming entrepreneurs are interested in seeking education and training in business planning and development. This includes scaling, obtaining grants and loans, crafting business proposals and feasibility studies, and recognizing and capitalizing on market opportunities.
- Future and aspiring farmers were highly interested in shadowing seasoned farmers and engaging in hands-on learning opportunities. They wanted to learn more about the daily responsibilities and time commitment required for farming, gain farming experience, and understand the feasibility of their farming goals.
- There is a strong belief that a mentorship program with established farmers is crucial for the success of new and aspiring farmers, requiring thoughtful planning to ensure mutual success for mentors and mentees.
- Food entrepreneurs also stated they need support systems such as mentorship and supplementary operational capacity sharing.
- Farmers emphasized the importance of including these key topics in the curriculum: understanding rules and regulations, time management, marketing and selling (including market identification), management, and business planning (i.e. business designation, scaling up or down, etc).
- There was mutual enthusiasm among farmers and food entrepreneurs for collaborative spaces on Farm Campus, indicating the potential for it to become an information hub with a database to connect Farm Campus producers with food entrepreneurs wanting to source foods locally.



When asked for the most critical supports for those new to farming, experienced farmers ranked the need for mentorship from experienced farmers, help with business plans, & training and workshops as their top 3.



Focus group participants expressed the least confidence in the incubator farm and healing garden's impact compared to the shared kitchen and post-harvest education facility components.



Lack of community and feeling isolated in farming is a huge problem. Mentorship can help with this.

### **4** ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

- Significant financial constraints and obstacles with grants and loans have prevented BIPOC farmers from maintaining or expanding their farming activities. These barriers include a lack of technical skill, language barriers, issues with eligibility, financial burdens caused by cost-fronting models, and limitations on funding use.
- Farmers believe that the County could have a huge impact on the future of farming if it dedicates resources to safeguard farmland from developers and prevent land costs from being excessively inflated.
- Farmers also believe that the County can best support emerging farmers by fostering relations with industry partners and leading in securing funding opportunities.
- Experienced farmers emphasized the importance of Durham County supporting the incubator farm participants' long-term prosperity by effectively preparing them to transition from the incubator farm to their own farming operation.
- While there is enthusiasm for Farm Campus, discussions often revolved around the program's long-term impact, which hinges on the success of incubator farm participants' post-program. Concerns were raised regarding the availability of funding and resources for participants once they no longer have access to the program's land and support.
- Some current farmers are enthusiastic about services that will be available for new farmers. They also hope that Farm Campus will provide support for those who have been working in the farming field for a long time.

I hope there is a lot of thought into how we can support these new farm entrepreneurs through to a successful farm AFTER Farm Campus, and beforehand, to how we are getting equitable engagement in the programs.



In a survey, most beginning farmers pinpointed land costs and insufficient financial support as the top ranking challenges for new farmers.



After gaining the skills and knowledge to farm within **Durham County, I** will have to leave the county to actually expand or have access to land.

### 1 COMMUNITY ACCESSIBLE SPACES

- Farmers mentioned that the food storage infrastructure in the county is inadequate. They noted that current facilities do not meet demand, lack cold storage space, have limited dry storage space, and do not support the use of equipment like pallet jacks.
- Food entrepreneurs were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the prospect of accessing shared kitchen and storage space in Durham County. They shared their experiences about challenges in accessing similar spaces, which have hindered business sustainability and growth.
- Community leaders and organizations see an opportunity to utilize space at Farm Campus for community purposes, like workspaces and pavilions, and offering culturally relevant food prep and cooking classes. These community spaces can bring awareness, interest and learning opportunities to community members that would spur interest in agriculture.

**Too many times** projects like these neglect security and theft and vandalism occur leading to low morale, community mistrust, and ultimately project failure.



When surveyed, all established food entrepreneurs indicated that lack of access to kitchen space' has hindered their ability to expand their businesses.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



### RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented in this report are responsive to insights from the Durham Community and should serve as a starting point to guide future strategy. With time being a critical factor, harnessing the current momentum generated by an engaged community is critical. This section outlines key recommendations to aid in preserving farmland, increasing local food production, and supporting the development of a new generation of diverse farmers in Durham County. Although there are significant obstacles to overcome, the goal of Farm Campus remains steadfast - to open opportunities for future BIPOC farmers and other traditionally underserved groups.

1

SHARE LEADERSHIP,
POWER, AND DECISION
MAKING AUTHORITY
WITH THE COMMUNITY.



2

CREATE INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.



