**Bringing the Forest into the City:**

**Creating a Community Food Forest for Saratoga Springs**

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**Abstract**

Although extensively practiced around the world and throughout history, forest gardening has recently become popular in the United States as seen through community projects such as the Beacon Food Forest in Seattle, Washington. Food Forests are low-maintenance, multifunctional, edible landscapes based on the principles of permaculture that can meet the needs of both people and ecosystems sustainably. We believe that the bio-regional Food Forest model is an appropriate, scalable solution to many environmental and societal problems. Thus, our purpose is to assess the feasibility of creating a Food Forest in the City of Saratoga Springs, New York. Our research questions focused on identifying the needs and values of city residents, asking whether a food forest could meet those needs, and identifying the opportunities and challenges towards implementation. We used a mixed methods approach of quantitative and qualitative research through online and written surveys and semi-structured interviews. Our survey results suggested that the values of city residents can be supported by the concept of a Food Forest. The majority of respondents also expressed interest in having access to a Saratoga Springs Food Forest. We were able to identify six possible locations for the Food Forest through the interview process, with the Jefferson apartments, Stonequist apartments, and Pitney Farm locations being the most favorable and feasible at this time. Our recommendations include creating a detailed design schematic through a democratic “design charrette” process, gaining support from the public and all stakeholders through social media outreach and personal connection, and fundraising through crowd-funding, grants, and donations from businesses and other organizations. We conclude that a Saratoga Springs Food Forest is desirable and feasible, and anticipate that our research and recommendations will guide future implementation. If appropriate action is taken, all who become involved will taste the fruits of their labor!

**Key Words**

*Agroecology, Community Gardening, Food Forest Garden, Food Security, Food Sovereignty, Landscape Design, Permaculture, Social Capital, Urban Agriculture*

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**1. Introduction**

In the face of climate change, communities are becoming tasked with the responsibility of adapting to a future of economic, social and ecological uncertainty. Integrated solutions with an eye towards resiliency are needed to address the wide array of challenges which lay ahead. Current prevailing paradigms of the global economy seek to maximize economic growth and productivity without regard to ecosystem resiliency or health and concurrently fail to recognize that the consumption and production of goods and services depend entirely on functional ecosystems(Liu, 2007). The pursuit of economic development has encouraged competition between businesses and individuals, creating income inequality and decreasing social capital and interconnectedness within communities (Costa & Kahn, 2002). Seemingly, a solution is needed that values financial, natural, human and social capital.

Previously tried integrated and multifunctional solutions applied at the community and landscape level are important to consider. They give strength and validity to holistic approaches that solve wide-ranging problems simultaneously. In Egleston Square, Boston, a neighborhood experiencing class and race divide and violence has restored a vacant lot into an Orchard. Following its inception, the Orchard has been seen as a statement of peace, managed by the community, uniting people across class and race divides and providing food for neighbors. The Egleston Community Orchard has consequently influenced many new community initiatives that seek to reclaim the streets and neighborhood as a “commons” (Kriegman, 2014). In contrast to the community approach, New Forest Farm, a commercial-scale enterprise in Viola, Wisconsin, has designed and implemented a perennial polyculture of multi-season food crops and livestock without chemical inputs and minimal labor, while restoring a previously degraded monoculture landscape. As this system of perennial plants and animals has aged, it has increased in productivity, resiliency, biodiversity and has provided many ecological services previously absent from the ecosystem. In addition to food, it produces biomass as fuel and fiber (Shepard, 2013). New Forest Farm demonstrates a possible solution that regenerates natural capital and provides financial capital. Another example in China shows the possibility of integrating ecosystem restoration and food production with community development. In a severely ecologically damaged area of the Loess Plateau region in Northern China, the government, engineers and local community worked together to restore the functionality of a landscape and eradicate poverty. The results of the initiative increased the ecological health and productivity of the land while yielding tremendous economic benefits to the community and offering the transition to a sustainable future compared to one of ecological collapse (Liu, 2007).

These solutions taken together show a possible route to societal well-being, economic productivity and ecological health and resilience for Saratoga Springs. The city of Saratoga Springs relies heavily on tourism as its main source of income during the summer season, as well as luxury-brand stores and local boutiques. Though the mean income for residents of Saratoga Springs was $62,766 in 2010, the poverty level from 2008 – 2012 was 7.5%, and 6.5% of residents relied on food stamps (United States Census Bureau, 2010)**.** Saratoga Springs’ dependence on external sources of income – tourism and national and international retail stores –highlights the need to create a local economy that is economically and ecologically sustainable, resilient to human and natural disturbances and relies more heavily on the creativity, skills and labor capacity of its citizens. Despite the need for economic opportunities that provide additional income, particularly to those living in poverty and relying on food stamps, activities are needed to supply local basic goods locally for sustenance: food, water, fuel and shelter. Producing goods for sustenance need not require the creation of economic enterprises. In this manner, the ability of those living in poverty to meet their basic needs could become feasible.

Our project purpose is to initiate the development of a multifunctional landscape that meets the diverse needs of the community while enhancing the health and abundance of the urban ecosystems of Saratoga Springs. As a tried and tested example of an integrated and multi-functional solution, we seek to incorporate perennial polyculture as a strategy that balances both social and environmental needs. As a multifunctional landscape, the space can serve many diverse functions including recreation, natural habitat and education as well. Central to the implementation of this project is the engagement of diverse community members and multiple stakeholders. Articulating the community’s needs and goals as well as understanding the supports and obstacles to the work is necessary. Nourishing public engagement, educating the community and its stakeholders of the opportunities that create social, human, natural and economic capital is of importance.

In addition to providing a sustainable source of food, fuel, medicine, and fiber, Food Forests are also capable of producing social, natural and economic capital, if the scale and context of a landscape permit it to do so. By implementing a Food Forest, we hope to provide a landscape model that sustainably produces food for the community, meets the diverse needs of residents, increases ecological literacy and builds social capital. A Food Forest landscape represents a “starting point” for citizens and students to understand how the disciplines of ecology, conservation, agriculture, business and design come together to show a holistic solution that addresses a wide array of problems. Though the size and scale of a proposed Food Forest in Saratoga Springs will be small compared to global sustainability initiatives, this project can at least provide a model to be tested, understood and replicated in other areas that are ready for large-scale implementation.

**2. Literature Review**

**2.1 Agroecology**

Agroecology is defined as “the ecology of food systems” (Francis et al., 2003, p. 100). Wezel and his colleagues gives agroecology a three-part definition: “a scientific discipline, agricultural practice, or political or social movement” (Wezel et al., 2009, p. 503). We will explore each of these definitions individually.

In the 1950s, agroecology was first used to describe the interactions between plants, animals, soil, and climate in a localized setting. Through the 1970s, the scientific discipline started to integrate the study of ecology and agriculture, which came as a partial response to the industrial Green Revolution, where agricultural production spiked worldwide. The discipline started taking on a holistic approach in the studying of ecology in agricultural systems. “Agroecology became defined as a way to protect natural resources, with guidelines to design and manage sustainable agroecosystems” (Wezel et al., 2009, p. 505). By 1987, G.R. Conway identified the four main properties of agroecosystems: productivity, stability, sustainability, and equity. Within the past decade, agroecology as a scientific discipline began to encompass the larger global food system and their interconnections. Today, agroecology is “the integrative study of the ecology of entire food systems, encompassing ecological, economic, and social dimensions,” or simply, “the ecology of food systems” (Francis et al., 2003, 100).

Agroecology as an agricultural practice evolved from various places around the world. Perhaps the most influential source was from Latin America in the 1980s. Techniques such as natural resource conservation, agrobiodiversity conservation, and water, livestock, erosion, and soil fertility management were utilized by nations such as Brazil, Cuba, and Costa Rica (Wezel et al., 2009). The integration of perennial plants into annual-based farms is a technique that helps increase soil health and provides stable yields. Inter-planting with perennials, a technique used by Malawian farmers, requires less fertilizer and adds nitrogen to the soil (Glover, Reganold, Cox, 2012). Perennial legume intercropping with heavy-feeding staple crops is a valuable strategic move that increases soil viability and sustainability due to the nitrogen-fixing capabilities of legumes (Wu & Wu, 2014). The integration of livestock grazing and crop production systems allow for the recycling of nutrients, which limits the necessity for nutrient inputs and provides valuable ecosystem services. Integrated silvopastoral systems, in which livestock are integrated into pastureland, act as a sustainable alternative to high-density livestock ranching, which often produces excess nitrogen and phosphorus (Peyraud, Taboada, & Delaby, 2014).

The potential for agroecology to restore degraded agricultural land is evident; research shows that a long-term maintenance regime (e.g. erosion control, water retention, and vegetation placement) can successfully sustain productivity in a previously degraded agricultural land (LaFevor, 2014). The Loess hilly region of China is just one example of a ten-year restoration project of a previously degraded agricultural terrace. The maintenance of wooded orchards in the Loess region allows for tremendous soil carbon sequestration, which in turn improves the health and quality of the soil (Qin, Xin, Yu, & Xiao, 2014). Many agroecological techniques are multi-functional in that they offer agricultural commodities and provide ecological services (Jordan & Warner, 2010). This multi-functionality of agricultural practices is a valued tenet of the agroecological field. The following techniques are just a few that facilitate carbon sequestration: reduction of tillage intensity and frequency, elimination of tillage, change in crop rotation, cover cropping in the winter, eliminating summer fallow, and adjusting grazing regimes (Shah & Venkatramanan, 2009).

The political and social movements of agroecology differ by location, but are all directly related to sustainability, social equality, environmentalism, sustainable agriculture, and rural development movements. In the USA, agroecology “was first explored by scientists concerned with environmental pollution” from industrial agriculture (Wezel et al., 2009, p. 506). The environmental movement was spearheaded by Rachel Carson’s then controversial book *Silent Spring* which warned the public about synthetic pesticides that persist and accumulate in the environment and in organisms. In contrast, Latin America’s agroecology movement was not based on a response to environmental toxins, but on the “sovereignty and autonomy of the local populations” (p. 507). Today, Latin America’s agroecological movement places an emphasis on indigenous knowledge, the integration of that knowledge, and the empowerment of agrarian and peasant communities (Altieri & Toledo, 2011).

More recently, agroecology has emerged as a “systems-based” field of participatory science. Unlike twenty-first century technology transfer, agroecology can only be “extended through networks of participatory social learning” (Warner, 2008, p. 754). This means that agroecology, as a discipline, practice, and movement, is best propagated through education and experiential learning. Many farmers and educators are now focusing on resource efficiency and system resilience rather than high-production alone, as well as life-cycle analyses and long-term thinking (Francis et al., 2011). Agroecology, which includes a strong practice of sustainable agriculture, is a social process that requires service and community-based learning to best spread its fundamental principles. This phenomenon directly relates to the Latin American agro-ecological movement in which the passing down of indigenous knowledge has ensured local food sovereignty and empowerment.

**2.2 Permaculture**

Permaculture is defined by co-originator David Holmgren as “consciously designed landscapes which mimic the patterns and relationships found in nature, while yielding an abundance of food, fibre and energy for provision of local needs” (Holmgren, 2004). Among the more mainstream approaches to sustainable food systems, permaculture offers unique approaches to the creation of ecologically viable agroecosystems. Permaculture can function as a framework for integrating knowledge and practice across disciplines to support researchers, stakeholders and land users (Ferguson, 2013). Permaculture utilizes a place-based design approach to offer solutions that fit the needs and goals of a specific area, culture, region, or climate and even microclimate (Holmgren, 2004). Permaculture can make complex socio-ecological concepts accessible and contribute to the ecological literacy of individuals, communities and land users (Ferguson, 2013; Orr, 1992).

For the purpose of our study, we focus on the theory of perennial polyculture for the implementation of a “Food Forest” in Saratoga Springs. Among the practices permaculture practitioners support, perennial polyculture is widely discussed as a technique that seeks to create perennial food systems which mimic the structure and function of forest and savannah ecology (Jacke & Toensmeier, 2005; Shepard, 2013; Weiseman, Halsey & Ruddock, 2014). Perennial polyculture, or edible forest gardens, are intentionally designed communities of mutually beneficial plants and animals intended for the production of food, fuel fiber, fodder and medicine (Jacke & Toensmeier, 2005). An established and mature edible forest garden replaces the need for intensive inputs of labor and chemicals with self-produced fertility, pest protection, and resilience from within its own structure through functional interconnections between species (2005). As edible forest gardens mimic forest ecology, they take on the characteristics of forests: high species and genetic diversity, species habitat protection, relatively consistent nutrient levels, low management requirements (once established), no pollution, carbon sequestration, hydrologic cycle facilitation and ground-water aquifer recharge capacity, and the building of soil fertility and organic matter (2005).

To facilitate the creation of an edible forest garden, a design process is often followed which enables stakeholders to realize their goals, in relation to the characteristics of a space, and implement them. Jacke and Toensmeier outlines this process as goals articulation, site analysis and assessment, design concept development, design, implementation and evaluation (2005). In addition, a design charrette can be used as a tool to incorporate community goals, ideas and visions for a space. A design charrette involves, “developing a creative design solution, often in an intensive participatory or group format, within a shortened period ranging from one day to two weeks” (Walker & Seymour, 2007). A design charrette can also be used as a pedagogical tool to teach community members about sustainability and ecological principles (2007).

An important objective of permaculture design is to create systems that require as little labor, management, and inputs as possible. By investing capital, resources, and labor during the initial setup of a system, time and energy can be saved in the long-term. Systems should be designed for self-management and self-regulation. Though permaculture systems can initially be more work than conventional agricultural systems, over time a community of plants and animals become independent of external inputs and the system is able to supply its own fertility, organic matter, weed management, and irrigation (Tippet, 1994). To create self-maintaining, low-input and high-yielding systems, a designer relies on their understanding and observation of the natural processes that govern a place or ecosystem and applies it to accelerate and “steer” the ecological succession, while meeting the articulated goals (Falk, 2013).

**2.3 Community Role**

Our conception of the edible forest garden results from the intersection of community gardening, agroecology, and permaculture. Community gardens in the United States were first implemented in the 1890’s to ameliorate poverty and unemployment. They became known as Liberty Gardens during World War I, Relief Gardens during the Great Depression, and Victory Gardens during World War II. After the 1960’s, poverty and unemployment mitigation were replaced by social activism as the driving force behind community gardening (Henderson & Hartsfield, 2009). Today, growing food in an urban setting is used as a means of subsistence survival in the developing world, while the developed world uses it primarily as an ideology (Mok et al., 2013).

The modern local food movement has been brought to public attention by popular books like as Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation*, Michael Pollan’s *Omnivore’s Dilemma,* and by documentaries like Robert Kenner’s *Food, Inc.* Community gardens can supply quality produce at low costs (Henderson & Hartsfield, 2009). They combat “food insecurity, environmental degradation, and urban disinvestment” (Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014). Community gardens can even sequester carbon, improve physical and mental health, and improve the aesthetics of a community (Mok et al., 2013). Buying local food and growing food locally have the ability to strengthen community networks, establish food security, and reconnect citizens with nature. Urban agriculture also boosts the self-reliance of a city by increasing food security. Local food industry jobs, community empowerment, greater property values, and economic security are all results of local self-reliance (Mok et al., 2013).

A city-run community garden is able to cultivate the relationship between citizens and their municipality. If a community garden is poorly implemented, the public’s trust can be shattered (Henderson & Hartsfield, 2009). A municipality is only one possible channel for implementation of a community garden. Institutions, land trusts, and community groups can also create and own community gardens (Mok et al., 2013).

