The Intervale Center

Strengthening Community Food Systems in Burlington, Vermont

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Overview

The Intervale
- Location, Land and Assets
- Our Approach
- Our Programs

Farm Incubation
- Introduction
- Program Structure
- Infrastructure
- Management
- Next steps

Discussion
The Intervale

• *Intervale* means “the land between”
• Intervale flood plain is 700 acres of land along the Winooski River
• Intervale Center owns or manages 350 acres of this land.
• Miles of recreation trails – bike, hike, ski, boat, fish
• Floodplain forests and wetlands protect water quality and maintain biodiversity
• Bordered by the Winooski River and ~1 mile from downtown
The Intervale - Vermont
The Intervale - Burlington
The Intervale and Our Work
Our Vision and Mission

**Vision**
We envision food systems that contribute to healthy communities.
~ Farms and food businesses are producing sustainable profits, products and livelihoods. ~ Land and water are healthy and protected. ~ People support and celebrate their communities agricultural producers. ~ We imagine the Intervalle Center as a living embodiment of this vision.

**Our mission is**
*to strengthen community food systems*

And our goals are to:
1. Enhance the viability of farming
2. Promote the sustainable use and stewardship of lands
3. Ensure community engagement in the food system
What is a Strong Food System

A sustainable community food system integrates production, processing, distribution, and consumption in ways that enhance the environmental, economic, social, and nutritional health of a particular place.

- Profitable Farms
- Access to Land
- Good Land Stewardship
- Diversified Production and Markets
- Local Processing/Storage/Distribution
- Eaters Who Value Local Food
- Local Waste Management Systems
- Public/Private/Social Partnerships
- Good Food Policy
How do we strengthen the food system?

**Stewardship** - Care and maintenance of 350 acres of land, infrastructure and it’s heritage.

**Conservation Nursery** - Growing plants for streambank restoration along farm fields.

**Farms Program** - Growing new farmers through farm incubation.

**Success on Farms** - Business planning for established farmers across Vermont.

**Food Hub** - Aggregating, marketing and distributing local food.

**Community Connections** – Engaging our community in support of sustainable agriculture.
Intervale History

500 BC-1700s CE Center of Abenaki Culture

1770s-1940s Family Farms

1940s-1980s Abandonment and Disuse
Intervale Transformation
Intervale Preservation
Intervale Programs
Intervale Compost Products
Healthy City Youth Farm
Success on Farms

Providing farm business planning statewide for existing farms.
Intervale Conservation Nursery

Growing trees and shrubs for planting forested buffers between rivers and farm fields
The Intervale Food Hub aggregates, markets and distributes local farm product through multi-farm CSA and wholesale.

We currently work with 25 farms to...

- Availability and Value of Local Food
- Environmental Sustainability
- Farm Production and Profitability
The Intervale Food Hub

Restored 1920’s dairy barn and complete Farmstead

1,600 sq ft temp controlled root cellar (12,800 cu ft)
8,040 cu ft walk-in cooler
1,000 sq ft packing space
1,000 sq ft office/conference space

Bathroom, wash sinks, heating/cooling, IT
The Intervale Food Enterprise Center
The Farms Program

Incubating New Farmers & Growing Food for Our Community
The Case for Growing New Farmers

- According to the 2007 Agricultural Census, the average age of farmers in the US is over 57 years old.

- In the northeast, there are twice as many farmers over the age of 65 as under 35.

- In 2008, the USDA predicted that 70% of all farmland in the United States will change hands in the next 30 years.

- At the same time, we are experiencing a surge in interest in local and organic food.

- Who will take over this land and fulfill the needs of this growing market?
History of Incubation

- Developed by Joe Mancuso in 1959 in Batavia, NY.
- He rented out a large industrial complex to multiple tenants and provided shared office space, assistance with capital acquisition, and business advice.
- Term *incubation* was jokingly coined, as one of his original tenants was a chicken hatchery.
- Since then, this concept has been applied widely to the development of industrial and science research parks that commercialize projects.
- Most incubators work with high tech innovators, focusing on new product development and companies with large growth potential.
Farm Incubation across North America

- Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA); Salinas, CA
- Farm Start; Guelph, Ontario, CA
- New Roots for Refugees; Kansas City, KA
- New Entry Sustainable Agriculture Project; Boston, MA
- New Farms for New Americans; Burlington, VT
- Prairie Crossing; Grayslake, IL
- Raft Swamp Farms; Antioch, NC
The Farms Program: Objectives