3

DEVELOP A VERSATILE SPACE FOR DIVERSE USE.



# SHARE LEADERSHIP, POWER, AND DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY WITH THE COMMUNITY.

### 1.1 Establish a community governance framework.

- Place community members who holistically represent underrepresented groups in decision-making positions, such as a Board that oversees Farm Campus, to ensure that the governance framework reflects diverse perspectives and needs. The group's responsibilities involve critical decisions such as advising on financial resources, facilitating an efficient evaluation process, and implementing significant programming changes.
- Involve traditional decision-makers by integrating them into an Advisory body to allow for the retention of valuable expertise and historical knowledge while shifting primary decision-making power to a more diverse and representative group.

### 1.2 Form a task force to design essential aspects of Farm Campus.

- Assemble a team that reflects diverse community members with guidance from a third-party consultant to produce:
  - 1. Framework and selection process for Farm Campus Board and Advisory members
  - 2. Farm Campus bylaws, operational procedures, space guidelines, member commitments, etc.
  - 3. Design elements for accessibility and safety include language in signage and materials, wheelchair access, restroom gendering, sensory accommodation, and ergonomics.

### 1.3 Allocate funding to form partnerships with local experts.

- Ensure that partners are fairly compensated for their time and expertise to acknowledge the value of their contributions, which could include providing knowledge, skills, and various services to the Farm Campus.
- Engage community partners in promoting Farm Campus through a grassroots approach—word-of-mouth marketing. Their local connections and trusted voices can raise awareness and attract participants and supporters.

# COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENHANCING EQUITY & OPPORTUNITY

- **>** Employ a diverse staff that undergoes diversity, equity, and inclusion training.
- > Establish ongoing listening opportunities for community members to share development updates and solicit feedback.
- Simplify the RFP and payment processes to streamline onboarding.
- > Conduct a landscape analysis to chart all local organizations and experts within the ecosystem.

# CREATE INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.

### 2.1 Concentrate on implementing foundational program elements in 2025.

- Launching immediate programming is a great way to swiftly generate excitement and momentum about Farm Campus.
- An immediate launch will help to identify future participants and continually offers community opportunities to learn and engage throughout the development process.

### 2.2 Phase in programmatic components across 3-5 years.

- Prioritize launching specific Farm Campus components, with an emphasis on the Incubator Farm to generate awareness and goodwill.
- Based on community input, consider the following phased approach:

PHASE 0

- Move forward with land preparation efforts
- Design and launch community programming, such as demonstration plots and a farming 101 workshop series
- Continue community engagement efforts

PHASE 2

 Open the shared commissary kitchen space to local entrepreneurs

PHASE 1

- Begin development of shared, commissary kitchen
- Introduce the healing garden and public spaces to the community

PHASE 3

- Launch the first incubator farm cohort
- Transition all programming operations to the education facility on Farm Campus

### 2.3 Establish a cohort learning model for the incubator farm.

- Develop a structured program supported by a clear scope and sequence for the program curriculum, prerequisite courses, and certifications.
- Forge strong partnerships with local higher education institutions to co-develop essential entry-level coursework.
- Foster a cohesive community among participants through collaborative initiatives, such as connecting with other farming programs and establishing intentional relationships with experts and fellow entrepreneurs at Farm Campus.

# CREATE INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.

#### 2.4 Design a mentorship program for Farm Campus.

- Facilitate meaningful connections between mentors and mentees through a matching process that can be based on interests, skills, and goals. This ensures that both parties are well-suited to learn from and support each other.
- Tailor the mentorship program to be culturally relevant to foster a more inclusive environment where mentors and mentees feel understood and supported.
- Offer financial support to mentors and mentees to help alleviate economic barriers that prevent participation.
- Provide structured onboarding processes to ensure mentors and mentees are well-prepared and understand their roles and responsibilities.

#### 2.5 Envision Farm Campus as a local attraction.

- Allocate space at Farm Campus for demonstration plots tailored for aspiring and novice farmers while fostering community interest in agriculture. Harvested produce can be sold to generate revenue or donated to local food pantries.
- Prioritize youth engagement and exposure through partnerships with schools and the Hub Farm, offering tailored programming for K-12 students.
- Develop diverse programming opportunities at Farm Campus for community members of all ages with varying agricultural experience and interests, including off-site farmer shadowing, cooking demonstrations to uplift culturally relevant foods, take-home garden boxes, volunteer days, and community tours.
- Offer learning opportunities for the community to explore large-scale machinery and use a library system to allow residents to borrow specialized tools.