Social networks are a crucial mechanism for grassroots community organizing. Therefore, community garden development relies heavily on local networks and groups (Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014). The implementation of a Saratoga Food Forest is reliant on compliance with not only the Saratoga Springs city government (if we choose to use that channel), but also with non-profit organizations like Sustainable Saratoga and Saratoga PLAN.

Werkheiser and Noll provide a comprehensive overview of the local food movement. Instead of viewing the benefits and shortcomings of local food as one movement, they divide it into three sub-movements: individual-focused, systems-focused, and community-focused sub-movements. The individual-focused sub-movement is what is commonly thought of as the “local food” movement. Its ideology is that food is a *product*, with economic value. Individuals, through their purchasing power in the economy, can chose to buy locally grown food and thus influence the food industry. The problem with the individual-focused approach is that it is exclusionary to groups who cannot afford to purchase grass-fed beef or farmers market produce. Instead of viewing the food industry as a system, the individual-focused approach believes that purchasing the locally grown options at Wal-Mart will create change. The systems-focused approach believes that change is made through politics and policy, and working with organizations or institutions. This sub-movement is correct in promoting organizational involvement over choice of the individual consumer, and placing more blame on the industry rather than consumers. The systems-focused sub-movement fails in that it only understands food as an economic commodity. Corporate producers will still degrade the environment by seeking to maximize food production. The systems approach is deeply tied to the food security movement, which “integrates communities into neoliberal globalization,” and because the “globalized economic system has long been criticized for its inequity and injustice against poorer people, indigenous communities, minorities, and other marginalized groups,” this channel of creating change is not ideal (Werkheiser & Noll, 2014). The community-focused sub-movement is truly local. It differs from the previous movements in that it views food holistically instead of as a commodity, and it views people as community members instead of consumers. This approach involves the strengthening and building of relationships in a community in order to create a sustainable, closed loop system. By treating food as a fundamental part of community life, its true value is represented. Each unique community has its own culture and own food needs. A community-focused approach brings people closer to their food, which hopefully educates them about the faults of the industrial agriculture system. By dissecting the local food movement, Werkheiser and Noll (2014)support an argument for implementing a Food Forest Garden in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Mok et al. assert that “without appropriate mechanisms of governance, urban agricultural activities may develop inefficient and uncoordinated ways” (2014). Henderson and Hartsfield echo this concern, stating that “for a city-run community garden program to be successful, the target community must trust that the city will support the program” (2009). However, if the program is poorly implemented, the “community garden program is likely to backfire” and citizens will lose trust in the municipality. Regardless of the organization chosen to lead the Food Forest, great care must be taken to ensure continued success of the project so that the ideologies of local food, agroecology, and permaculture are not tarnished in the eyes of the community (Mok et al., 2014).

While the concept of a Food Forest presents many benefits to the Saratoga Springs community, “overemphasizing the benefits of urban agriculture without regard to its downsides is dangerous and risks marginalizing [the urban agriculture] movement back to its perceived hippie roots” (Mok et al., 2014). The Food Forest has the potential to bring food security and social capital to Saratoga Springs, but one small Food Forest will not immediately revolutionize the food consumption patterns of an entire city, nor will it immediately solve social inequities. The Food Forest is just one step towards solving these problems.

Urban agroecology has the potential to empower low-income areas in Saratoga Springs. In a study of the international farmer’s movement La Via Campesina, the ideas of food sovereignty are articulated for the peasants of Mexico:

This place-bound identity, that of ‘people of the land,’ reflects the belief that they have the right to be on the land. They have the right and obligation to produce food. They have the right to be seen as fulfilling an important function in society at large. They have the right to live in viable communities and the obligation to build a community (Desmarais, 2007, pg. 140).

Food sovereignty helps those who have little realize their individual and rights as they relate to the production of food. Everyone has the right to partake in food sovereignty and develop a place-bound identity, effectively enriching their local communities. Because low-income individuals lack the mobility of the wealthy, it is veritably more important for them to connect with their immediate surroundings and community.

**3. Methods**

A mixed-methods approach was used to collect our research data. A survey, both physical and online, was designed to assess the needs and values of the people in the Saratoga Springs community and gauge how residents perceive the concept of a Food Forest and multifunctional landscape. This data supplied both quantitative and qualitative results. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was utilized to assess the residence location distribution of survey-takers across the city to spatially visualize our respondent sample. Interviews were conducted with experienced permaculturists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government officials, and Saratoga Springs residents. Through the interviews, we sought to gain insight about the potential obstacles, supports, ideas, and general considerations for implementing a community multifunctional landscape or Food Forest within city limits. Four central questions guided our research:

1. What are theneeds and value**s** of residents and stakeholders in Saratoga Springs?
2. Can a multifunctional landscape or Food Forest meet those needs?
3. What are the opportunities and supports for implementation of a Food Forest?
4. What are the challenges and obstacles in implementing a Food Forest?

**3.1 Population and Setting**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 2013 population estimate for Saratoga Springs was 27,315 people, of which 7.9% were below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The city of Saratoga Springs is a fairly affluent city whose economy relies on tourism from the race tracks, casinos, and various arts venues. It is also home to Skidmore College, a liberal-arts academic institution, which draws in travelers from around the country. The life of the city is centered around its main street, Broadway, where there are numerous restaurants, boutiques, hotels, and other shops. Saratoga Springs also has a farmers’ market and several small farms in the surrounding region.

In recent years the Saratoga Springs community has been confronted with different future development options. The city is faced with the dilemma of preserving green space or expanding infrastructure to accommodate tourists and visitors in the summer season. The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Planning Committee has contributed to the city by offering a vision that supports the protection of green space while accommodating economic growth in the city.

**3.2 Case Study**

Case studies provide a comprehensive view of the variety of approaches, obstacles, and benefits of a Food Forest. To understand the different processes utilized by Food Forests within the region, we examined a case study of a newly implemented Food Forest in the small town of Wendell, Massachusetts. Our understanding gleaned from this case study can be applied to the planning of the Saratoga Springs Food Forest.

**3.3 Survey Instrumentation and Data Collection**

Our survey, entitled “Saratoga Springs Sustainability Survey” was designed to gain information about residents’ views on an ecologically-sound, multi-functional landscape, that utilizes sustainable practices (i.e. composting, rainwater harvesting), produces food sustainably and uses community participation, in order to gauge the type of public support that exists within the city. The survey was also designed to assess residents’ values of their food, environmental issues, and connection to community to better understand their thoughts, needs, and desires. The survey used a likert scale from one to five, and contained statements in which the participant agrees with or disagrees. Quantifiable results were received using the likert scale, and write-in-responses were included to gather other numeric and verbal information not easily obtained from the likert-style questions. An online survey was distributed through an online survey platform, Qualtrics. Participants answered the same questions, with the addition of a short video that further explained the concept of a Food Forest. The online survey was distributed through a Qualtrics web-link and made accessible through flyers posted in downtown Saratoga Springs.

The first question of the survey asked the respondent to identify the neighborhood in which they live on a map provided. Neighborhood areas were mapped by “block group” subdivisions within the city of Saratoga Springs as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Under the map, definitions of the terms Food Forest and multifunctional landscape were given. The online survey provided an additional video. After gaining familiarity with the concept of a Food Forest, the respondent then answers questions about their interests and opinions on a potential Saratoga Food Forest on a likert scale. Next, the respondent is asked three qualitative questions on community participation, percentage of food grown, and the environmental impacts of their lifestyle. The last segment of the survey contained statements with a likert scale again, but with a general focus on food, community, and sustainability. At the end, a space was provided for questions and comments, and for e-mail addresses if they were interested in our project.

The survey was distributed on multiple occasions in the city of Saratoga Springs during street festivals, public NGO meetings (Sustainable Saratoga), and various public events. After a test trial on January 31, 2015 at Chowderfest, a popular city festival, we edited the survey’s structure and format and condensed the content to a single double-sided page.

**3.4 Interview Instrumentation and Data Collection**

Permaculturists, local NGOs, government officials, and Saratoga Springs residents were interviewed to gain an understanding of the complexities involved in establishing a community multifunctional landscape. Understanding the needs, interests and goals of each stakeholder and their insights into the political, economic, and social obstacles or supports is necessary for the future implementation and sustainability of this project. The interviews contained a semi-structured format that included several formulated questions; the semi-structured format allowed for opportunities to ask previously unconsidered questions based on comments made by the interviewee. Interviews were conducted with a voice-recorder, a note-taker, and were subsequently transcribed for further analysis.

**3.5 Data Analysis**

Through in-person and online surveys, a broad understanding was gained about the views, needs and opinions of residents related to potential community participation and interest in multifunctional landscapes and Food Forests in Saratoga Springs.

In our interviews, we gained insight into the social, economic and political obstacles and supports in implementing a multifunctional landscape. We also received recommendations and ideas that could potentially aid the process of implementation.

In our GIS analysis, we identified potential sites for a Saratoga Food Forest Garden, and made note of their locations relative to neighborhoods in the community. We also investigated zoning restrictions for the feasibility of implementations.

**3.6 Limitations to Research**

In considering case studies of Food Forests and multifunctional landscapes, it is important to realize that systems occurring in cities with different zoning policies and community needs may not be relevant within the context of Saratoga Springs. Each Food Forest is specific to location and surrounded by a unique set of circumstances.

Limitations to data collection through random surveys include receiving data that may not be representative of the Saratoga Springs population. There could be survey bias. Random surveys do not target people who may in the future decide to intentionally engage with the landscape. Targeted surveys do seek to understand the views of people who may engage with the proposed landscape, though are not representative of the larger city population. The amount of collected data was severely limited by time constraints, and cold temperatures as well.

Though semi-structured interviews yielded helpful information, interviewees needed prior knowledge of ecological landscape practices and sustainable agriculture to be able to answer some of the questions. In some cases, participants were capable of answering questions and in other cases participants were not entirely informed and attempted to answer questions to their fullest.

**4. Results & Discussion**

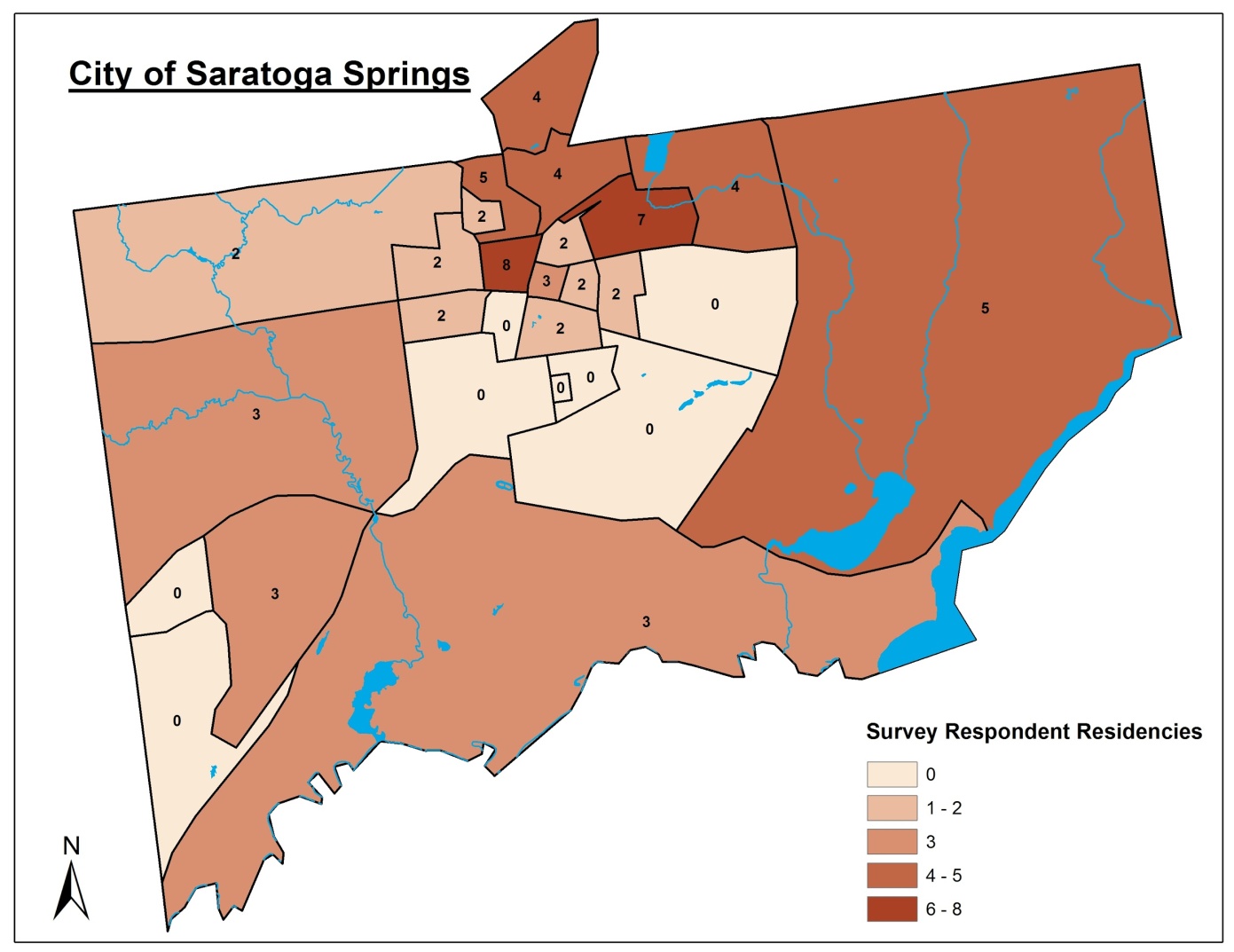
**4.1 Data Findings**

Data was collected through a written and online survey which sought to gauge the values, needs and behaviors of Saratoga Springs residents with regards to sustainability practices. The survey introduced the concept of a “Food Forest” and a “Multifunctional Landscape” to participants and also requested feedback to determine if such practices would be desirable, appropriate, and beneficial if applied in Saratoga Springs. A total of 80 survey responses were collected: 33 online responses through Qualtrics and 47 paper responses.

A representative sample of the survey respondents can be observed through this map of Saratoga Springs (Figure 1). The displayed data shows the density distribution of respondent residencies, providing a visual representation of our respondent sample (N = 65).

Figure 1.

Density distribution map of survey respondent residencies



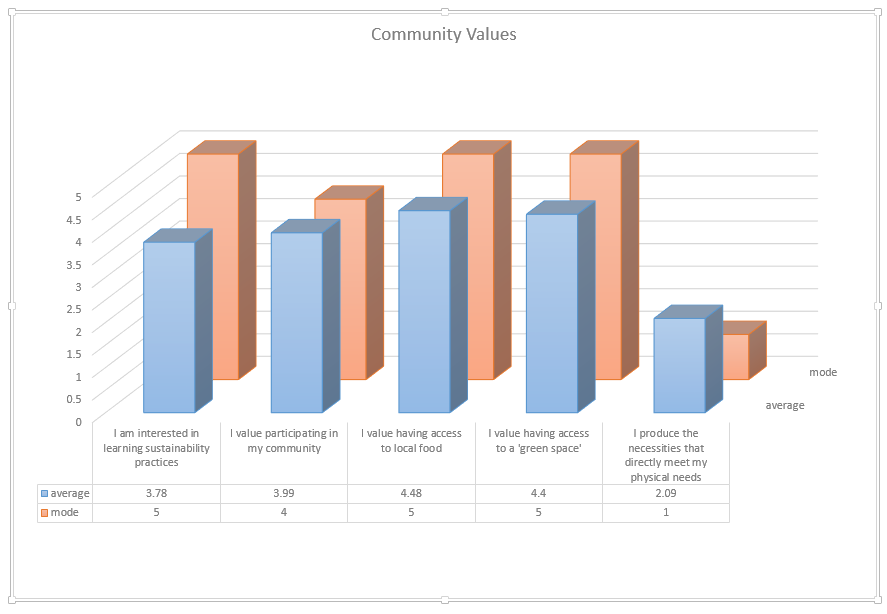
Our first research question (What are the needs and values of residents, groups and stakeholders in Saratoga Springs? Can a multifunctional Food Forest or multifunctional landscape meet those needs?) is divided into two parts. Our survey was therefore designed in two parts: Figure 2 shows the values that Saratoga residents hold about sustainability, community engagement, green space, and local agriculture. Figure 4 shows the reactions of Saratoga residents to the idea of a Food Forest.

