

# Durham County Farm Campus

Feasibility Study Final Presentation

May 5, 2025

HR&A +  endropogon



# **About Farm Campus**

# Mission

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



# 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

FARM CAMPUS  
**COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT  
REPORT**



# 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.



JULY 2024



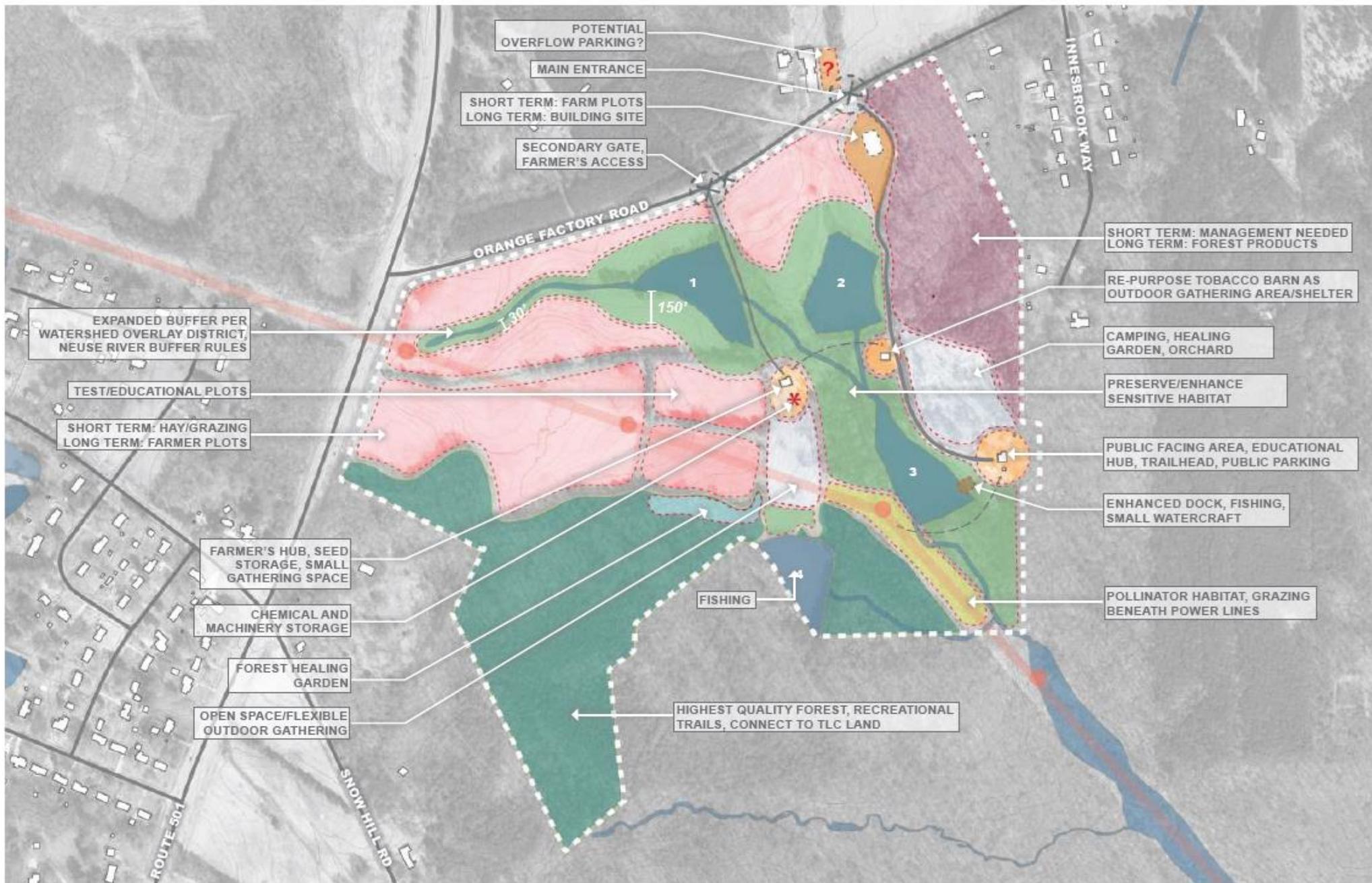
Prepared in partnership with  
**COSPERO CONSULTING**

# 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



- ### LEGEND
- Agricultural Use
  - Building Program
  - Enhanced Habitat
  - Group Recreational Programming
  - Agri-forestry
  - Healing Garden
  - Apiary/Foraging in utility ROW
  - Forest (Existing)
  - Pond (Existing)
  - Wetland
  - Entrance
  - Gate
  - Duke Energy Line & Tower
  - Well (estimated)
  - Existing Structure
  - Future Structure
  - Storage
  - Trail Connection



