

Durham County Farm Campus

Feasibility Study Final Presentation

May 5, 2025

HR&A +  ndropogon



About Farm Campus

Mission

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.

Farm Campus Components



**Incubator
Farm Program**



**Post-Harvest Food
Education Facility**



**Shared Kitchen
Space**



Healing Garden

Key Milestones



2011

Durham County collaborates with sister counties to help launch the Piedmont Food Processing Center.

2016

The Durham County Farmland Protection Board establishes the Farm Campus Working Group.

2020

Farm Campus Working Group identifies need for feasibility study.
Durham County hires Agricultural Extension Agent for Small Farms & Local Foods.

2021

Durham County hires its first Food Security Coordinator.

2022

Durham County secures a grant with USDA to conduct a Feasibility Study.

2023

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

2024

Durham County secures around 130 acres of land for Farm Campus.
Community Engagement Scope Presentation.

2025

Final Feasibility Study
Today's Presentation

Feasibility Study

About HR&A

HR&A Advisors (HR&A) is a national economic development and real estate advisory firm with offices in six cities, dedicated to expanding opportunity and enhancing urban quality of life. Our **Food Systems & Cultural Capital Practice** is led by Senior Advisor Derek Fleming.

Food Systems & Cultural Capital Practice



Real Estate
Development
Advisory



Economic
Development
Strategy



Hospitality, Retail,
Food Systems
Development



Program Design &
Implementation

Farm Campus Focus

Farm Campus aims to support a more resilient food system that systematically addresses the root causes of food insecurity by:

- **Launching the next generation of farmers through increased access to land, infrastructure, and markets for new and beginning farmers**
- **Fostering racial equity and development of generational wealth by centering diverse community priorities in design and development.**

Farm Campus aims to be a welcoming, accessible, and empowering space for Historically Underserved farmers, as defined by the USDA.

Feasibility Study

WORKSTREAM 1: SITE SELECTION

- Site evaluation
- Scorecard development

WORKSTREAM 2: DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- Development & phasing considerations
- Programmatic elements

WORKSTREAM 3: IMPLEMENTATION

- Governance plan
- 10-year operating budget
- Case studies

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCOPE



Community Engagement Scope

- The Feasibility Study is informed by findings from CoSpero's Community Engagement Report.
- CoSpero collected over 100 survey responses and inputs from almost 60 focus group participants.