Results from Figure 2 tell us that a Food Forest would potentially meet the needs of Saratoga residents. For “I am interested in learning sustainability practices (i.e. composting, rainwater harvesting, supporting native plant species, energy efficiency, avoiding plastic products)” the average of the responses was 3.78 on the likert scale, with a mode of 5. For “I value participating in my community” the average of the responses was 3.99, with a mode of 4. For “I value having access to local food” the average of the responses was 4.48, with a mode of 5. For “I value having access to ‘green space’” the average response was 4.4, with a mode of 5. All averages measured above the midline measure of 2.5.

The responses to these four questions confirm that there is community interest in designing a Food Forest in Saratoga Springs. A Food Forest could be used by educators to teach residents sustainability practices, provide them with an outlet to participate in their community, give them access to local food, and provide access to a green space. For the question “I produce the necessities that directly meet my physical needs” the average of the responses was 2.09, with a mode of 1. This tells us there is a lack of self-sufficiency among Saratoga Springs residents. A Food Forest could ameliorate this situation by being utilized as a teaching tool to teach residents how to produce their own necessities (i.e. food, compost, etc.). Responses to this survey point to a desire for community-based sustainable agriculture in Saratoga Springs, and that there would be sustained community interest in a Food Forest.

Figure 2.

Community values



If there is a need for community based sustainable agriculture, would a Saratoga Food Forest meet that need? Figure 4 shows the results of the other half of our survey. Before these questions, a short description of a Food Forest and Multifunctional Landscape was provided (Fig. 3). For the question, “I'm interested in having access to a Food Forest that grows food sustainably and serves many community and ecosystem needs,” the average response was 4.16 on the likert scale, with a mode of 4. For “I think a community Food Forest would (in part) be an appropriate, local solution to bigger environmental problems” the average response was 4.13 with a mode of 4. “I think a Food Forest or community space will bring my community together” received an average response of 3.82 and had a mode of 4. For “I like the idea of an open, multifunctional landscape that welcomes the whole community” the average was an impressive 4.27 and the mode was 5. “I’m interested in collecting/harvesting food from a community Food Forest” received an average of 3.62 and a mode of 4. For the question “A Food Forest is a good educational tool for all ages” the average was an impressive 4.37 and the mode was 5. The question “I would be interested in volunteering or contributing to a community Food Forest” received an average response of 3.51 and a mode of 4. “I would be interested in managing a community Food Forest” only received an average of 2.44 with a mode of 1.

The results of these eight questions presents the evidence that a multifunctional Food Forest landscape is desirable to Saratoga Springs residents. The responses towards the idea of implementing a Saratoga Food Forest were overwhelmingly positive, except for the question about management. This is not surprising or worrying, as only a small number of people would be needed for formal leadership roles. Most respondents did however express interest in volunteering or contributing. The results also indicate a strong interest in the concept of a community-accessible Food Forest and the faith that it would be an appropriate solution to larger environmental problems, and be an effective educational tool.

Figure 3.

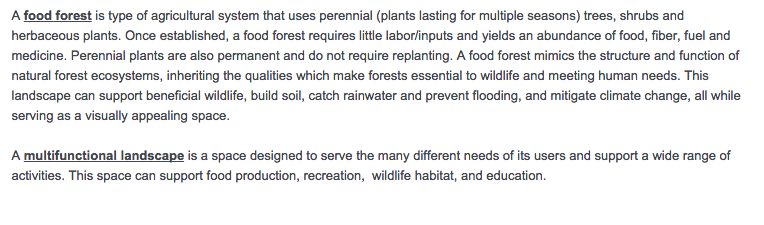
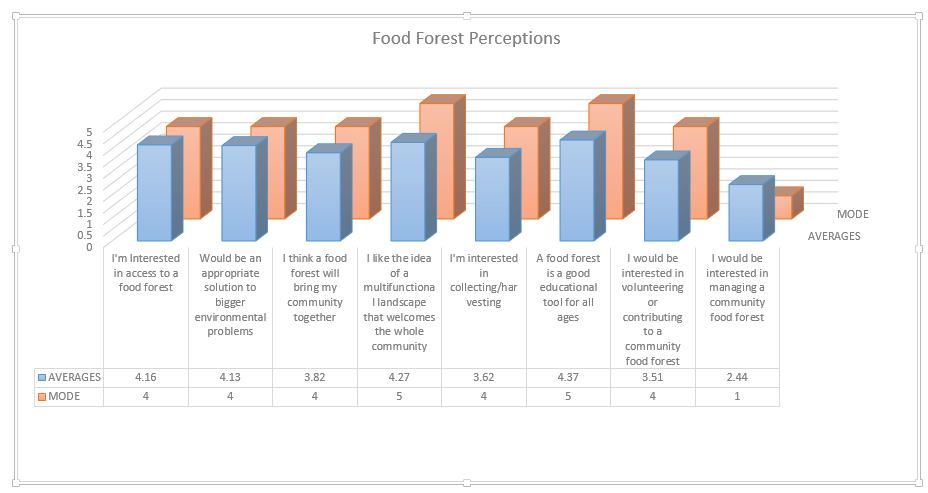
Food Forest description

Figure 4.

Food Forest perceptions

From our survey, we also learned that most Saratoga Springs residents do not produce any of their own food. For the question “I grow \_\_\_\_% of the food consumed for myself and my family” the mode was 0, and other results were negligible (between 1%-5%), except for outlier respondents who reported 71%, 25%, and two who reported 20%. By learning permaculture practices through volunteering and becoming involved with the Saratoga Food Forest, Saratoga Springs residents could increase the percentage of food they produce for themselves, both through the Food Forest and in their own backyards and homes.

The final question at the end of our survey was “If you have any questions or wish to participate in our project, please write your e-mail address.” Out of our 80 respondents, 11 gave us their email. These respondents are important stakeholders, and their continued support is needed for any future facilitation of this project.

**4.2 Qualitative Findings**

Through our semi-structured interviews we received feedback about potential interest in in a Food Forest in the city of Saratoga Springs. Interviews pointed to potential opportunities and supports for implementation, challenges and obstacles for implementation, and effective methods for long-term success.Table 1 displays the all the stakeholders that were interviewed in our research process.

Table 1.

Stakeholder List

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Individual** | **Organizations/Position** | **e-mail** |
| Lisa DePiano | Permaculture Designer, Teacher, Practitioner; UMass & Yestermorrow Design/Build School, professor; Mobile Design Lab, founder | ldepiano@gmail.com |
| Scott Kellogg | Radix Ecological Sustainability Center, Albany, NY, founder; Austin, Texas’ Rhizome Collective, co-founder; Ecological Designer; Teacher; Activist | sk@radixcenter.org |
| Glenn Herlihy | Beacon Food Forest, co-founder | g.herlihy@beaconfoodforest.org |
| Eliza Hollister | Skidmore Community Garden, manager; Skidmore Student | ehollist@skidmore.edu |
| Rob Curry | Shelters of Saratoga |  |
| Marilyn Rivers | City of Saratoga Springs, Risk and Safety Management, Director of Risk and Safety, Safety and Compliance Officer | marilyn.rivers@saratoga-springs.org |
| Susan Barden | City of Saratoga Springs, Planning Department, Senior Planner | susan.barden@saratoga-springs.org |
| John Hirliman | City of Saratoga Springs, Recreation Department, Administrative Director | john\_hirliman@saratoga-springs.org |
| Tom Denny | Sustainable Saratoga, boardmember; Urban Forestry Project, head; Comprehensive Planning Committee, member | tomdenny2010@gmail.com |
| Casey Holzworth | NYS Parks, Regional Natural Resource Steward; Saratoga PLAN, Stewardship Committee; Sustainable Saratoga, boardmember; Comprehensive Planning Committee, member | casey.holzworth@parks.ny.gov |
| Paul Feldman | Saratoga Springs Housing Authority, Director | pfeldman@saratogaspringspha.org |
| Michael Kilpatrick | Kilpatrick Family Farm, Co-Owner | info@kilpatrickfamilyfarm.com |

**4.2-1 Case Study**

To understand the process of creating a Food Forest, we visited Wendell, Massachusetts where we volunteered our time planting saplings in the new Wendell Food Forest. We gained ‘hands-on’ knowledge of permaculture techniques used in Food Forests, including building swales and hugelkultur mounds. In addition to understanding the technical aspect involved in implementation, we interviewed University of Massachusetts professor and permaculturist Lisa DePiano, as well as Trevor Kearns, a board member of Wendell’s Open Space Committee, and Betsy Ames, Chair of the Energy Committee in the town’s Food Security Project. We inquired about the political and social processes that occurred during the decision-making stage and how the interests and concerns of community members and stakeholders were addressed. Lisa DePiano explained the democratic design process:

...So we did a pretty thorough process in the beginning where we had a public design charette. So we invited key stakeholders in the community to come together and there were like 15-20 people and we did a day-long charette where people went over: what are their goals and visions for the project, and we spent some time talking together as the different stakeholders what that was, and then established some goals and a vision statement around it. And then we spent the afternoon out on site doing some site analysis work and then from that the design was created. So we worked with the town and I think that helped the project be more successful with the public because people were involved from the get-go (DePiano, personal communication, 2015).

Due to the siting of the town’s community garden next to town hall, sufficient community interest in sustainable agriculture, and ample space on a nearby undevelopable slope, town hall became a prime site for the new Food Forest. As a small town, Wendell’s population is under 1,000, and almost all of the volunteers working on the Food Forest were involved in the city’s town hall.

In our subsequent discussions with stakeholders who had minimal experience in landscape design, dissimilar to Wendell community’s experience, the expression and concept of a “Food Forest” seemed to resonate more than the concept of a “Multifunctional Landscape”. This may be because a Food Forest is a specific representation of a Multifunctional Landscape. Thus, in our interviews we decided to use the phrase “Food Forest” while also maintaining that such a landscape performs many functions for different users.

**4.2-2 Political Hurdles and Opportunities**

Many of our interview subjects expressed their concerns while also mentioning potential opportunities for implementation of a Food Forest in Saratoga Springs. Further, we found respondents expressing uncertainty towards how the city and other stakeholders would respond to the creation of such an unfamiliar type of land-use.

Casey Holzworth, the Regional Natural Resource Steward and employee of NY State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation,expressed concern about successfully implementing a Food Forest in Saratoga Springs. Casey’s experience with political matters on ‘land-use issues’ in the city allowed us to gauge the opinions of the City Council toward in-city agriculture and multifunctional green spaces. When asked about the City Council’s perceptions about the actions outlined in the 2014 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan Draft (i.e. backyard agriculture, creation of green space, etc.), he expressed uncertainty:

I honestly don’t know what their perceptions are, I don’t think they’re opposed to it. There was a small community opposition but it was the same people who wanted everything to stay the same in the Beekman area… I think their fears are way overblown and they’re taking these things to the utmost extreme possibility to say that nothing should be allowed to happen. Maybe some person in the future would have some variance to have 1,000 geese or chickens next to them which would certainly not be in the spirit of what’s being discussed, but you can imagine some far out scenario where someone paid someone in council off to do something funky. I tried to make it clear that I think that’s what’s happening and I don’t think council members are too concerned with it. I’ve heard some stories where it’s been difficult to do some things in the city, growing your own food kind of stuff which should be really easy, and I guess my point of it was the city should not be a roadblock and in all actuality should make it easier for people to do these sort of things, not more difficult. (Holzworth, personal communication, 2015).

Although having a thousand geese or chickens is extreme as a form of land-use, this concern is not without merit. Resident complaints are taken seriously by City Council. In another example, he explains how bureaucratic measures and requirements have been a hindrance toward actions of local sustainability, seemingly in line with the Comprehensive Plan:

The one that comes to mind is a couple years ago where somebody, I can’t remember exactly what road they lived on, but they were in the Eastern Plateau area. They had a small farm and wanted to put up a farm stand. They like, wanted to put up a booth. And they had to go through the full business process of site plan review, come to the City Council, pay your $250 to like, talk about it and all these processes. It was a farm stand! There’s literally like a shed on the side of the road, this is not craziness, it shouldn’t be that difficult (Holzworth, personal communication, 2015).

Tom Denny, board member of the NGO Sustainable Saratoga and chair of its Urban Forestry Project, echoed a similar cautious optimism. In addition to the city’s fears, he felt that the “unconscious fears” of the populace could also be an obstacle to implementing a Food Forest. Though the 2014 Comprehensive Plan Draft does outline ambitious sustainable practices, he expressed that it is very unlikely that the city would accept them immediately:

You need to understand that a Comprehensive Plan, much like an Urban Forest master plan is full of sort of grandiose language that many people are counting on never being enacted into anything binding, like you know that’s a great ideal to have – affordable housing, a train service to Albany… (Denny, personal communication, 2015).

Despite the ‘good-natured’ intention of the Draft Comprehensive Plan to encourage more sustainable practices in Saratoga Springs, the intention alone may not be enough catalyze action. According to our respondents, it is generally considered to be difficult to get community projects going in the city. Despite this, the sustainability measures in the Draft Comprehensive Plan provides written City Council support for such project proposals. The language used in the Comprehensive Plan, such as the intentional preservation of green space, and the support of environmental health and resilience could be regarded as advantageous for a proposed Food Forest project. In discussing the work of Sustainable Saratoga, Tom Denny explained that the City’s language, despite its actions, have been integral for the Urban Forestry Project to progress.

Through interviewing individuals who work within City Departments, we identified some sentiment of openness and willingness to provide support. Marilyn Rivers, the Director of Risk and Safety in Saratoga Springs, demonstrated that risk management is not about project limitation and saying “no,” but about mitigation: “It’s about taking a look at the totality of the operations of a system and problems are really not problems – we call them opportunities for improvement” (Rivers, personal communication, 2015).

The Saratoga Springs Planning Department has also shown a certain level of support. In meeting with Susan Barden, Senior Planner in the Planning Office, we gained insight on the preferences and direction of planning and development in the city to further gauge city perspectives on multi-functionary nature of a Food Forest. Barden expressed her support of mixed-use zoning practices, and explained that the Planning Department also favors and encourages mixed-use zoning: “Cities are going back to [mixed use zoning] and getting rid of Euclidian [single-use] zoning” (Barden, personal communication, 2015).