# Phase 0 | Farm Campus Foundations

## Year 0-1



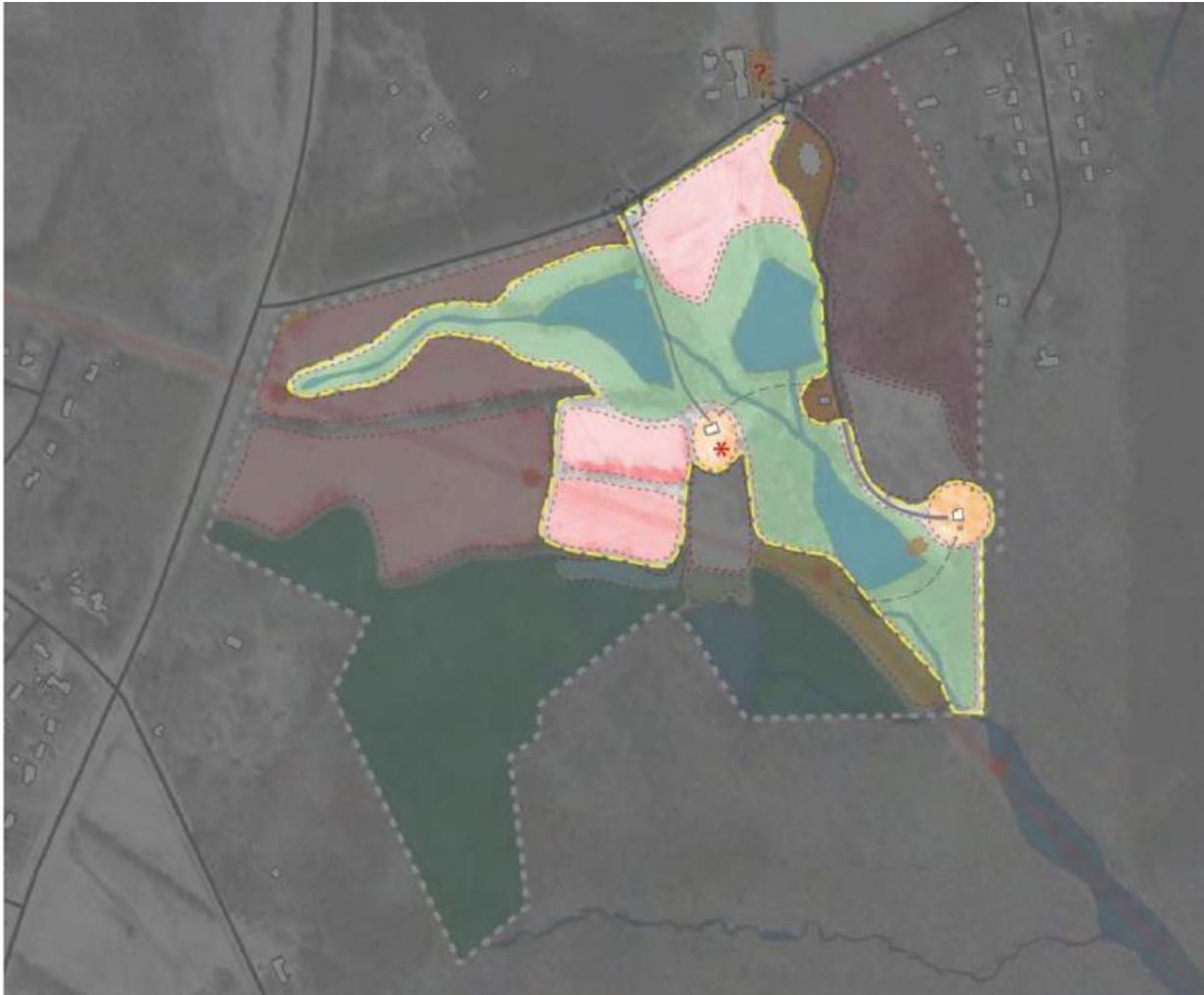
- Continue site preparation efforts
- Design and launch early community activation events
- Continue community engagement, get people on-site