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENHANCING EQUITY & OPPORTUNITY

- Given the Farm Campus's location, the County should explore various transportation options to assist community members, such as transportation stipends, shuttle services, or expanding bus routes.
- The absence of childcare has hindered underrepresented groups from engaging in learning environments. Offering childcare reimbursements or onsite care could ensure the participation of individuals with families.
- To ensure participants' success, meeting them at their current learning stage and addressing their needs is crucial. When designing the program curriculum, consider diverse learning styles, multilingual requirements, and flexible engagement options like flexible schedules and virtual opportunities to cater to different needs.
- Partner with city and county leaders, and religious organizations, to directly engage with BIPOC communities to deliver essential information that resonates with their needs and captures their attention, providing a more inclusive and accessible approach to outreach.
- Throughout history, marginalized communities have experienced land confiscation and restrictions on land acquisition. Establishing pathways to land ownership could aid in community healing from past injustices. Moreover, conducting workshops on collective land ownership may expand ownership prospects for various underrepresented groups.
- Community interest in livestock is high, but Farm Campus may be unable to offer this farming option due to differing resource and staffing requirements for crop production and livestock management. Alternative methods to involve those interested in livestock include offering learning opportunities at Farm Campus.

# DEVELOP A VERSATILE SPACE FOR DIVERSE USE.

#### 3.1 Design spaces that serve multiple purposes.

 Make versatile indoor and outdoor spaces available for rental so the community can host events, workshops, and gatherings - strategically increasing foot traffic and engagement at Farm Campus. Consider offering a no-cost or reduced rate for participants and partners of Farm Campus.

#### 3.2 Customize the kitchen space with advanced features and amenities.

- Design the kitchen with a flexible layout that can accommodate different cooking processes and workflows, allowing multiple entrepreneurs to work simultaneously without disruption.
- Implement flexible hours with equitable reservation policies.
- Provide ample secure storage solutions, including dry storage, refrigerated storage, and freezer space, to accommodate bulk inventory needs for various entrepreneurs.
- Install specialized equipment tailored to different types of food production, packaging, and storage.
- Establish and enforce formal agreements and insurance to ensure protection for the space and its members, including:
  - operating guidelines and procedures
  - o education on the proper use, storage, and cleaning of tools and appliances
  - training on waste management systems

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENHANCING EQUITY & OPPORTUNITY

- Develop creative initiatives to share BIPOC farming history and provide historical education on the origins and implications of farming and food businesses today.
- Establish mutual community guidelines emphasizing anti-racism, kindness, and respect for the land and one another.
- > Implement gender-neutral restrooms to promote inclusivity.
- **>** Provide tools and spaces that are accessible to individuals of varying abilities.
- Ensure spaces are accessible and affordable for entrepreneurs and organizations of varying financial means, potentially offering tiered pricing or subsidized rates.
- Implement gated access with security cameras and off-site video monitoring, supported by ID card protocols.
- Designate a Farm Manager for guidance on tool usage, a Head of Campus for oversight and coordination, and Community Liaison to connect entrepreneurs with resources.
- Promote local economic growth by engaging small businesses through commissioning artists to showcase multicultural artwork, partnering with landscape designers to enhance the campus environment, or creating social media content to showcase Farm Campus entrepreneurs.

# **APPENDIX A**

# COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

### COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

We led targeted outreach efforts to reach community members across Durham County with the hopes of reaching new, aspiring, and experienced farmers and food/culinary entrepreneurs, along with adjacent organizations and leaders in the community. We reached 112 community members across 29 residential zip codes, with 92% of respondents indicating they lived and/or worked in Durham County.

#### **Engagement Reach**



11 Aspiring farmers
36 Current farmers

- Aspiring Interested in farming
- Beginning Farming 10 years or less (current farmer)
- Established Farming more than 10 years (current farmer)



**09 Entrepreneurs** (all)

- Aspiring Interested in starting a food or culinary business
- Beginning Entrepreneur 5 years or less
- Established Entrepreneur more than 5 years

### ORGANIZATION & COMMUNITY LEADERS

43 Org/community leaders

- Organization leader- Affiliated with a group or organization (nonprofit, political, coalition, etc.)
- Community leader Community leader or organizer (independent of any specific group or entity)

# COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY CONT'D

Although audiences offered different perspectives and feedback, the following key themes were consistently highlighted across stakeholder groups. These themes helped guide focus group activities, allowing for a deeper exploration of their suggestions for Farm Campus programming and operations.