Saratoga Springs is described as the “City in the Country” by many, including City Council. The general approval of mixed-use zoning in Saratoga’s urban planning and an openness to community projects provides a potential supportive foundation for the future of a Food Forest. Casey Holzworth concisely summed up the sentiment of multi-functionality that the city supports and that requires more community support (one of the stated goals of a Food Forest):

I think a lot of people haven’t realized what their possibilities are in a city. A lot of them think, “Oh I’m a city person, I have to do this, I have to do that.” We have a small yard, and we still have rain barrels and compost and all that fun stuff (Holzworth, personal communication, 2015).

**4.2-3 Liability Concerns**

Liability was another concern that respondents discussed during interviews. A public community space that is intended for moderate to high impact recreation and food production, such as a Food Forest, especially on city or private property, could pose a certain level of risk without proper liability insurance. Casey Holzworth discussed this consideration:

What is different about Saratoga? And I never got an answer. Pretty sure I remember asking that question: Why is Saratoga different from Glens Falls, or Albany, or all these other places that allow it [a community garden].And I think it comes down to- in order to do it, they require a non-profit or something that has that level of liability insurance that will protect the municipality (Holzworth, personal communication, 2015).

In considering liability as a notable impediment, we interviewed the city’s Director of Risk and Safety, Marilyn Rivers. Unbeknownst to us and many others, there was actually a failed community garden project in Congress Park a few years back (circa 2009), largely due to a lack of interest and management. After briefly discussing that project, Marilyn explained:

I worked here since 2003. Before 2003 we never had a formal risk management program. The city has never had litigation. We’ve had trips and falls but not anything to do with gardening. [...] We don’t have the experience of having any [community gardens] (Rivers, personal communication, 2015).

Insurance coverage is especially an important consideration for siting a Food Forest on city-owned property. Insurance can often be provided to projects through an umbrella organization, such as an NGO with tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status.

Marilyn Rivers also helped us understand concerns associated with the implementation of a Food Forest from a risk-management perspective:

So there would need to be, from a risk management perspective, if I were going to take a look at it, I’d need to see a map of the trees and I’d need to see what the planning was of how you intended on bringing in the dirt or the plants or the trees, what the intent was, who’s going to be responsible for it (Rivers, personal communication, 2015).

Not only would a mission statement, design, and management plan for implementation of a Food Forest greatly reduce the chance for injury, errors and unforeseeable problems, it resonates with the Permaculture design approach which demands an articulation of goals and an assessment of the conditions of the site and its socioeconomic context. The Permaculture design process proceeds from site assessment to design creation: the placement of plants and phases of implementation of a Food Forest are all considered as the plant community develops over time. Management, labor, and other necessary materials (water, mulch, etc.) should be accounted for within the Food Forest design process to better facilitate implementation (Jacke & Toensmeier, 2005).

**4.2-4 Vandalism**

Certainly, with any property made accessible to the public, risks will be unavoidable. Several stakeholders shared their perspectives on the potential of vandalism. Marilyn Rivers mentions vandalism as a risk:

I think that the issue is when you start talking about the sort of Food Forest, you always have to be aware of the fact that there’s a capacity for vandalism and that although you may care deeply about the environment… (Rivers, personal communication, 2015).

John Hirliman, the Administrative Director of Recreation in Saratoga Springs, agrees that vandalism is a risk and that it can be detrimental to the longevity of a project:

Unfortunately, it has to be close to something so that someone can police it. We’ve had vandalism. If you let it go a day or two days, then you’re out of luck. You have to fix it the next day… to keep everyone’s spirits up so that other’s won’t come in and do the same thing... and it shows that someone cares. If you just knock it down then the residents where we were, they’ll just be like, ‘Oh, management doesn’t care, they don’t care if it’s broke (Hirliman, personal communication, 2015).

In addition to the above concerns, we spoke to Paul Feldman, the Executive Director of the Saratoga Springs Housing Authority (SSHA), about the issue of vandalism. The SSHA manages several affordable housing apartments in the city. Paul Feldman explained:

As I said I haven’t been here long, but I came from Schenectady and we had all kinds of issues with vandalism, graffiti there. I don’t see that here on nearly the same level. There’s some, but from my understanding they used to do a ‘beautification program’ here and I’m going to try and do it this year. We’re going to buy flowers and mulch for residents and then they’re going to each fix up their own little area, or as many people wanna do it in front of their apartments at the terraces (Feldman, personal communication, 2015).

If vandalism is not tended to within a day at most, it is very easy to assume that nobody cares and that destructive actions are accepted in the space. If a vandalized area is immediately tended to, the chance that another destructive action is taken is reduced and a community ethic towards caretaking for the space is fostered. Beautification programs, like Paul Feldman mentioned, are visible ways to prevent and counteract vandalism.

**4.2-5 Technical Concerns and Suggestions**

An important concern mentioned during the interview process related to the technical aspects of a Food Forest care and management. Robert Curry, an active community member who works for Shelters of Saratoga, expressed much enthusiasm for the concept of a Food Forest but also warned: “If you do something like [a Food Forest], field mice and rabbits will girdle your seedlings so you need to wrap them with hardware” (Curry, personal communication, 2015). Tree girdling is a legitimate concern that needs to be considered and addressed in the implementation and management plans of the Food Forest. A Food Forest with several young fruit and nut trees could easily be destroyed by girdling, the stripping of the bark by rodents, nullifying all of the previous investments made: time and labor. This problem can easily be avoided by investing in tree guards.

At the Wendell Food Forest in MA, Permaculturist Lisa DePiano explained some of the required preparatory steps before planting a Food Forest:

From three years, from start of the project to creating a design, getting a fence up, killing all the – cause there was lots of rhizomatous, brushy material there, and that took a while to get rid of. That’s what they did, using solarization, so heating up the soil so it kills a lot of the [weeds]... so all that black plastic, before you guys got here, that was all over. And then installing a rhizome barrier is also a lot of work, so a lot has gone in. And also, it’s like, you know, with permaculture, small and slow solutions. So it’s not like we want – let’s see how fast can we put this garden up (DePiano, personal communication, 2015).

Due to the long-term nature of a Food Forest, the design and build process must reflect that commitment. If time is not adequately invested in the preparation of a site before the planting process, its long-term success could be easily thwarted.

Glenn Herlihy, co-founder of the Beacon Food Forest in Seattle, Washington, has experienced tremendous success with the young and thriving city Food Forest. In their third growing season, the Food Forest has produced 450 pounds of produce and perennial herbs and berries for community forage and local food banks. In regards to the planting process, Glenn suggested:

You get your trees in first, that’s what we did. That’s what you want to get established because you want to get over your watering cycle of getting them established. Once they’re established, your land around you is open for whatever. I mean perennials will be small; your shrubs will be small. You can introduce a lot of legumes and nitrogen fixing annuals that will help fix the soil for later years. So that’s kind of what we did. We just planted a lot of peas and grew them up right up into our little trees and so forth and then chopped and dropped them right below there for nitrogen (Herlihy, personal communication, 2015).

It is standard practice and smart in both an ecological and practical sense to plant annual crops within the Food Forest to boost productivity within the first few years and to keep the landscape active and relevant while fruiting perennials mature. This suggestion will be considered in the later design process of the Food Forest.

**4.2-6 Management and Volunteerism**

For a public Food Forest to succeed, long term management must be secured. Stakeholders explained the challenges of attracting and creating long-term management for a food-producing landscape.

Casey Holzworth, the Regional Natural Resource Steward, mentions how a Food Forest would require a form of labor and management that is different from what Community Gardens usually require:

So more than a community garden where you’d have to have someone to manage the ancillary aspects of the community garden and sort of the community member relations, you basically need a group that is willing to be the gardeners. You’re not asking the community necessarily on a yearly basis to be *their own* gardeners. You need a group that’s going to be *the* gardeners (Holzworth, personal communication, 2015).

A community Food Forest is unique in that the edible yields of plants (fruits and nuts from trees, shrubs, herbs and vines) are ‘free-for-the-taking’ and there is no ownership over a plot of land as there are in Community Gardens. Thus, volunteers would contribute knowing that their labor is intended to establish food-producing plants harvestable to all.

Scott Kellogg, founder of The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center in Albany, NY highlighted the unpredictability inherent in dynamic projects: “I guess our always concern is that people start something with the intention of doing it and then stuff changes, then it falls upon them [city] to be responsible for it” (Kellogg, personal communication, 2015).

Though there are no certainties in maintaining long-term commitment for community projects without remuneration, there are ways to attract volunteers and ensure continuity in some form.

The Beacon Food Forest in Seattle, Washington, the largest Food Forest in the United States, provides one such example where enough enthusiasm and volunteerism has been generated so that all their labor and management needs have been satisfied up to date. Glenn Herlihy, of the Beacon Food Forest, explained:

We actually have been blessed with a plethora of people who are willing to show up monthly for work parties and weekly for meetings. You know, it’s all about the people. If you can manage the people, the garden will come easy (Herlihy, personal communication, 2015).

Glenn’s statement is of particular importance. Through learning about the Beacon Food Forest and how they have been able to succeed, we have come to realize that the management of people - finding and sustaining dedicated support and volunteers - could be the greatest hurdle in the future for Saratoga Springs.

We have generated a few ideas for volunteers that have also been suggested in the interview process. Paul Feldman, the executive director of the SSHA mentioned that high schoolers volunteer out back behind the Stonequist Apartments in the community garden. Marilyn Rivers, the City Director of Risk and Safety suggested:

Yeah, so what I’m saying is boy scouts, girl scouts, but I would say boy scouts because they’re pretty active around here and they’re always looking for a project. Instead of building something, it’s better that they could really do some forestry stuff (Rivers, personal communication, 2015).

One of the stated purposes of a community Food Forest is to educate volunteers on gardening and permaculture practices. Ecological education is not only inherent within the Food Forest schematics, but acts as a great persuasive tool to the city, the community, and for volunteers. The Beacon Food Forest operates purely on volunteerism and a volunteer central management. Glenn Herlihy explained the dynamic:

Volunteers are coming to us because they want to work. They want to get their hands in the soil. They want to learn about trees and food forestry. They want to probably just hang out with other people and play some music too. How you entertain that at your work parties or how you educate them will bring back volunteers, cause that’s what they’re ultimately looking for, is some connection. If you can engage them in something they’re very interested in and they feel that they have become a part of or have helped lead or teach, then you’re more likely to see them come back over and over again (Herlihy, personal communication, 2015).

Glenn brought up an interesting point - that the interactive environment and dynamic of the “work parties” matters. Assuming minimal mandatory volunteerism, fostering community and ecological connection that volunteers are seeking will possibly encourage them to be dedicated members. If there is an ample population of willing volunteers, the attraction of those volunteers could be the limiting factor.

**4.2-7 Creating and Sustaining Support**

Thinking about long-term management naturally drew us to the consideration of support for a community Food Forest. How can the project generate interest and sustain a support network for the years to come? Advertising, promotion, community meetings, and visibility are all viable options. Eliza Hollister, a senior at Skidmore and manager of the college’s Community Garden explained:

Yup, [we always had people showing up, eager to work] which was largely due to social media, and getting people aware of what we were doing. Definitely [social media and networking], and promoting it through posters, and having meetings (Hollister, personal communication, 2015).

Susan Barden at the City’s Planning Office suggested that it would be a good idea, especially for the proposal process, to acquire letters of support from local NGOs and college professors. Marilyn Rivers went so far as to mention that this project needs strong, long-term support if we’re trying to create the beginning of a “legacy”:

To develop a program like you’re doing that matches the longevity of that water study for Loughbury Lake. But I think that there has to be a champion. [...] But you know, from a Skidmore perspective, which of your professors has the capacity to get interested and embrace it? Who’s gonna be that counterpart that interacts with myself? (Rivers, personal communication, 2015).

Exactly how the project creates and sustains support will depend on the siting of the Food Forest. City properties would comparatively provide a stronger drive to promote and vouch for the existence of the Food Forest. In the case of Beacon, Glenn explained:

Ultimately, we had to show them we’re successful and continuously we have to show them that we’re going to be successful, but in the beginning we really just needed to show them we needed community support. So when we did our design party for designing the schematic, we saw an exponential amount of people show up at each of the meetings. There were 3 or 4. By the last one there was over 100. So that in a way kind of demonstrated to them that we had community support. But we were required to do postcard mailing and we actually even hired community ambassadors for different cultural groups within the community to go out and talk to their communities (Herlihy, personal communication, 2015).

Community ambassadors for different cultural groups goes above and beyond in terms of inclusion and is a great way to bring people of multiple cultures together that would have otherwise not been involved.

Eliza Hollister, of the Skidmore Community Garden offered her perspective on support and volunteerism at the garden: “But honestly finding volunteers wasn’t a problem because of our location. Before we moved we always had trouble finding people to come and help” (Hollister, personal communication, 2015). Eliza emphasized that location is a key factor in generating interest and support. Visibility is imperative for others to become inspired.

Scott Kellogg of The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center suggested stressing the educational component of the Food Forest in the promotion process:

That’s a good way to cut through a lot of the political garbage. I mean if you talk about education, it will get people’s ears, especially framing it in the context of STEM education which is what everybody’s obsessed with right now. Kids can learn about biology, physics by planting trees (Kellogg, personal communication, 2015).

Stressing education in promotion falls in line with another suggestion we received. In pitching this project to an NGO or the city, visuals can be one of the most important tools. Glen Herlihy from Beacon stated:

So we had a drawing that came out of the permaculture design class that showed a Food Forest type garden on the land we ended up getting permission to use, but it basically demonstrated – it was a mapping, a design drawing showing all different kinds of Food Forest techniques. It was basically a roadmap for us to show the community. So whenever we did present the idea, even before we had permission to use the land and even before we did a community design for the final garden, we had this tool that allowed us to explain a lot about food forestry. It was good to have and we brought it everywhere. [...] It really helps people get excited when they can actually see something that would happen or might happen. Just talking to them is a little different unless you’re very descriptive in your language. So yeah, I would recommend strong visual aids about the beauties and the benefits of a Food Forest (Herlihy, personal communication, 2015).

An example blueprint of an existing Food Forest design could be a great tool to demonstrate the aesthetic beauty and ecological dynamics of a Food Forest. Furthermore, Marilyn Rivers stated that the design schematics would be very important:

We’d want to know the type of trees you’re planting and their longevity and the interrelationships they have with what you’re trying to achieve. [...] So there would need to be, from a risk management perspective, if I were going to take a look at it, I’d need to see a map of the trees and I’d need to see what the planning was of how you intended on bringing in the dirt or the plants or the trees, what the intent was, who’s going to be responsible for it. Signing an identification agreement for someone to go in to take care of the trees is not rocket science (Rivers, personal communication, 2015).

No matter the stakeholder and owner of the land, we concur that a hypothetical design schematic specific to the land would be an invaluable tool to show that there is true potential for a Food Forest to exist. Susan Barden agrees that showing the stakeholders some visual ideas would be helpful in moving forward.

**4.2-8 Fundraising**

An obvious concern for the creation of a Food Forest is money. Even with NGO or other institutional partnerships, the project should not rely on any one type of funding. Since that will most likely be the case, a community Food Forest must rely on fundraising: donations, grants, and crowdsourcing.

In discussing the success of the Wendell Food Forest, Betsy Ames, Chair of the Energy Committee in the town’s Food Security Project mentioned: “A lot of fund-raising helped and the budget from the town from the Energy Committee and the Food Security project made a big difference” (Ames, personal communication, 2015).