***“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**

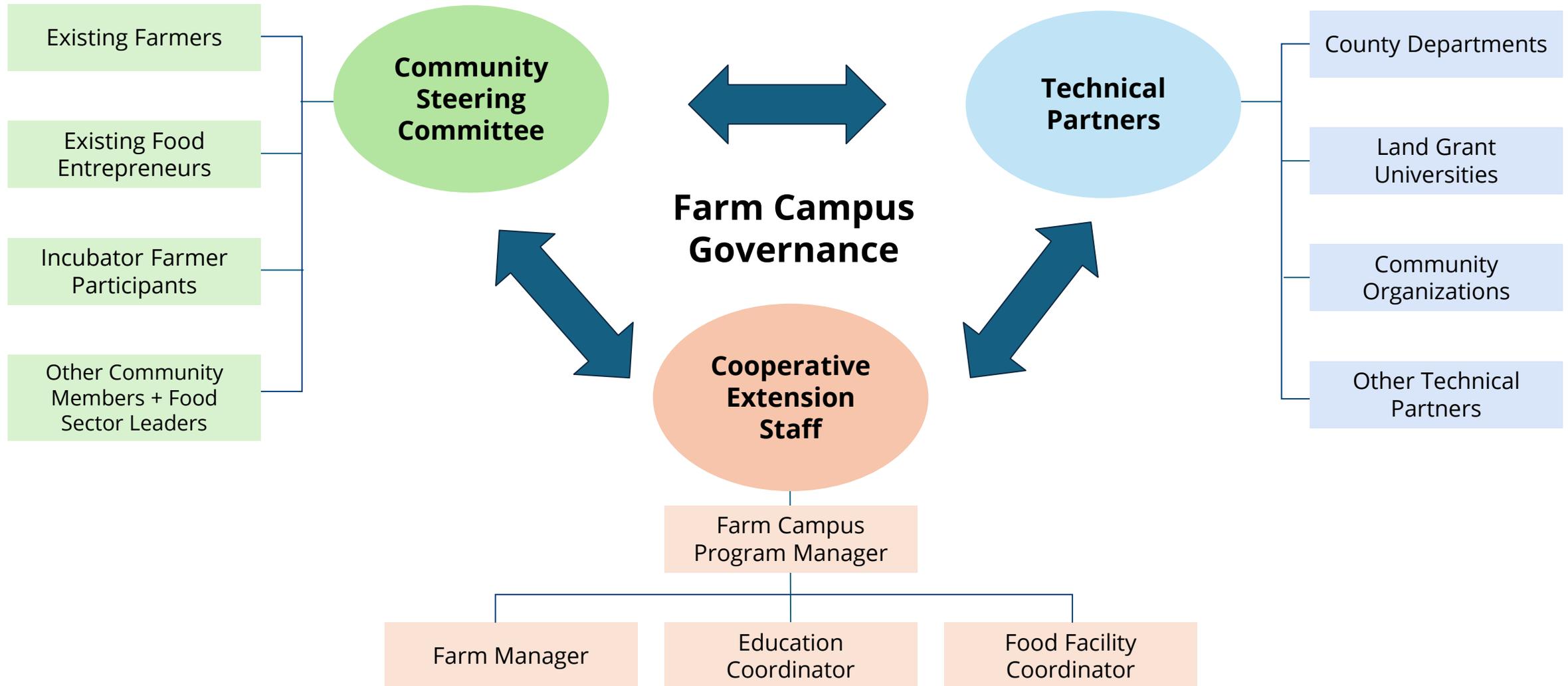
**Develop Incubator Farm Program**

**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
<b>Personnel</b>										
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
<b>Operating Costs</b>										
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
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$256,000</b>	<b>\$268,000</b>	<b>\$276,000</b>	<b>\$338,000</b>	<b>\$348,000</b>	<b>\$358,000</b>	<b>\$522,000</b>	<b>\$579,000</b>	<b>\$634,000</b>	<b>\$691,000</b>

# 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)

A scenic view of a pond or lake surrounded by trees, with a light green text box overlaid in the center. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding forest. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The sky is overcast with soft, grey clouds. The text box is a solid light green color and contains the word "Discussion" in a large, bold, black font, and a URL below it in a smaller, black font.

# 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
<b>Personnel</b>										
<b>Staff Salary</b>	<b>\$53,000</b>	<b>\$123,000</b>	<b>\$126,000</b>	<b>\$183,000</b>	<b>\$189,000</b>	<b>\$194,000</b>	<b>\$253,000</b>	<b>\$261,000</b>	<b>\$268,000</b>	<b>\$276,000</b>
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
<b>Staff Benefits<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>\$16,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$38,000</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>	<b>\$56,000</b>	<b>\$58,000</b>	<b>\$76,000</b>	<b>\$78,000</b>	<b>\$80,000</b>	<b>\$83,000</b>
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
<b>Operating Costs</b>										
<b>Incubator Farm</b>	<b>\$203,000</b>	<b>\$146,000</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>	<b>\$155,000</b>	<b>\$159,000</b>	<b>\$164,000</b>	<b>\$169,000</b>	<b>\$174,000</b>	<b>\$179,000</b>	<b>\$185,000</b>
<b>Start-Up Costs - Infrastructure and Equipment<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>\$110,000</b>	\$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
<b>Operating Costs</b>	<b>\$93,000</b>	<b>\$146,000</b>	<b>\$151,000</b>	<b>\$155,000</b>	<b>\$160,000</b>	<b>\$164,000</b>	<b>\$169,000</b>	<b>\$174,000</b>	<b>\$179,000</b>	<b>\$184,000</b>
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
<b>Food Hub Operating Costs<sup>8</sup></b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,000	\$54,000	\$74,000	\$96,000
<b>Commercial Kitchen Operating Costs<sup>9</sup></b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,000	\$54,000	\$74,000	\$96,000
<b>Healing Garden Operating Costs<sup>10</sup></b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$30,000	\$36,000	\$37,000	\$38,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$256,000</b>	<b>\$268,000</b>	<b>\$276,000</b>	<b>\$338,000</b>	<b>\$348,000</b>	<b>\$358,000</b>	<b>\$522,000</b>	<b>\$579,000</b>	<b>\$634,000</b>	<b>\$691,000</b>

# 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



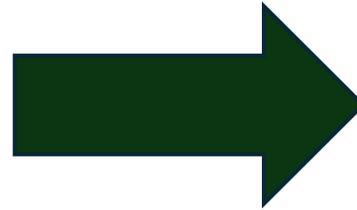
## Case Study #1: Intervale Center

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.