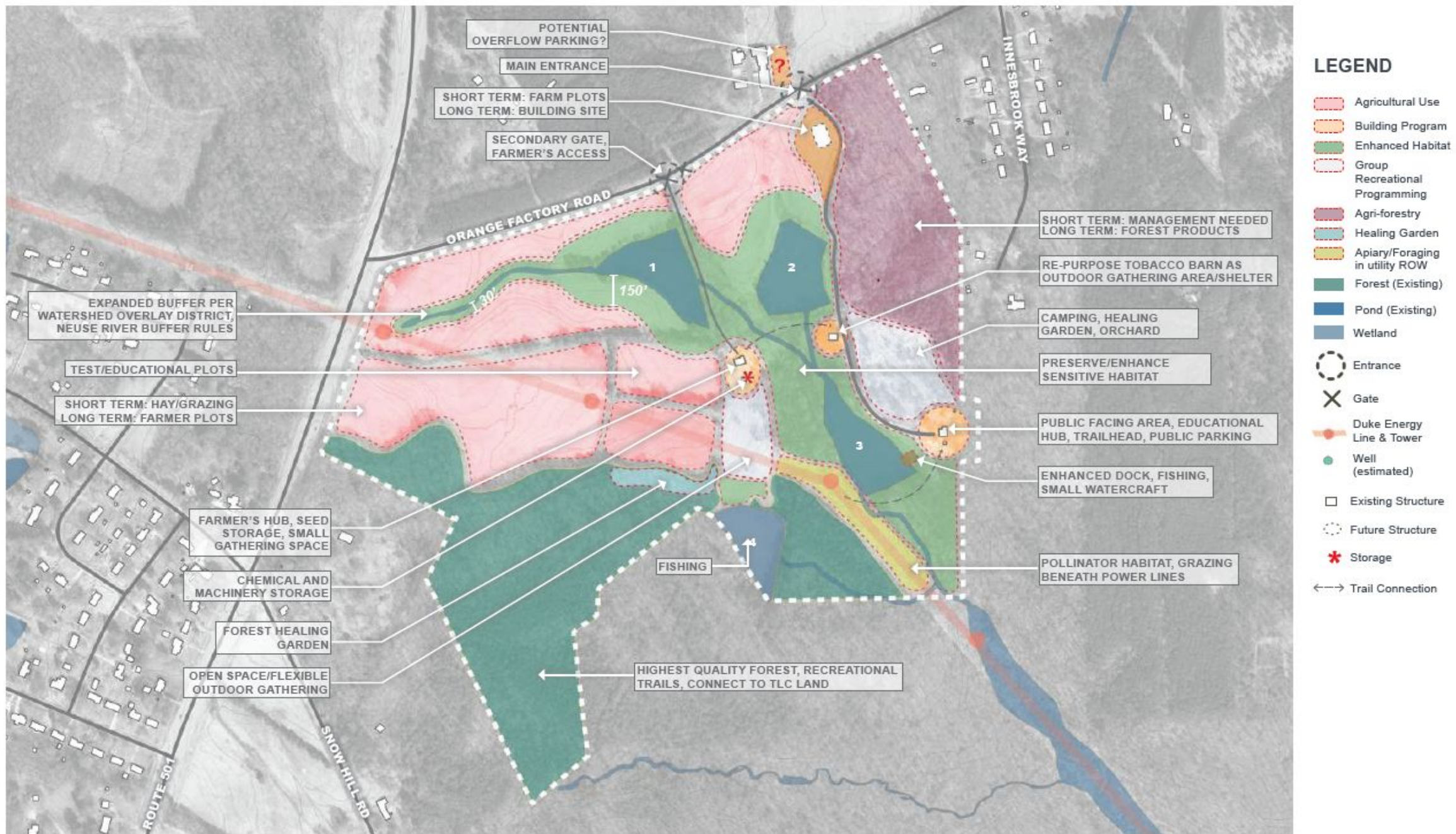


Site Selection Scorecards & Acquisition

- HR&A evaluated four sites using a scorecard that evaluated environmental, program-specific, and economic considerations.
- In November 2023, the scorecards were shared with the Board of Commissioners.
- In February 2024, the County successfully acquired Site #1: 308 Orange Factory Rd.



The Farm Campus Vision



Phase 0 | Farm Campus Foundations

Year 0-1



- Continue site preparation efforts
- Design and launch early community activation events
- Continue community engagement, get people on-site

“Launching immediate programming is a great way to swiftly generate excitement and momentum about Farm Campus.”

CoSpero Community Engagement Report

Phase 1 | Becoming a Farm Campus

Year 1-3



- Basic safety and access upgrades
- Early community activation events
- Incubator plots
- Temporary parking and infrastructure

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

Re: Incubator Farm Program, CoSpero Community Engagement Report

Farm Campus Components



**Incubator
Farm Program**

Phase 2 | Enhancing & Growing the Campus

Year 4-6



- Expanding incubator farm program for beginner farmers
- Additional capital upgrades
- Additional educational programming

“Develop diverse programming opportunities at Farm Campus for community members of all ages with varying agricultural experience and interests.”

CoSpero Community Engagement Report

Farm Campus Components



**Incubator
Farm Program**

Phase 3 | Completing the Vision

Year 7-10



- Food facility construction
- Expanded and upgraded parking
- Healing garden
- Recreational and trail system buildout

“Food entrepreneurs were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the prospect of accessing shared kitchen and storage space in Durham County.”