Marilyn Rivers provided many suggestions on possible donation sources:

The other avenue is, have you checked the Tree Farm on Rt. 9? They still have a tree farm, you know it’s with the DEC. Another avenue you might want to pursue is Finch Pruyn it’s in Glens Falls [it’s a Paper Mill] and they have moneys available for sustainability – for forests. The other piece is that the city does business with some of these folks in town – it was just on the City Council agenda, some of the horticulture folks – they sell flowers. Home Depot is a good source. They give to the community. They have trees and they have fruit trees there. So you might be able to ask for a donation and they do give trees. I’m not sure about Lowes but I know Home Depot does. They’re very community minded. So I think those are opportunities if you want to reach out to do that cause in some sense we all want to give back to the environment before we – cause the Earth is a pretty damn small place. I almost think it’s Dehn’s but I don’t know. That’s where the city buys all of its trees and flowers. So I guess if you went to the local tree and shrub places, they may be able to assist. [...] The Golub Foundation out of Schenectady has environmental programs (Rivers, personal communication, 2015).

**4.2-9 Partnerships and Potential Locations**

Several organizations showed considerable interest in either hosting a Food Forest on their property or supporting the project in some capacity. Though the success of a Food Forest does not necessarily rely on financial or physical (labor) support from a non-profit, land owner or caretaker of property, the verbal support and permission to use the land is almost essential and shows that the vision of this project is in alignment with the goals of local organizations, the city and housing authorities. Tom Denny, board member of Sustainable Saratoga and chair of its Urban Forestry Project, has helped to influence city policy with regards to maintaining and protecting trees within urban areas and educate citizens on the numerous beneficial services they provide. When broached on the subject of incorporating food-producing trees in the city, Tom responded:

I think we’re definitely curious about the possibility... It’s something that intrigues us and we’re curious about and we haven’t had serious conversations about when and where it makes sense, maybe because we’ve never had somebody who has done the leg-work to show us how feasible it is... So anyway, that’s where you come in. If you have a way of putting together a package that sells, that makes it possible to sell this to either us, the community, or somebody to run with it (Denny, personal communication, 2015).

Tom also mentioned the need for long-term management that is oriented toward maximizing ecosystem services:

At the moment we’re trying to push as much as we can to shift the mentality from planting small and medium sized trees to getting back to planting trees that someday will be large trees because that’s where the ecosystem services are greatest, kind of exponentially as you get a larger tree. So that’s been our approach (Denny, personal communication, 2015).

Though trees and plants in a Food Forest may be selected to provide food, they can also be chosen and designed in a manner that also provides many beneficial ecosystem services. Food Forests which are designed to mimic the structure and function of forest and savannah ecosystems, similarly provide habitat for wildlife (birds, pollinators, etc.), filter air and water, build soil and sequester carbon among other services. Seemingly, the Food Forest approach is in alignment with the goal of providing ecosystem services, with the addition of providing food and other usable goods; though some of the trees in a Food Forest may not reach the size of the largest trees in Saratoga Springs, Food Forests provide a complete habitat within a defined space.

We have identified three locations where implementation is almost certainly feasible, and two other possible locations (see Table 2). Several interview subjects who were either landowners or were associated with the management of a property, clearly iterated their initial attitude and perception towards having a Food Forest on their property. Some stakeholders like John Hirliman, Administrative Director at the Recreation Department, responded positively and inquired about the project’s future:

So we are definitely on board, we’d just see if it would fit with us and be able to make it work. I think the biggest thing for us would be to know basically the size and scope and what our role would need to be in it if it’s maintaining it, if it’s designating the land for people to be able to come and go (Hirliman, personal communication, 2015).

Paul Feldman also responded favorably to the idea, with a recommendation to first seek the approval of residents:

You can say that I’m willing to offer some space for the project... I would also put you in touch with the leaders of our resident councils and resident advisory boards because it would probably be best to work through them to try and gauge a level of interest with the residents...And they’d also probably be willing to do a little bit of ground work in terms of drumming up support for participation from other residents... Yeah I wouldn’t see a problem with that. Again I’m kind of tentatively saying yes…(Feldman, personal communication, 2015).

Farmer and entrepreneur Michael Kilpatrick showed interest in creating a Food Forest for a previously owned property by Pitney Farms. The property will feature a land-use that caters to community needs, local farmers and promotes education:

I feel that something like a Food Forest would definitely work. I think one of the things we struggle to look at on this property is we have 35 acres of woods and yes we’re thinking of things like doing pasture pork production back there and we want to do walking trails but obviously it’d be really helpful if we could find another community aspect of the woods… this would be something I feel is just there more for the community than anything (Kilpatrick, personal communication, 2015).

Table 2.

Potential Locations for a Community Food Forest in Saratoga Springs, NY

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Location** | **Owner** |
| Stonequist Apartments | Saratoga Springs Housing Authority |
| Jefferson Terrace Apartments | Saratoga Springs Housing Authority |
| Pitney Farm | Saratoga PLAN; Michael Kilpatrick (Not  yet acquired) |
| Water Treatment Facility | City of Saratoga Springs |
| Weibel Avenue Ice Rinks | City of Saratoga Springs |
| Northside Recreation Field | City of Saratoga Springs; Skidmore College |

The responses from community stakeholders suggest there is an opportunity for implementing a Food Forest, but the opportunity must be pursued if it is to become a reality. The stakeholders note that community plays a prominent role in this land-use and confirms our initial intention of designing a landscape that serves the needs of the community. Further, the survey results proved that residents of Saratoga Springs are generally interested in having a Food Forest as green space and for educational and environmental benefits.

**5. Recommendations**

Our process of understanding the needs of residents, whether a Food Forest could meet those needs and what the opportunities and challenges were for implementation has been a feasibility study. We have laid the foundation upon which further progress towards implementation can be built. Implementation of a community Food Forest is quite complex. There are many steps that need to be taken to ensure that a multifunctional landscape will satisfy the needs of residents, stakeholders and the city government, while also providing ecosystem services for wildlife and residents. Our recommendations center on community networking to build support, raising money and creating interest and excitement in the project, and creating a design with input from the community (through the form of a design charrette). We have made many connections in the community who will facilitate future implementation of a Saratoga Food Forest.

All of our work so far is theoretical, and must be exemplified through design and actual implementation. For example: though our survey findings show that residents believe a community Food Forest is a solution to larger environmental problems, that belief must be proven with a physical Food Forest that provides substantial ecosystem services. The educational component of a community Food Forest will also be dependent upon future action. Outreach to local schools and other interested groups will have to be made, and a pedagogy must be used which is based on curriculum specific to Saratoga Springs.

Our research has helped to determine the potential locations of a Food Forest site, the associated stakeholders with locations, and the opportunities and concerns that exist for each location. To pursue implementation, we strongly recommend beginning by gathering more support from stakeholders at all levels for each location; this would include residents, property owners, landscape maintenance staff, apartment managers and staff and the city of Saratoga Springs “Planning and Economic Development” Office and “Risk and Safety Management” Office. It is important to understand that siting and developing a Food Forest will require engaging multiple levels of the “total social structure” that encompasses each location; this is necessary to ensure that development meets all stakeholders’ expectations and abides by established zoning rules and other regulations.

Maintaining a relationship with the public is crucial to the success of a Saratoga Food Forest. The Stonequist location is particularly desirable because of its dense population. A highly visible location will keep the focus of the public consciousness, and as we learned from Eliza Hollister, the Skidmore Garden manager, makes it easier to find volunteers. Further public outreach must also be done via social media. Community members can be immediately notified of events such as work parties and harvests by Facebook or an email list. Michael Kilpatrick also mentioned a brilliant idea of having an app that alerts people when fruit or nuts are ripe. Social media has the ability to extend the Food Forest’s volunteer reach, supplement the education of people interested in the Food Forest, and even aid in fundraising. Crowd-funding is another important resource that is strongly linked to social media. Particularly during the first few years of planting and building the Food Forest, fundraising and acquiring volunteers will be two of the most crucial tasks. Establishing an online presence alongside a physical presence in the community early on will facilitate those two actions.

To win the support of Stonequist residents, we must appeal to the resident council which Paul has given us the contact information for (see Table 3). His offer to use the community room at Stonequist for meetings and planning is also a valuable resource. An indoor community meeting space will be especially needed for the initial steps of planning and designing. The Stonequist community room would be an excellent place to host a design charrette.

Involving Stonequist residents in the design process early on is important to show that this project truly belongs to them and the community. Paul Feldman further mentioned that “there are some people [at Stonequist] who love to be the boss of things, so you won’t have trouble with [finding leadership].” Ensuring that the decision process and future maintenance is democratic and discouraging hoarding of any harvestable good is important when working with a large group of people.

Table 3.

Stonequist and Jefferson Terrace Apartment Resident Council Members

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Individual** | **Phone #:** |
| Ollie Wescott | 518-587-2750 |
| Susan Christopher | 518-587-5476 |
| Peter Berrios | 518-258-0143 |
| Elizabeth Lowers | 518-893-2571 |
| Bill Bloom | 518- 879-7632 |
| Kathy (?) | 518-584-6600 |

We encourage residents and relevant stakeholders to create a detailed design schematic. A “design charrette” is a useful tool that gives residents and stakeholders the opportunity to design together, incorporating concerns, ideas and visions into a “concrete” plan and design – we encourage this tool to be used as it involves *everybody*. Firstly, a detailed design should consist of a list of (mostly) perennial plants for planting: trees, shrubs, herbs, vines, ground cover and root crops are the plant layers (strata) that should be considered. An understanding of a site’s soil, climate, water and other conditions will influence the choice of plants – for example, plant hardiness zone must be considered. Getting a soil sample to create a list of plants, perhaps consider asking all prospective users what they would to have. Secondly, a “detailed design” should consider the layout of plants. Plant layout and the design of polycultures is more complex as it involves understanding the characteristics and growth pattern of each plant, where the nitrogen-fixing species are in relation to fertility-needing plants, what plants are able to tolerate being close to other plants, etc. The layout of the plants will also influence the maintenance regime – i.e. if plants that supply fertility are near fertility-demanding plants less time and resources are needed, if predator-attracting plants are near pest-vulnerable plants and so on. The more knowledgeable a designer(s) is with these factors, the better a Food Forest will function. Thirdly, the methods for implementation must be considered. This includes how the plants will be planted, if and what soil amendments will be used, if sheet mulching will be employed to prevent weed growth, how supplies will be brought in, equipment needed, amount of labor is needed, etc. This step has important implications from a “risk management” perspective since safety of individuals partaking in implementation is important. Lastly, a “detailed design” must consider “time” when designing a permanent forest. As trees grow, their canopies will begin to develop and shade out other plants; thus the design must “think forward” to later successional stages of forest growth and not plant sun-loving species beneath a tree’s canopy. Throughout the development of a Food Forest, different plants may need to be planted at different times because conditions change to become more favorable for certain plants. Throughout growth, different management actions will need to occur. Actions such as planting, mulching, weeding, harvesting, pruning, applying compost and other amendments, will occur not only at different times with a single season, but change in their occurrence across multiple seasons. For example, perhaps some opportunistic plants will outgrow their intended space and need to be cutback or pruned. This by no means is meant to give a comprehensive understanding into the design of perennial polycultures, or Food Forests. For more information on this design process, use *Edible Forest Gardens Volume Two*by Dave Jacke and Eric Toensmeier and *Integrated Forest Gardening*by Wayne Weiseman, Daniel Halsey and Bryce Ruddock.

For the Pitney Farm location, we suggest to keep in contact with Michael Kilpatrick about the status of the Saratoga Community Farm project. It would be beneficial to stay aware of the time-frame involved in the purchasing of that land, development, and further planning process.

As mentioned above, fundraising will be a crucial task for the success of a community Food Forest. All of the potential locations for implementation will require a heavy focus on fundraising. We recommend that money should be raised through several actions: through online crowd-funding fundraisers, through grants, or through partnerships with local NGOs and businesses. It is important to remember that fundraising and donation campaigns only be started upon the completion of location selection, an educational campaign, and a design charette. It is the last step before the action begins.

For crowd-funding, online platforms such as Kickstarter or Indiegogo can be used to advertise the project. The platform can employ various aspects of the educational campaign including location, goals, stakeholders, example site design, and project timeline. Grant application is another great prospect for fundraising. Several grants may exist for sustainable and community agriculture. Depending on the grant, it may be the case that an NGO or accredited organization can apply. If this is the case for many grants, it may be very useful to strengthen the ties between this community Food Forest project and a Saratoga Springs NGO, such as Sustainable Saratoga, for support and oversight as an umbrella organization. Cooperation with Sustainable Saratoga and other NGOs could serve useful in the long run by supporting their mission, and, in turn, receiving further attention and support in the form of donations. Businesses are another great option when thinking about fundraising. Many companies have a Donation and Outreach department specifically designed to serve and support communities through projects or volunteer initiatives. Table 4 displays some of the businesses that were recommended throughout our study.

Table 4.

Business Donor Options

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Business** | **Phone #** | **Location** |
| Brookside Nursery | 518-885-6500 | 824 NY-67, Ballston Spa, NY 12020 |
| Hewitt's Garden Source | 518-580-1205 | 621 Maple Avenue (Rt. 9), Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 |
| Mandy Spring Farm Nursery | 518-525-1311 | 3 New Country Way, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 |
| NY State Tree Nursery | 518-581-1439 | 2369 Route 50 South, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 |
| Gurney's Seed & Nursery Co. | 513-354-1492 | Greendale, IN 47025 |
| Fedco Seeds | 207-426-9900 | Waterville, ME 04903 |
| Seed Savers Exchange | 563-382-5990 | 3094 North Winn Rd, Decorah, Iowa 52101 |
| The Home Depot | 518-581-6480 | 3043 Rte 50, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 |
| Finch Paper Co. | 1-800-833-9983 | 1 Glen Street, Glens Falls, NY 12801 |

**6. Conclusion**

Our research shows that there is great potential for creating a multifunctional landscape, specifically a Food Forest, for the city of Saratoga Springs. Based on surveys and semi-structured interviews, we have learned there is interest for implementation among various stakeholders, associated property owners and residents of Saratoga Springs. Our research questions— (1) What are the needsand values of residents and stakeholders?, (2) Can a Food Forest meet those needs?, (3) What are the opportunities and supports for implementation, and (4) What are the challenges and obstacles for implementation?—were answered through surveys and interviews. Residents value learning sustainability practices, participating with their communities, having access to local food, and having access to green space -- values that can all be supported through a community Food Forest. In addition, residents are interested in having access to a Food Forest, collecting or harvesting from it, and volunteering or contributing in some manner towards its creation and future maintenance. Residents believe a Food Forest would help solve environmental problems, bring the community together and be a good educational tool for all ages.

Interviews took place with individuals with prior experience in Food Forest design, associated property owners of potential locations, city of Saratoga Springs staff and members of local non-profit organizations. These interviews illuminated the opportunities and challenges of implementation, as well as gave insight into effective ways to ensure its long-term success. Some elements of concern that could hinder the success of the Food Forest include proper and sufficient management and labor and the integration of a detailed design.

We have discovered six potential locations that could host a community Food Forest. Among these, we consider Stonequist Apartments, Jefferson Terrace Apartments and the old Pitney Farm sites the most feasible. These locations are more promising because of stakeholder interest, their proximity to residents, including the elderly, students, and children, and their potential to become highly utilized community spaces.

Our research has established a foundation that is required for possible future implementation for a city community Food Forest. We have found that there is sufficient interest, support, and feasible locations to begin further research into the design and campaign process. We recommend ensuring that support from all parties – residents, apartment staff, the city and other relevant stakeholders – has been received in order to make a final decision with regards to a location for the Food Forest. In alignment with our vision of a community space, the design process should incorporate the desires and goals of *all* residents and stakeholders and be thoroughly democratic in nature.