- Access to training
- Access to land
- Access to capital
- Access to markets
- Farm experience
- Reduce farmer isolation
- Produce food
“Being at the Intervale with...shared infrastructure and start-up guidance is a huge help. And being around other farmers who have a bunch of experience is the best.” – Bobby Young, Hens and Hands CSA
The Farms Program: Structure

**Incubator Farms: 1-3 years**
Intervale provides 20% cost share on Intervale fees yrs 1-3; none 3-5

**Mentor Farms: 6 plus years**
Farmers pay 100% of Intervale fees, offer volunteer time to the program and sponsor an Incubator Farm

**Next:**
- Policy development on becoming a mentor.
- Off-site Land Access and support
The Farms Program: Infrastructure

- Intervale Farmers Equipment Company, LLC was established in 2007 with grant support
- Owns 2 greenhouses, 4 tractors and various implements
- Rents to members at cost effective rates
- Purchases decided collaboratively
- Maintenance and repairs shared
- Farms build equity in LLC
- Oversight by Board of Directors (2 IC and 4 farms)

Next: transitioning further assets to IFEC
The Farms Program: Application and Enrollment

• Recruit from local colleges, word of mouth, occasional presentations & open houses.

• May 31 and Dec 31 application deadlines for following year.

• Staff review and development of business plan.
  – Business plan development (farm type, market, risk assessment, calendar, $$’s).
  – 1-3 years farm experience (but have never owned a farm).
  – Capacity to absorb risk.
  – Understanding of sustainable agriculture.

• Farmer review and recommendation to Land Committee.
  – Equipment compatibility, markets, traffic, community, financials.
The Farms Program: Management

- Recruitment and enrollment
- Business planning
- Lease negotiation and oversight
- Land, infrastructure and equipment
- Billing and budget management
- Fundraising
- Regulatory compliance
- Strategic planning
The Farms Program: Farm Numbers

- 11 farms, ~120 acres cultivated
- 53 full- and part-time jobs
- Farm size from 0.5 to 56 acres. Average size is 10.9 acres. Age from 1 to over 15 yrs.
- 618 total CSA shares & 5 farms contributed to Food Hub CSA.
- 8 of 11 attended at least 1 farmers’ market per week
- 5 identified as primarily wholesale
- Individual farm sales from less than $8k to nearly $325k.
- Over $1 million in gross sales combined.
The Farms Program: Participation history

- 44 farms have participated in the Farms Program
- 4 are current incubators
- 8 farms are current mentors in the Intervale
- 13 farms continue to farm outside the Intervale
- 4 known farm failures (3 by year 3, 1 at enterprise stage)
- 3 farm businesses sold to new owners
- 11 unknown

Next: Working with Vermont Land Trust on surveying five Farms Program grads placed on VLT lands to assess transition
Partnership Programs

An Entrepreneurial Approach to Small Scale Farming

For less than $1,000 a month you could be on the fast-track to becoming a sustainable farmer, farm manager, or food systems leader.

Farmer Apprentice Program
April 4, 2011 through November 1, 2011
To learn more visit: learn.uvm.edu/farmerapprentice

- Learn all the essentials of sustainable farming in just one growing season.
- Gain access to our network of leaders and organizations that are pioneering the internationally recognized Vermont food & agriculture industry.
- Learn to grow, manage, and sell through hands-on experience from farm-to-market.
- Focus on your unique needs and interests by developing a Personal Learning Plan.
- Explore the role of entrepreneurship and the latest innovations in small scale farming.
- UVM housing is available to program participants.

The University of Vermont

Partnership of the University of Vermont and the Intervale Center
New Farms for New Americans
Creating opportunity for refugee women & their families
The National Incubator Farm Training Initiative (NIFTI) provides support and technical assistance to emerging, land-based farm incubator projects across the country that serve beginning and aspiring farmers.

Our Services
• One-on-one technical assistance
• Webinars on topics of interest to incubators
• Three-day intensive Incubator Farm Field School in Oct. 2012
• Online resource center and training materials

Are you starting an incubator project or training new farmers?

Our Partners

For more information, contact:
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Ongoing Program Development

Infrastructure
- Mentor farms need increased infrastructure
- Hoop houses and FEMA
- Leasing ICP assets

Land
- Better water quality
- More land needed
- Improved access roads

Long Term Viability
- Transferability of leases
- Length of leases
- Livestock policies
- Expanded partnerships
Thank You
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