#### Key Insights

- Both aspiring and beginning farmers, as well as food/culinary entrepreneurs, recognize the immense value in accessing mentorship and learning from seasoned veterans in their respective industries.
- The majority of successful individual in farming and food/culinary entrepreneurship have achieved their momentum and accomplishments through selfteaching.
- Beginning and aspiring food entrepreneurs, along with farmers, acknowledge the potential for Farm Campus to support the growth and formal establishment of their businesses.

- Aspiring and beginning farmers, as well as food and culinary entrepreneurs, exhibit considerable enthusiasm towards utilizing communal kitchen and storage facilities, and the healing garden.
- Respondents express a need for additional details regarding the incubator farm and the operational framework of the community site to develop comprehensive opinions about Farm Campus.
- Community leaders & organizations expressed excitement about Farm Campus & envision themselves as advocates, there's an opportunity to strengthen support and rekindle connections with all contributors who have been involved in shaping the Farm Campus concept.

For additional information on the insights shared by the survey respondents, please see to the full Farm Campus Survey Summary linked <u>here</u>.

# **APPENDIX B**

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

#### **FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES**

Focus group activities and discussion prompts were customized for the community survey's target audiences, enabling the Durham community to elaborate on survey feedback and delve into topics aligned with their expertise. We engaged farmers and food entrepreneurs with varying levels of experience and multiple community leaders who continued to highlight critical insights essential for the ongoing development of Farm Campus. Please note that the following points do not encompass all feedback shared by community during the focus group sessions. Additional details are available in the 'Insights' and 'Recommendations' sections of this report.

#### **FARMERS**

# **05 FOCUS GROUPS HOSTED 32 ATTENDEES**

Attendees were inclusive of aspiring, beginning and established farmers.

#### What additional skills are needed beyond farming to ensure participants achieve economic prosperity after their time at Farm Campus?

- Understand rules and regulations, including farming, land laws, and biosecurity to ensure safety and take care of the environment.
- Manage finances by understanding input costs, setting up a business structure and LLC, and planning and tracking expenses and earnings to scale up an established business.
- Manage time effectively by prioritizing tasks, planning their execution, and finding ways to complete them more efficiently with available resources.
- Market and sell products by effectively communicating their value and price to potential customers and identifying target markets.

#### What supports and resources are necessary to ensure the success of incubator farm participants?

- Pair aspiring farmers with experienced mentors who can offer one-on-one or group guidance, advice, and support.
- Assist aspiring farmers in developing business plans, budgeting, and marketing strategies to help them establish successful farm businesses.
- Provide financial assistance through education on managing and writing grants, budget management, and narrative writing.
- Conduct hands-on workshops, demonstrations, and shadowing opportunities to offer essential learning and reference points for new and beginning farmers.
- Work with industry partners to design and develop farm infrastructure, including the placement of farming areas, wells, and fencing.
- Hire farm management staff to manage the acre property and supervise farmers.
- Provide lease agreements for farmers.

#### **FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES**

#### FARMERS CONT'D

#### How can Farm Campus tackle financial challenges for BIPOC farmers to aid in establishing successful farming operations?

- Offer farmers financial literacy support, including guidance on building business credit and developing business plans.
- Share funding opportunities available and assist farmers with loans and grants processes.
- Mitigate the impact of high debt-to-income ratios on loan eligibility.
- Provide training to enhance farmers' technical knowledge and grant-writing skills.
- Simplify permitting processes to reduce delays.
- Provide case management for scaling up operations.
- Offer guidance on managing taxed grant money.
- Ensure inclusivity for non-citizens and non-native English speakers.

#### **PARTNERS**

# 02 FOCUS GROUPS HOSTED 18 ATTENDEES

Attendees were inclusive of community-based organizations and community leaders.

#### How can Farm Campus establish strong community partnerships and increase community awareness of its programs?

- Offer opportunities to use Farm Campus resources such as equipment and facilities at low to no cost.
- Evaluate how power is shared and exercised within the partnership, including decision-making processes and conflict resolution.
- Enhance and compliment existing services or organizations and address gaps as necessary, rather than duplicating existing efforts.
- Ensure paid opportunities are available for community partners and manage all financial transactions guickly and smoothly.
- Create opportunities for networking and building relationships with other organizations, stakeholders, and community members through the partnership.
- Start to involve the next generation of farmers by connecting with schools and student-focused programs that can showcase opportunities for young students to explore and connect with local agriculture.