There are few spaces in Saratoga Springs that are designed and created by residents, for residents. As such, this process of creating a landscape to be shared with neighbors will be full of learning opportunities. Perhaps mistakes will be made - residents prioritizing their desires over others’ and not sharing the yields of a landscape - but they are mistakes worth learning from. Implicit in our vision of a multifunctional landscape is the opportunity for individuals to interact with their community and the environment in a mutually beneficial manner. Yet, our modern societal condition tends to discourage human interaction in settings that encourage cooperative behaviors such as sharing, co-creation, and mutually beneficial interaction. Adopting attitudes of cooperation and tolerance towards others is fundamental to the success of a community Food Forest. Without these attitudes, a landscape cannot be *for* the community, only *for* individuals. It is our hope that those involved with a Saratoga Springs community Food Forest embrace these values in all stages of implementation.

We hope that further actions will be in the works to make a Saratoga Springs Community Food Forest a physical reality. We have overviewed its purposes and benefits, as well as assessed its feasibility for implementation within the city. It is up to local residents in Saratoga Springs and across the country with a vision and a desire to assume the leadership in implementing beneficial, scalable and location-specific solutions. The time is now.

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**Appendix**

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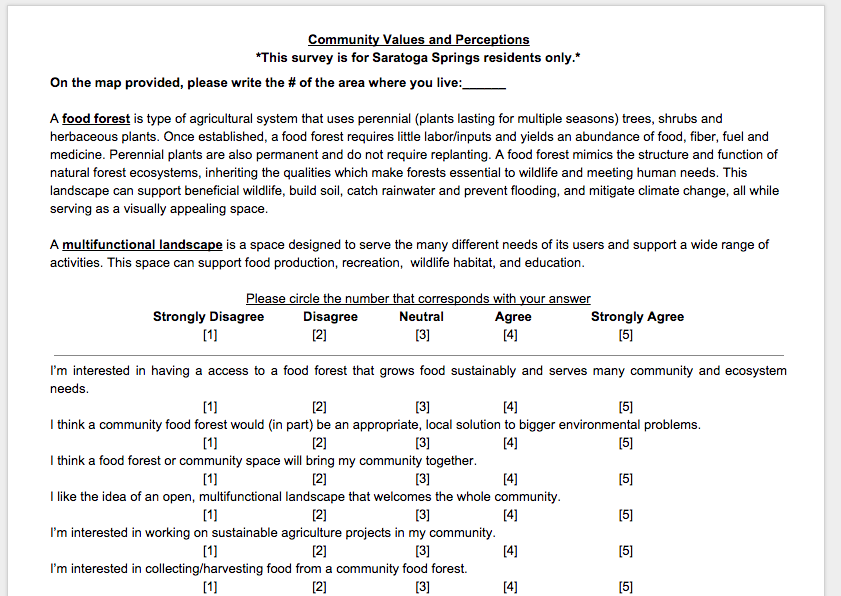
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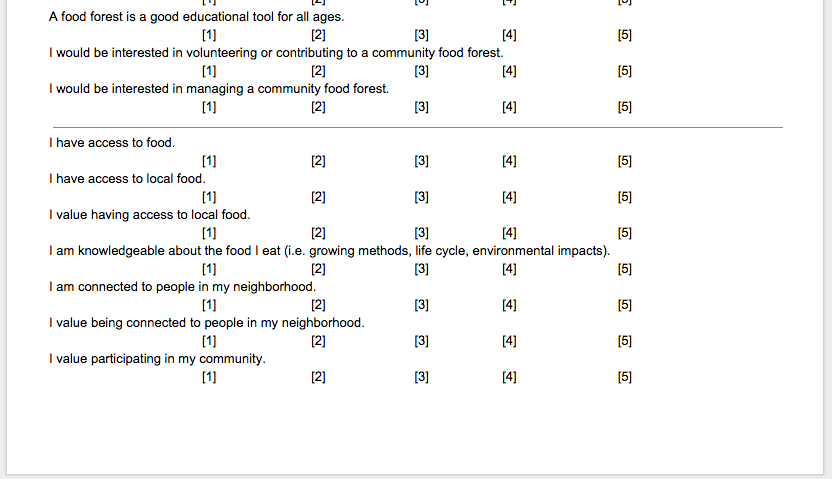
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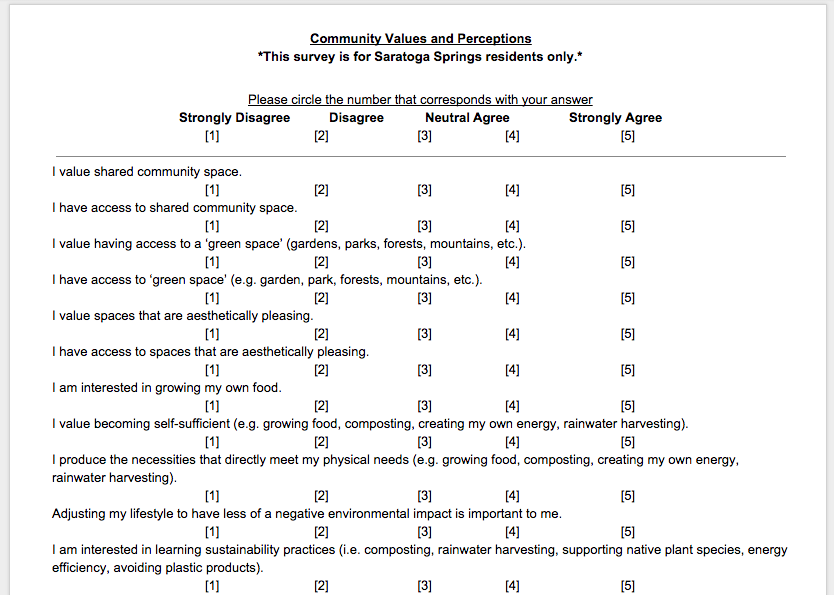
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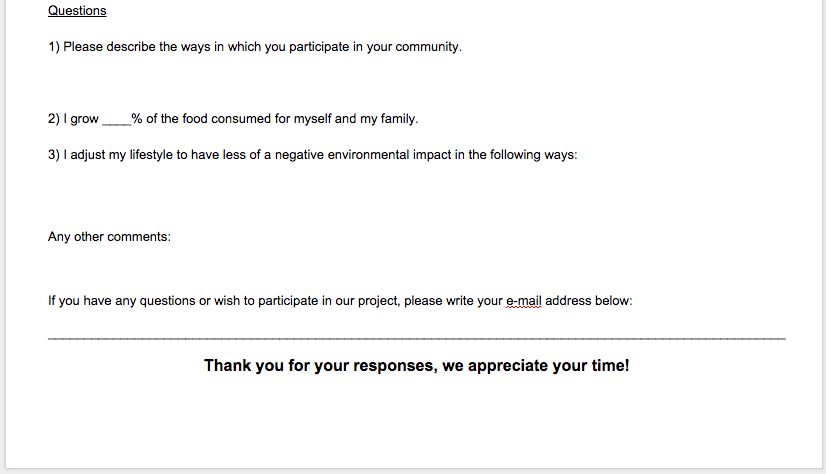
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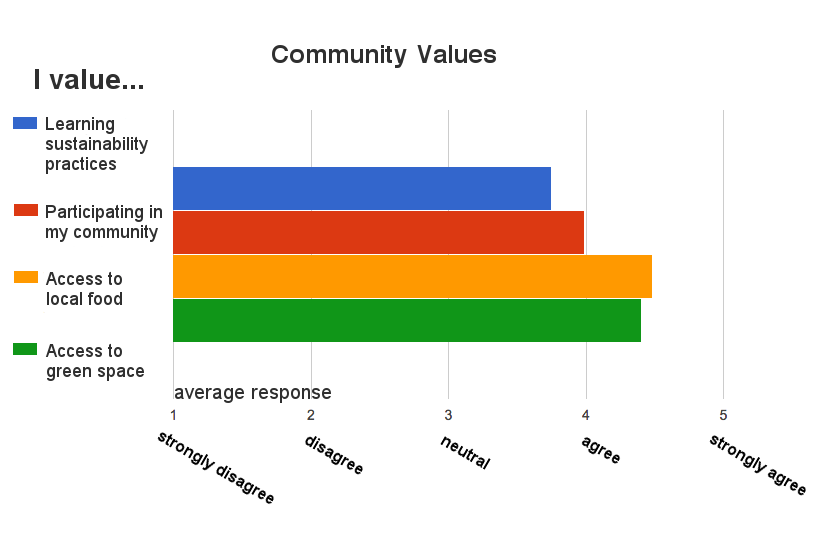
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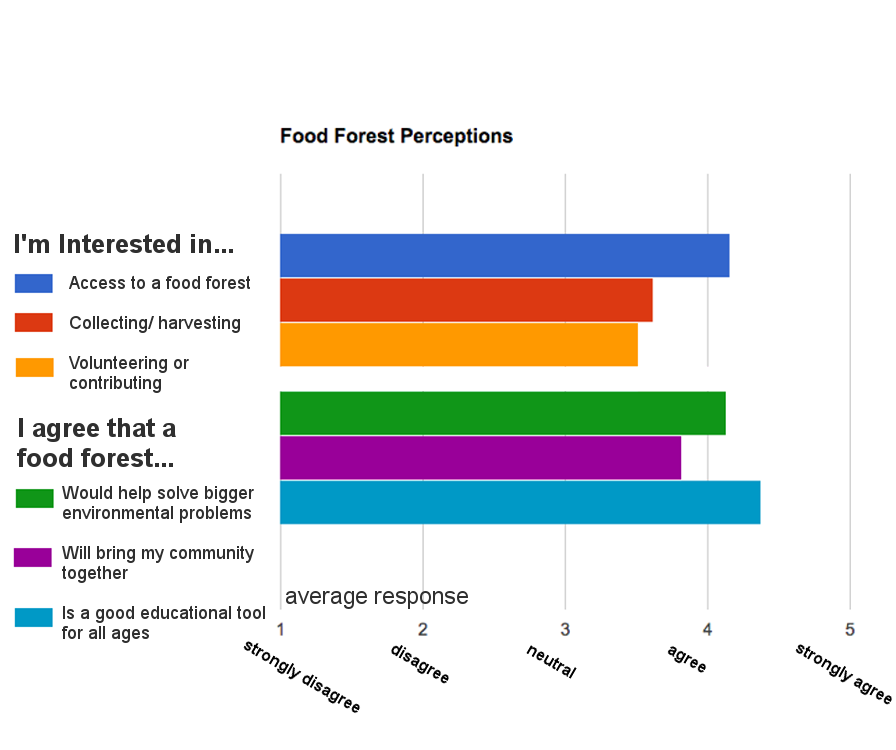
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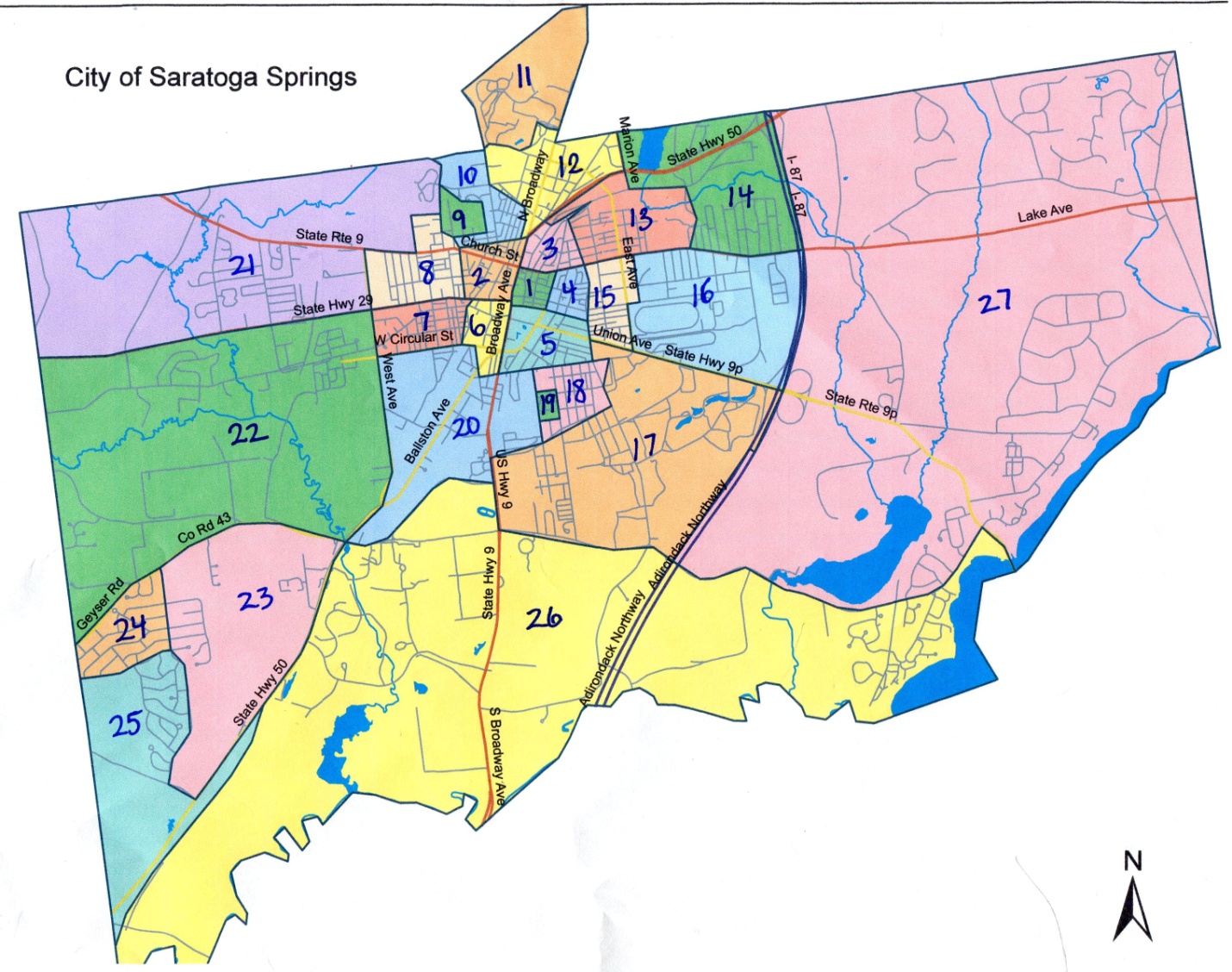
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Appendix 2: Additional Figures







Appendix 3: Stakeholder Interview Contacts

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Appendix 4: Interview Transcriptions

**Wendell, MA Food Forest Interview – 10/19/2014**

JESS: What inspired you to build a garden here – how did it come into fruition?

LISA DEPIANO: Yeah, Betsy Ames over there is, um, one of the leaders, and uh, visionaries of the project and um, she took our permaculture design course a few years ago and you should ask her more about that, but this was kind of – she connected some of the teachers after the course and said hey we want to do this here at Wendell and we’re gonna do it right here at the town hall so that was what kind of excited me –

JAMES: Oh wait, where is the town hall?

LISA DEPIANO: This is town hall.

JAMES: Oh, okay! I didn’t realize that.