CoSpero Community Engagement Report

Farm Campus Components



**Incubator
Farm Program**



**Post-Harvest
Food
Education
Facility**



**Shared
Kitchen Space**



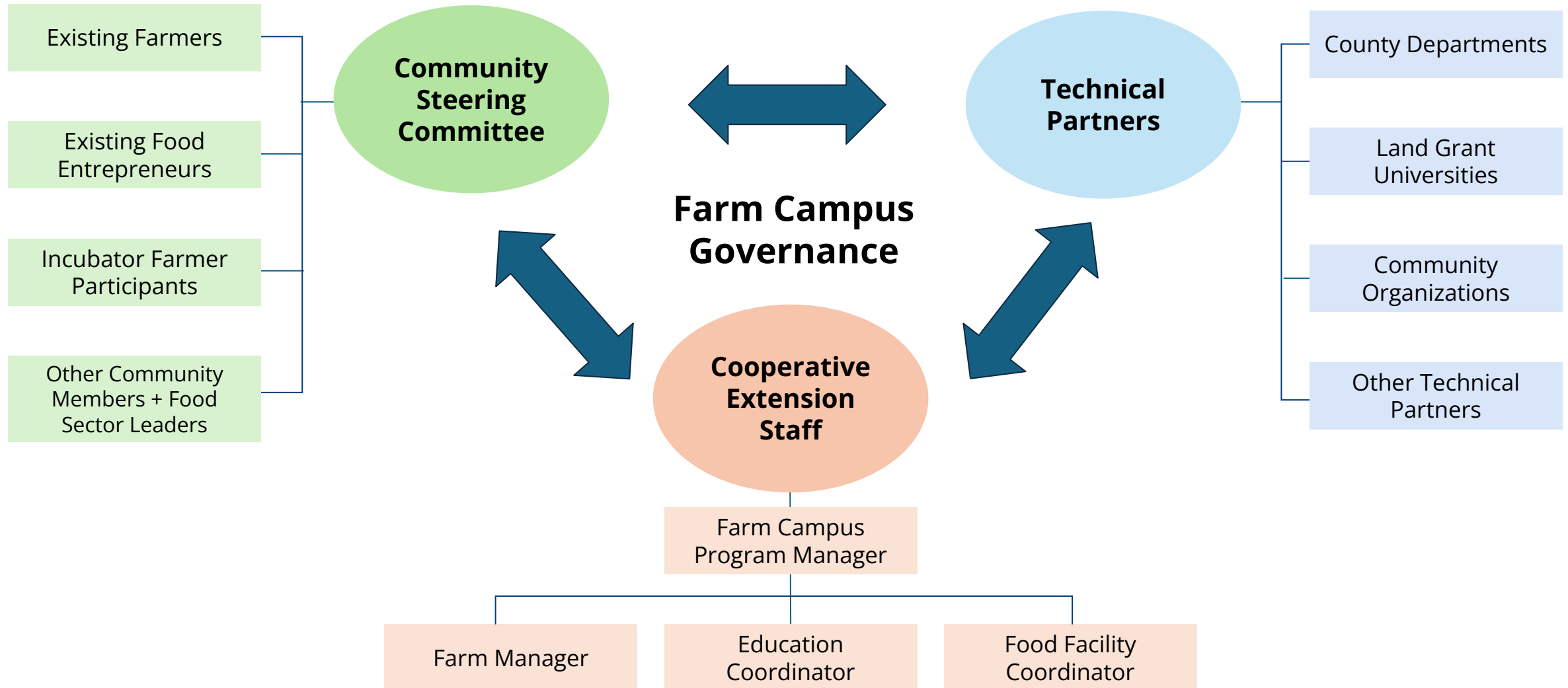
**Healing
Garden**

Implementation Plan



PHASE 0	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
Y0-1	Y1-3	Y4-6	Y7-10
Site Preparation			
Develop Incubator Farm Program			
Solidify Key Farm Campus Positions			
Foster Coordination with Existing Local Efforts			
Develop Marketing & Identity Strategy			

Organizational Chart



Operating Budget

HR&A developed a 10-year operating budget for Farm Campus' realization. Existing staff can continue to support and contribute in meaningful ways, but bringing on additional staff—**particularly a dedicated Farm Manager**—will be essential as the first step as soon as possible (Phase 0).

Farm Campus Operating Model

	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
Staff Benefits	\$16,000	\$36,000	\$38,000	\$55,000	\$56,000	\$58,000	\$76,000	\$78,000	\$80,000	\$83,000
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	\$110,000	\$0	\$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
Food Facility Operating Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,000	\$54,000	\$74,000	\$96,000
Commercial Kitchen Operating Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,000	\$54,000	\$74,000	\$96,000
Healing Garden Operating Costs	\$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

Risk Mitigation

HR&A also identified potential risks to Farm Campus' success and outlined approaches to mitigate internal, political, and community-facing impacts.

Example Mitigation Approaches

- Maintaining community touchpoints and engagement
- Regular communication and transparency with community members and partners
- Generating buy-in from County leadership
- Hiring staff with relevant and diverse experiences

Next Steps

Recommendation: Farm Campus is a viable project that offers significant benefits to the community.

Next Steps

- Share findings from the feasibility study with community stakeholders
- Maintain momentum through near-term activation and programming (“low-cost, high-impact”)
- Recruit Community Steering Committee to guide next phases
- Identify and pursue additional funding opportunities
- Prepare to hire a Farm Manager in Year 1
- Transition from Feasibility Study to the County Capital Improvement Process Framework Plan (consultant selected; process underway)



Discussion

<https://www.durhamfarmcampus.org/>

Appendix

Operating Budget

Farm Campus Operating Model

	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 ¹	\$53,000	\$55,000	\$56,000	\$58,000	\$60,000	\$62,000	\$63,000	\$65,000	\$67,000	\$69,000
Farm Campus Program Manager ²	\$0	\$68,000	\$70,000	\$72,000	\$74,000	\$76,000	\$79,000	\$81,000	\$83,000	\$86,000
Education Coordinator ³	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$53,000	\$55,000	\$56,000	\$58,000	\$60,000	\$62,000	\$63,000
Food Hub/Commercial Kitchen Coordinator ⁴	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$53,000	\$55,000	\$56,000	\$58,000
Staff Benefits⁵	\$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 Equipment⁶	\$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
Contingency	\$10,000	\$0	\$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.) ⁷	\$28,000	\$29,000	\$30,000	\$31,000	\$32,000	\$33,000	\$34,000	\$35,000	\$36,000	\$37,000
Food Hub Operating Costs⁸	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,000	\$54,000	\$74,000	\$96,000
Commercial Kitchen Operating Costs⁹	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,000	\$54,000	\$74,000	\$96,000
Healing Garden Operating Costs¹⁰	\$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