#### **FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES**

### ENTREPRENEURS 02 FOCUS GROUPS HOSTED 08 ATTENDEES

Attendees were inclusive of food and culinary entrepreneurs.

#### What support can Farm Campus offer entrepreneurs to best position them for economic prosperity beyond their time at the campus?

- Ensure participants receive training in food safety (e.g., ServSafe), HACCP plans, health department rules, insurance requirements, and Department of Agriculture regulations.
- Provide support in developing a business canvas, creating budget and revenue projections, offering financial training, and developing marketing strategies.
- Implement mentorship programs with specific coaching areas and shadowing components.
- Provide affordable usage rates, ensure safety measures, and offer equipment maintenance support.
- Develop plans for seasonal produce usage, designate separate spaces for dry goods, and maintain an ecosystem approach to farming practices.
- Ensure access to essential facilities such as kitchen space, equipment for filling, sealing, and labeling, storage for bulk ingredients, palletizing capabilities, and loading docks.
- Foster relationships with farmers markets and connect participants with tech and marketing professionals, influencers, and potential business opportunities.
- Offer training on equipment usage and raise awareness about space availability for potential participants.

# **APPENDIX C**

# FOCUS GROUP EXIT SURVEY SUMMARY

# FOCUS GROUP EXIT SURVEY SUMMARY

Each focus group participant was invited to complete an exit survey, where they rated the impact of Farm Campus' proposed components using the Net Promoter Score (NPS) Rating. Respondents chose a rating between 1 (not likely at all) and 10 (extremely likely), falling into one of the following categories based on their response.



The NPS score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters. NPS scores can vary greatly by sector, but the chart below provides general guidance.



#### **Net Promoter Score (NPS) Rating**

Farm Campus Component	Detractors	Passives	Promoters	NPS Score
Incubator Farm	13.3%	35.6%	51.1%	37.8
Post-harvest Food Education Facility	13.3%	31.1%	55.6%	42.3
Shared Kitchen	11.1%	20%	68.9%	57.8
Healing Garden	28.9%	26.7%	44.4%	15.5

# FOCUS GROUP EXIT SURVEY SUMMARY CONT'D

Focus group participants also had the opportunity to share their ideas around different aspects of Farm Campus' planning and development through the exit survey. Suggestions made my community members are below.



#### **Safety & Access**

- Implement community guidelines that all program participants must agree to and sign off on.
- Hire a Farm Manager to provide guidance on using implements and assist participants with questions and concerns.
- Ensure accessibility by providing wheelchair access, Spanish and Braille translations, and sensory accommodations like bright color contrasts and headphones for noise reduction.
- Enhance security with gated access, off-site video monitoring, and ID cards.
- Allow use of spaces outside of normal working hours.
- Provide demonstrations on safe use of tools and other equipment.



#### Community Involvement

- Ensure leadership is representative of Durham's own community.
- Implement regular evaluation cycles with the community to identify areas needing attention.
- Host education trainings and events for community members of all ages.
- Provide work days for volunteering and community engagement.
- Partner with City and County leaders, community organizations, churches, and schools to share upcoming events and opportunities available at Farm Campus.
- Invite subject experts and local community members to lead workshops and other events.
- Consider smaller plots for a community garden and generate community excitement by offering giveaways such as plants, seeds, and flowers.



#### **Addressing Barriers**

- Ensure public transportation to Farm Campus and childcare support is available.
- Provide online access to Farm Campus resources.
- Employ a diverse staff trained in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Acknowledge existing social/political conflicts within agriculture while striving for solutions.
- Provide signage and support in multiple languages.
- Share Farm Campus information with communities of color.
- Support local food pantries by donating extra food and produce from learning gardens.
- Offer non-gendered bathrooms.



### **Celebrate Community, Culture, and Identity**

- Develop creative methods to share Black farming history and educate on the historical evolution and present-day implications of farming and food businesses.
- Support local small businesses to contribute to the development of Farm Campus.
- Offer cultural education opportunities and sharing days, including "cooking together"
- Establish a board comprised of residents and partners, and hold annual stakeholder meetings
- Showcase multicultural artwork.
- Organize a welcoming event featuring Durham farmers, farmer markets, farm-related organizations, and nonprofits.

Much appreciation to everyone who took the time to share their past experiences and future aspirations for Farm Campus!



CoSpero Consulting helps forward-thinking organizations unite community voice and strategy to create transformational change.

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Stay tuned in for updates. <a href="https://durham.ces.ncsu.edu">https://durham.ces.ncsu.edu</a>