LISA DEPIANO: So part of what’s so exciting about this is that this is a public space, it’s accessible to the whole town, so it’s a teaching garden as well as a place to get food and medicinals and to really learn about hugleculture cause that’s one of the major on-site resources here is they have so much wood everywhere –

JAMES: Where does the wood come from?

LISA DEPIANO: Just, it’s such a wooded, rural area, that that’s like a waste product that a lot of people have. So just kind of thinking what’s an appropriate strategy for Wendell, and hugelkulture mounds and forest gardens…

STUDENT: Mushroom farming.

LISA DEPIANO: Yeah, mushrooms…  
  
STUDENTS: Yeah, lots of mushroom farming. I mean we’re talking about dead wood and wanting to make food out of it.

JAMES: Was there anyone who was opposed to this being created?  
  
LISA DEPIANO: I mean I’m just the – I just work here, um…

JARED: The facilitator of the implementation?  
  
LISA DEPIANO: Yeah, so we did a pretty thorough process in the beginning where we had a public design charette. So we invited key stakeholders in the community to come together and there were like 15-20 people and we did a day-long charette where people went over: what are their goals and visions for the project, and we spent some time talking together as the different stakeholders what that was, and then established some goals and a vision statement around it. And then we spent the afternoon out on site doing some site analysis work and then from that the design was created. So we worked with the town and I think that helped the project be more successful with the public because people were involved from the get-go.

JESS: So they also had a plot of land that was just unused and was possible to be chosen.

JAMES: Well this was already a garden before, right?

LISA DEPIANO: Yeah, so this is the community garden.

JAMES: So this was already the community garden, that’s important.

STUDENT: Oh, so that’s where the controversy could have come from, you think? Because you’re appropriating community garden space to…

LISA DEPIANO: I mean this was unused. Often times hillsides are underutilized pieces of land that people don’t want, especially not for farming because they have to get tractors and things through so slopes and hillsides are prime permaculture areas cause we can take advantage of the water and the land-form and build soil up that way.

STUDENT: Someone mentioned that there was a lot of back and forth about this. Do you know what the content of that was?  
  
LISA DEPIANO: Well I think, you know, whenever you’re working on a public project it can take longer because there are multiple stakeholders and…

STUDENTS: But does everyone has a stake in it or?

LISA DEPIANO: I mean, if you want the dirty details, you should talk to those three. Those three are like the – I don’t really know the politics of it.

JAMES: I guess it’s like—have you seen Parks and Rec—where they have town hall meetings and everyone has horrible, dumb questions. I guess it can be like that.

LISA DEPIANO: But I mean it was relatively short. From three years, from start of the project to creating a design, getting a fence up, killing all the – cause there was lots of rhizominous, brushy material there, and that took a while to get rid of. That’s what they did, using solarization, so heating up the soil so it kills a lot of the, um…

STUDENT: That must have taken a while.

LISA DEPIANO: It did. So three years…

STUDENT: Like rotating like a greenhouse almost, right?  
  
LISA DEPIANO: Yeah, so all that black plastic, before you guys got here, that was all over. And then installing a rhizome barrier is also a lot of work, so a lot has gone in. And also, it’s like, you know, with permaculture, small and slow solutions. So it’s not like we want – let’s see how fast can we put this garden up. Often times when things move too fast you get into trouble because people are like, “What, I didn’t know about that,” and they can get upset, but this was, you know, it took the process was… So people have gotten used to this being here. The process was slow but not too slow, but not too fast.

JAMES: Another question: so obviously all this work is volunteer. Everyone here is a volunteer, right?

LISA DEPIANO: I’m not a volunteer.

JAMES: Oh, you get paid to do this?

LISA DEPIANO: Yeah.

STUDENT: I would have been here even if you hadn’t offered extra credit.

LISA DEPIANO: They get extra credit from me.

JAMES: Are you being paid by the town?  
  
LISA DEPIANO: Yes.

TREVOR KEARNS: Yeah, we decided to hire her.

LISA DEPIANO: Yeah, I’m a hired consultant.  
  
JAMES: And so where does the funding for this come from?

TREVOR KEARNS: Well, the Open Space Committee, on which I sit, voted a (something). We raised a few hundred bucks. Yeah we’re in charge of like all the protected town-lands.

STUDENT: How did you get appointed or elected?

TREVOR KEARNS: I got… nobody sits on town boards.

STUDENT: You just signed up. *Laughs*.

JAMES: It’s kind of like Student Government at Skidmore. It’s like… “I’ll do it.”  
  
TREVOR KEARNS: Right, exactly. So we voted to pay something, I forget what we – a lot. Something. Well you had some money from energy committee, right?  
  
BETSY AMES: Yeah. Energy Committee Food Security project started this whole thing and um… cooperation with the Open Space Committee and the Community Garden, so it’s been a collaboration since the beginning. And the Energy Committee has by far put the most money in from our regular budget and from a special budget that we had a fundraiser for.

TREVOR KEARNS: Was that at Full Moon Coffee House?  
  
BETSY AMES: It was at Full Moon Coffee House. We also did a techno-trash recycling where people dropped off old electronics and we carted them down to Springfield and people paid us instead of paying the transfer station, so that was a lot of work.

JESS: So a lot of fundraising helped.  
  
BETSY AMES: A lot of fund-raising helped and the budget from the town from the Energy Committee and the Food Security project made a big difference.  
  
STUDENT: That’s probably where the controversy came from. Was it allocation of money? I was trying to figure it out.  
  
TREVOR KEARNS: Well, whenever you have town committees or town boards voting to pay money, there’s obviously going to be someone in town, “That’s my tax money! Rah, rah, why are you spending it on that crap?” So you know, you’re always going to have that sort of thing. Each committee has a certain amount of money and on the Open Space Committee we decided, well, I mean we basically do… Uh, I mean we’re hiring a forester to do some forestry work on some the town lands, but that money goes… Anyway that’s a whole other thing. We spend our money to hire people to come and teach tracking workshops and wild forage workshops, and we had a mushroom workshop this summer, I mean we should probably do that three times a year, basically. And then we’re like, “Well we have this money, what are we gonna spend it on? This seems like a completely logical thing to put money into.”

BETSY AMES: And we split the budget – you guys did the paying for the education piece, Energy Committee did supplies. So we did the plants, the compost, so that was sort of how it broke down.  
  
LISA DEPIANO: They are doing this as kind of a case study for their capstone project at Skidmore.

BETSY AMES: Cool.

JESS: We wanted to gather some perspectives. What are your names again?

BETSY AMES: I’m Betsy Ames, I’m the Energy Committee chair of the Food Security Project.

TREVOR KEARNS: I’m Trevor Kearns. I live in Wendell and sit on the Open Space Committee.

LISA DEPIANO: If you guys think of more questions, you can get in touch. I’d be happy to…

TREVOR KEARNS: Yeah, if you want to contact me, I’m at GCC – Greenfield Community College. So just go, I’m the only Trevor there. Go to the GCC homepage and in the directory just look for Trevor. And I’m there and there’s my contact info and everything. Thanks for coming out and helping!  
  
LISA: All the way from Skidmore. Three hours away!  
  
BETSY AMES: Thank you guys.

**Casey Holzworth Interview – 2/19/2015**

US: Could you briefly say what you do?

CASEY: I work for NY State Parks, I’m the natural resource steward for two regions - the thousand islands region and the Saratoga capital district region. It’s a hard job to describe, it’s a little bit of everything…. Most of our parks are 10-15% developed and I’m responsible for everything else. I’m the resource person

US: In the email you mentioned you’re interested in permaculture?

CASEY: Part of why you’re talking to me is because of what I do on the side. I’m a founding member and chairperson of Sustainable Saratoga, and helped get the Urban Forestry Project off the ground. I’m also a board member of Saratoga Plan, in their conservation committee and their stewardship committee... And then personally we own a small farm in Greenfield where were in the process of doing a lot more permaculture activities and trying to establish basically a perennial homestead sort of situation there.

US: What have been your responsibilities with the Comprehensive Planning Committee?

CASEY: Oh yeah! I’m a member of the Comprehensive Planning Committee, although I don’t know if that is anything at this point, because we’ve delivered our “final work product” to the city council.

US: Was that the draft that’s up online?

CASEY: It changed substantially in the two final meetings; it changed from a conservation minded-maintaining the typical development pattern we’ve had in Saratoga for the past 100 years, to a much more development friendly pattern (in the green belt). [He’s not sure if his amended version is online or not.]

US: So which body accepts the draft and incorporates it into policies?

Casey: It’s up to the city council. They’ll accept it and they can amend the draft however they want, then put it up for public comment. The plan is supposed to be reviewed every 5 to 7 years, and that’s why were working in 2013 on a 2001 comprehensive plan because there was supposed to be a 2007 comprehensive plan that was never acted on by the council.

US: What are the chances you think they’ll adopt these objectives and actions that are outlined in the draft?

Casey: I think they’ll move forward with something because it’s not a good PR move to say, ‘We’re not gonna have another draft and were just gonna rely on the 2001 plan.” I think they’re gonna have public workshops, invite the public into a CPC meeting. I believe the 1st one is for the 24th of April.

US: Of the actions on the list of the CPC, there was a lot that mentioned green space, incorporating green space into neighborhoods, and there was a mention of backyard agriculture and those sorts of things, what do you think the perceptions of the city council are on those issues?

CASEY: I honestly don’t know what their perceptions are, I don’t think they’re opposed to it, there was a small community opposition but it was the same people who wanted everything to stay the same in the Beekman area. I tried to make this clear as nicely as possible in the meetings: I think their fears are way overblown and they’re taking these things to the outmost extreme possibility to say that nothing should be allowed to happen. Maybe some person in the future would have some variance to have 1,000 geese or chickens next to them which would certainly not be in the spirit of what’s being discussed, but you can imagine some far out scenario where someone paid someone in council off to do something funky. I tried to make it clear that I think that’s what’s happening and I don’t think council members are too concerned with it. I’ve heard some stories where It’s been difficult to do some things in the city, growing your own food kind of stuff which should be really easy, and I guess my point of it was the city should not be a roadblock and in all actuality should make it easier for people to do these sort of things, not more difficult. The one that comes to mind is a couple years ago where somebody, I can’t remember exactly what road they lived on, but they were in the Eastern Plateau area. They had a small farm and wanted to put up a farm stand. They like, wanted to put up a booth. And they had to go through the full business process of site plan review, come to the city council, pay your $250 to like, talk about it and all these processes. It was a farm stand! There’s literally like a shed on the side of the road, this is not craziness, it shouldn’t be that difficult. I live downtown and I have chickens, and one of the nice things is it’s in our zoning.

US: Where downtown do you live?

CASEY: Over on the west side, kind of near Allerdice. But um, [discusses chicken zoning laws].

CASEY: [His neighbor loved chicken coop, new neighbors love it too.] People are like ‘chickens are loud’ which is why you can’t have roosters, but so are peoples dogs! I mean I get woken up by dogs all the time and there’s no law that says you can’t have a barking dog, so why is a chicken any different? [Rules: you can’t have roosters, and they have to be in some sort of enclosure.] I’ve stayed quiet about it because … much more rural areas than Saratoga have started to outlaw chickens. We can [have chickens], I know we can, but if I speak up, will someone get annoyed for no good reason, and fight to make it so they can’t? Again this is some of the background, those same people who are gonna freak out about, “oh you can’t say people are allowed to have gardens,” are gonna freak out that maybe someday their neighbor will want to have chickens so they’ll ban it in the city, which is ludicrous. I know 6 people in the city who have chickens and were like, “keep it quiiiiet,” ya know. And it would be awesome because there’s other communities who have backyard chicken tours, where you can go tour all the things and see how people do it, its super easy.

US: Do you think that would be beneficial to have a place that’s set up as a demonstration site to show people?

CASEY: I think they’re called the [sroptymists?] they always have a backyard garden tour, with flowers and stuff. I thought it would be cool to have a backyard vegetable tour. But then it’s an issue of what you’re allowed to do in the city.

US: Well Instead of backyard, our project is more of a shared public space. We haven’t ruled out the idea of chickens yet, but mostly just permaculture, trees and shrubs, composting, etc.

CASEY: I think a lot of people haven’t realized what their possibilities are in a city. A lot of them think, “Oh I’m a city person, I have to do this, I have to do that.” We have a small yard, and we still have rain barrels and compost and all that fun stuff. I think that would be cool though I guess to answer your question.

US: To have a shared community space?

CASEY: Yeah, well so another thing. I approached the city: one of my first ideas in SS was that we should try to have community gardens. And so I approached the city and I got shot down…

US: Because there are currently no community gardens in Saratoga.

CASEY: There are not. And the primary reason that I’ve run into is risk management.

US: How so?

CASEY: I spoke to a woman named Marilyn Rivers who is the risk management officer or whatever, and was told that you cannot do community gardens on city owned property. Which is the obvious thing, and the city has a bunch of vacant parcels and things that they own, and parks! We have the farmers market in a big park which is highly underutilized.

US: High Rock Park?

CASEY: High Rock Park yeah, and we have a lot of spaces in the city but we cannot do it on city property because the insurance liability is too high. And what I was told is that as soon as people start digging in the ground the insurance liability goes sky high. And I’m like, “Well we have a skate park!” How can we say, “Here go jump off this on a little board with 4 wheels” and we can’t say “grow a carrot” [Laughter.] But I never got a great answer for that, but I was told as soon as you start digging it’s a whole ‘nother thing. But cities all over the country do it [community gardens]. What is different about Saratoga? And I never got an answer. Pretty sure I remember asking that question: Why is Saratoga different from Glens Falls, or Albany, or all these other places that allow it.And I think it comes down to- in order to do it, they require a non-profit or something that has that level of liability insurance that will protect the municipality.

US: Maybe like Saratoga PLAN?

CASEY: When I started out, SS didn’t have nonprofit status, so I approached Saratoga PLAN about getting umbrella coverage under them for this. And now, like I said, I’m a member of Saratoga PLAN. They’re a county based program, so they felt it was too small a mission to fit under Saratoga PLAN. That they should be doing county things not city of Saratoga Springs things. And I moved on from that to the Urban Forestry stuff and kinda left it at that. At that point there was no feasible way to get community gardens on public property in Saratoga. I don’t think that it’s impossible, but I wasn’t available to, at that point, push that issue.

US: What do you think about SS, cause they’re a nonprofit now right, so what do you think about it being more directed at SS?

CASEY: So like I said I’m a board member and I’m involved. I think it’s a possibility, but we’re planned out. One of the things I like about SS is that we’re project focused. And so we have groups that basically work on projects. We have the Urban Forestry Project, the Bag Project, we have the Solarize Saratoga Project. These are very specific and we have people working on those projects. This would be another project, and so if a group or person was willing to take that on, and be in charge of that and SS was confident in their ability to do that project and represent Sustainable Saratoga well, then I think there’s a possibility. I think they would incorporate that under Sustainable Saratoga’s umbrella, and like I said, I can’t state that for a fact of any sort but, I do know that it’s all volunteers. There’s like a half of one employee right now, we basically hired an intern. So it’s not like there’s a bunch of people running around with nothing to do. We all do regular jobs then go do that stuff. So if there’s somebody or some group that was willing to take it on then I think there’s a possibility that SS would allow it to become a group of SS, a committee of SS, and work under their umbrella. But of course that would have to go to the board. And then also it might change their insurance framework. I mean yes they’re a nonprofit but I don’t know if we have the insurance necessary for that project, because most of our projects don’t require much in the way of insurance because were really not involving people in that way. So, those would be issues that might have to come up. But I think it’s possible.