Detailed Case Studies

- Intervale Center (Burlington, VT)
- Good Hope Farm (Cary, NC)
- Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) Community Farm (Alexander, NC)

Case Study #1: Intervale Center

Location: Burlington, VT

Size: 360 acres, 170 acres for incubator farm

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

History of the Property: Former city dump, established as a nonprofit to support community cleanup

Programming:

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



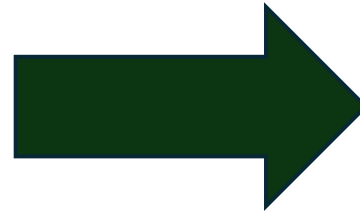
Case Study #1: Intervale Center

Intervale is one of the oldest farm incubator programs in the nation. In 2018, they shut down their formal farm incubator program and now offer farm business services.

“Traditional” Incubator Farm

Intervale farmers usually paid subsidized rates for 3-5 years. Shared equipment, water, and infrastructure.

Challenges: Farmers struggled to move farms. Building up soil was difficult and time-consuming. Graduates didn’t have the capital to invest in infrastructure and attract a new customer base.



Farm Business Services:

After shutting down the farm incubator program in 2018, Intervale still has 7-8 permanent tenants. They usually sign a 10-year lease with their tenants.

They have focused their resources into business planning and financial coaching for farmers. They also offer extensive support for farmers to access farmland.

Highlights for Farm Campus: It is important to consider what happens before and after an incubator participant comes to Farm Campus. After evaluating the existing gaps in the area, Farm Campus should determine what level of involvement + guidance they want to provide to their participants.

Case Study #2: Good Hope Farm

Location: Cary, NC

Size: 29 acres

Owner/Operator: Town of Cary (Owner) + Non-profit collaborative of 4 organizations (Piedmont Conservation Council, The Conservation Fund, Conservation Trust for North Carolina, North Carolina Community Development Initiative)

History of the Property: Historic family farm since the 1910s. Purchased in 2008 by the Town of Cary.

Programming:

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



Case Study #2: Good Hope Farm



- Hires City staff responsible for managing project as well as major infrastructure installation and renovations
- Supports the project with funding
- Handles program and services (water, garbage, electricity, etc.)



- Holds 8-year lease with the Town of Cary
- Employees farm manager for day-to-day operations



- Supports the project with funding
- Collaboratively employs one project manager to handle grant writing, marketing, other big picture duties



Implications for Farm Campus: Finding a nonprofit partner(s) with aligned vision could be a strategic move to distribute funding and operating responsibilities.

Case Study #3: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) Community Farm

Location: Alexander, NC

Size: 140 acres

Owner/Operator: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

History of the Property: Donation of 100 acres of farmland in 2010.

Programming:

- Farm Business Incubator Program
- Farmer Education Workshops
- Community Value-Added Kitchen
- Discovery Trail
- Stream Restoration Project
- Silvopasture Demonstration Project
- Food Forest
- Scottish heritage breed cattle



Case Study #3: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy Community Farm

The SAHC Community Farm offers a range of activities on-site, allowing them to unlock a variety of funding resources and partnerships.

Farm Incubator Program



- Requires at least 2+ years of direct farming experience
- Farmer Education Workshop series with WNC Farmlink

Demonstration Project(s)



- Educational site to demonstrate regenerative agriculture and soil conservation techniques

Commercial Kitchen



- Industrial kitchen to create value-added products

Recreation & Education



- Hosting volunteer & educational workshops
- Discovery Trail loop and restoration projects

Case Study #3: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy Community Farm



STAFF

Community Farm Manager

- Manages day-to-day operations on the Community Farm
- Coordinates commercial kitchen use
- Handles on-site tours

Events and Wedding Coordinator

- Coordinates wedding and on-site events on the Community Farm

Other SAHC Staff

- **Fundraising Staff:** Fundraising for the Community Farm
- **Education Staff:** Leads educational programming
- **Volunteer Staff:** Coordinates with outside organizations

Implications for Farm Campus: Separate from staff needed to manage the day-to-day site needs, a successful operations requires administrative support to coordinate the overall project, fundraising, as well as partnerships with external groups.