US: Why is it that you can’t just have people sign waivers?

CASEY: I would ask Marilyn Rivers about that. City of Saratoga Springs.

US: Or maybe just a sign, outside the property

CASEY: I get told all the time that waivers are meaningless. That there like a nice idea, but if someone wants to sue they’re allowed to sue, even if they signed a waiver. But I would talk to Marilyn Rivers about that. I’m sure risk management could give you details about that.

US: Do you have any other questions about our project?

CASEY: So the word you used first was Food Forest, and we haven’t talked about that. Is that your idea is it a food forest or a community garden? To me a food forest is a lot different from a community garden. In what you’re asking people to do and what the site will be like, and in where you’d want to do it.

US: We want it to be as inclusive as possible, maybe for lower income areas of Saratoga also.

CASEY: Well you don’t have plots in a food forest like you do in a community garden, and you’re not being active in it as you are in a community garden where you have a bare space and plant seeds. So a food forest in my mind is a group develops it and nurtures it and builds it up and establishes it, and basically anyone can walk over and grab something.

US: I think that’s what we had in mind, something that’s open to everyone.

CASEY: So more than a community garden where you’d have to have someone to manage the ancillary aspects of the community garden and sort of the community member relations. You basically need a group that is willing to be the gardeners. You’re not asking the community necessarily on a yearly basis to be their own gardeners. You need a group that’s gonna be the gardeners.

US: We actually traveled to Wendell MA, where they started their own food forest, last Fall. And we volunteered and planted some trees there. There seemed to be a fair amount of people in that town who were really into permaculture and sustainability and who volunteered their time. I guess we’d have to find a base like that in Saratoga.

CASEY: I honestly don’t know what the permaculture crowd is like in Saratoga. This is a quick anecdote: When we first started SS we started out with these community forums where people were invited to come out and talk about sustainability and what they thought would be nice for Saratoga. Which was nice but after like the 3rd meeting you keep hearing the same idea over and over again, and nothing happens. I was like if I want to be involved, I don’t want to write a plan that goes to the mayor and collects dust for the next 20 years. I want to DO stuff. So that’s where it really got started. The city of Austin, Texas has this campaign, “Keep Austin Weird,” have you heard about that?

US: Yeah and like Portland has adopted it too

CASEY: Yeah the idea that gentrification homogenizes a lot of things and rich people move in and they just wanna drive their SUVs into their garage, that sort of thing. So someone [in SS] was like, “We need a keep Saratoga weird!” And then someone was like, “Saratoga’s not weird!” [Laughter.] It’s just not weird. The demographics of Saratoga are, to be blatant, its old white people.

US: Even Beekman Street is pretty tame

CASEY: And that’s one of the weirdest parts of Saratoga and it’s still mostly old white people. So I don’t know if the permaculture vibe is in Saratoga.

US: That’s not to say old white people wouldn’t be interested in permaculture…

CASEY: No but this is a stereotype, you know, stereotypes exist for a reason. A lot of the time they’re true.

JESS: We were also interested in seeing how something like this could potentially be intertwined with some sort of educational component, like say with service learning from schools or Skidmore or other schools in Saratoga, and in that example students could help volunteer. So that has potential.

JARED: And to teach the sustainability practices that were mentioned in the draft, composting, rainwater harvesting, green infrastructure to absorb storm water, those sorts of things.

CASEY: You can incorporate all kinds of stuff like that into permaculture. The whole point of permaculture is to make it not so much work all the time, not have to replant it every year, but to build something that’s resilient, and that takes care of itself a lot. So that kinda eliminates some of the service learning like, “Come help us with all this stuff we have to do!” If we did it right, we don’t have that much stuff to do.

US: That’s good, that takes away the liability. So you’d be saying we only need insurance for the first few years, after it’s established it’s accessible. Unless fruit falls on your head.

CASEY: Well instead of having random people come in doing plots all the time, you have a short period of time but you probably also have a fairly reasonably small number of people doing it, so rather than saying you need insurance for anybody in the city who might come over to be a gardener, you need insurance for a group of people to do a specific project in like, these three years, and then after that it’s all minor upkeep.

US: If people are going to volunteer, they’re not just random people they want to help. They probably wouldn’t sue or anything?

CASEY: Well yeah but you can’t just assume they don’t want to sue, that’s exactly what Marilyn Rivers point is, you can’t just assume that they need actual proof. But my point is if it’s not just any random person, if you can identify 20 people and you have a project, “We want to do THIS,” that might be easier for the city to wrap their heads around, and to facilitate perhaps. That would be a Marilyn Rivers question again though. That would be a Marilyn Rivers question again though.

US: Vacant plots – do you know what happens to them, once they’re vacant do you know who owns them?

CASEY: Google saratogacountymapviewer. It’s a GIS website,

CASEY: One of the things that I’ve sort of approached the city about is planting fruit trees as street trees, but haven’t gotten anywhere with that.

CASEY: One of the things we did with the Urban Forestry Project is we fought hard to get rid of invasive species from the tree lists, and to make it so that we are planting large species trees wherever we can. We saw two big trends: one was a ton of Callery pears which are an invasive species, and also we’re seeing a lot of Japanese tree lilacs which are an invasive species. They’re [lilacs] chosen primarily because they don’t get very big, they’re hardy, and they have nice flowers, so you basically get tall flowering bushes as street trees. Which from an ecological perspective, obviously they’re invasive species which is a problem, but they don’t shade very much, they don’t provide much habitat, they don’t do much oxygen cleansing/filtration of pollutants, they don’t absorb a lot of storm water, they don’t do much besides look like little pretty lollipops for 2 months out of the year. So we fought for the idea that we shouldn’t be planting these little baby trees, we should be planting real trees, big trees which do the shading and the kind of things were trying to do with an urban forest. SO, because of that I believe their allay of trees will all be fairly large trees.

JARED: Are there any other properties or property owners that come to mind who would be interested in something like a food forest?

CASEY: We here at Parks are planning to plant some fruit trees to some extent, but not like a grove of them but as we replace trees to include some fruit trees in that. There’s been a little bit of pushback initially with the idea that fruit trees don’t grow well unless you use a lot of herbicides and stuff like that, and I was like “we don’t want to do that” so what’s the harm in planting these trees and the fruit might not be perfect? We don’t care we’re not selling them to price chopper, we’re letting people walk up and if they want to eat it they can.

Wesley is a possibility, the nursing home. They now have a nice community garden which we helped get started. We talked about expanding it into this field over here (looking at online map)

For a food forest you basically need an open space…

JAMES: Yeah for light…

CASEY: A lot of people think food forest, “Oh I go into the forest and I start planting things” well that usually doesn’t work very well so you gotta start from scratch and look for open spaces.

(Casey identifying open spaces on map)

JAMES: If we did secure the space at Wesley, would it be only for Wesley residents?

CASEY: Well this community garden is for anybody, it’s not just Wesley people.

JESS: ...Its just on their land

CASEY: Right, they were nice enough to let it be on their land. The original community garden was small and not well maintained.

(Identifying space on Skidmore) (mentions there was some contrversy over management/nepotism at Jefferson apartments, doesnt know who owns it now)

We with the urban forestry project have been working on trying to get this better street-treed (?) and so we’re working with the Saratoga Housing Authority. Their office is at Stonequist apartments. (Stonequist has their own community garden?)

(casey thought it would be cool to put a roundabout/ town square [big rotary that has buildings on it] where the old saratoga diner space was.)

CASEY: Some parts of the city are still on septic, and sometimes if you see a big field its their leachfield, so you gotta be careful of that.

I guess you’d have to think about what your scale is and what size food forest you’re looking for. I mean a food grove is a lot easier than a food forest.

JARED: What do you think is a leverage point, or the way to convince people to get on board, to get residents or the city council to plant a food forest?

CASEY: I don’t think you’d get the city to plant one for you.

JARED: No just so they approve it

CASEY: My impression is that if you do the work for them and take care of the liability, as long as they don’t think it’ll be viewed negatively. They’re not gonna do it for you or help you, but if you can get it set up and basically hand them something and say “look we have this group of people, we have the insurance we need, we’ll do the work” you might get some help, you might get access that way.

JAMES: so you think PLAN or some sort of non profit…?

CASEY: Talk to Marilyn Rivers, or risk management person, and find out what those hurdles are. If the hurdles for what you wanna do are still liability and that sort of thing, then you’re gonna need to find a partner. You might be able to fall under Skidmore’s liability?

JAMES: So we’re just doing a feasibility study, and we’ll hopefully handoff that study to PLAN or maybe even a capstone group next year, who could continue this, so what do you think is the best way we could lay the groundwork to make this idea a reality?

CASEY: Find out what the hurdles are. Find out what the opportunities are. It sounds like you’re working at a big scale, you’re not trying to design this food forest, so think about what size itll be, what activities you’ll have there, and what general maintenance will be required on a yearly basis. What kind of oversight will be required. Figure out what the obstacles are and what the opportunities are for overcoming them.

Most of your time is gonna be waiting for people to get back to you with real answers.

(US asking Casey to distribute our survey online. Casey mentions the RADIX center, mentions how he wants to build a greenhouse attached to his house)

**Tom Denny Interview – 2/23/2015**

JAMES: So we’re currently collecting data from people in town. We have our survey – it’s up online and we’ve been distributing it. The purpose of the survey is to find out the needs and wants of people in town, if they would be receptive to the idea of a food forest.

JARED: And we’ve collected data from interviews. You are our third. And the purpose of the interviews is to get more expert knowledge from NGOs within the city to understand more specifically what those obstacles would be to prevent a food forest from occurring, as well as what are the supports, what would allow it to happen. Also identify potential properties.

TOM: And what’s your vision, or sort of more a precise description of what a food forest would mean in the terms of what you’re trying to promote for Saratoga, or explore for Saratoga.

JARED: Yeah. We consider the food forest that permaculturists talk a lot about like – the fruit and nut tress with the shrubs, herbs and vines, having a public space that has all these varieties of fruit and other plants. That was one of our main techniques that we were looking to promote, but we’ve also since reading the comprehensive plan, saw that there was a lot of interest to get people to get into composting, rainwater harvesting, those sorts of things. So we’re thinking that a landscape could be a demonstration site for those sorts of practices – kind of like the way Radix is in Albany.

JAMES: Are you familiar with Radix?

TOM: I am not.

JAMES: Basically this guy, his name is Scotty Kellogg, purchased this empty plot of land – it was like a parking lot – and then built a giant greenhouse with a slanted roof that faces south. The roof is clear and lets in light for the plants inside. He doesn’t use municipal water, he only uses rainwater. I think he also gets paid to collect compost from the city of Albany which he uses. He uses the compost as food for chickens, ducks, and rabbits and sells the products of those animals to restaurants. He grows watercress from the water that is recycled from inside the greenhouse. It’s just very sustainable, very closed loop, minimal inputs.

TOM: Cool.

JARED: And one of his big goals is to try to teach people in the city to use these technologies.

JAMES: I think lots of schools and field trips go there to learn about sustainability but his is different from our project in that he purchased the plot of land himself and we’re looking to find an NGO or something, like Sustainable Saratoga to front the money maybe, or just some kind of organization that would like… Basically we can’t just buy a plot of land in Saratoga and then be like, “Hey, now we’re gonna do this.” We need educational support behind this whole idea, like a group of people that would be willing to volunteer some work.

TOM: Are you guys going to be around after May to guide this somehow or are you just looking for a handoff?  
  
JAMES: Our project is mostly just a feasibility study and we want to pass it down to some group in town or maybe some students next year who are in Environmental Studies who can pick up where we left off.

TOM: Uh huh.  
  
JAMES: Oh, another thing that Scott Kellogg’s Radix thing in Albany that’s I think the purpose of it is to create profit, right?  
  
JARED: Well, profits and to maintain the operations of it. It seems like much of it is to educate.

JAMES: Ours would be educational too but we wouldn’t sell any products, it would just be open to the community to take fruits and nuts and herbs from it.

JESS: And, I don’t know if we also mentioned the educational component. It would be similar to Radix in that it would have educational programs and we would try to create some links between Skidmore, the High School, or the elementary school.

JAMES: Yeah, we haven’t ruled out having it on school property so that’s one possibility.

TOM: Have you talked at all to the people at Geyser that are doing the orchard? One of the elementary schools in town is trying to launch an orchard this Spring I believe. Did you talk to him?  
  
JARED: I did, yeah. I was going to set up a time to meet but I didn’t send a response back.  
  
JAMES: What kind of an orchard would it be? An apple orchard?  
  
TOM: I think it’s apple. I’m actually meeting with him I think later this week just to see if it can somehow fit in or if we can support it, mutual interests, you know. So I’ll know more by the end of the week I guess, but I think it’d be worth talking to him. I don’t know where they are, but at least it’s an actual live project that’s happening in town that already has the land identified and has a lot of legs up. I don’t really know their goals.

JAMES: We could incorporate the ideas of a food forest into that maybe, because the only difference would be it would just have to have supporting plants and other things involved other than just the apple trees to have more permaculture practices.  
  
TOM: Mhm. I’m sure the apples will not be producing fruit for a while I would guess, so perhaps there could be phases so that by the time the apples come in line, the permaculture might be there.  
  
JARED: Yeah, like growing annuals between the trees.

TOM: So yeah, I think I made clear that this is not my field of expertise, but I’m happy to answer anything that I know anything about, which may have more to do with politics or just general community things than the edible forest itself.

JAMES: Would you mind briefly talking about your role in Saratoga in the government and what you participate in?  
  
TOM: Sure. I retired from Skidmore in 2010. I’ve been there my entire career. I was a music history prof; I chaired probably a third of my time there. I was the chair when Zankel came online so I brought that building open and brought everyone into it the first year, so it seemed like a good moment to move on to something else, so I did. And I got involved with Sustainable Saratoga. At that point it wasn’t even called the Urban Forest Project. Casey was sort of singlehandedly trying to help the city complete a tree inventory that they had to produce under terms of a DEC grant that they had. And they had run out of money so he basically kept the idea alive to get citizens to do the inventory. I had retired just at the right moment and I volunteered for him. And then it became clear that he didn’t have time with a full time job and he was trying to be a small farmer. So I offered to help and since then I pretty much headed up the Urban Forestry Project with Casey still involved. There’s a core of some really great people.  
  
JAMES: Do you have a title or is it that you just do most of the work for it?  
  
TOM: Uh, sometimes I get called chair of the UFP, sometimes I’m head of. You know, it’s not like a firm title, but in any case. So one thing led to another – that was in 2011 and 12 that that all started up and I ended up being on SS’s board which I’ve been on for the past few years and out of all that I got to know some of the people on City Council, and there was this thing on the Comprehensive Plan, I don’t know if you’ve ever heard about the complicated history of how the Comprehensive Plan committee was appointed in the first place, but the outgoing mayor, the last mayor, wanted to appoint the entire CP committee himself, which was a break in past practice where the mayor had appointed a sizable number of people but he had let the other commissioners appoint them, and he had tried to do it himself and it led to this huge brou-ha-ha. And in the end, the other commissioners sort of held their grounded they each got to appoint people. So long story short, Michelle Maddigan, this commissioner of finance appointed me to the CP committee, so I’ve been part of that whole, at this point, 21 month process. Technically we have ceased operations so I guess my part is over, but I’m still monitoring quite closely developments on that and there’s a meeting tomorrow night that the council will be working on publicly tomorrow, so I’ll probably be there. So that’s basically my involvement.

JESS: To bounce off of that, when we talked to Casey, he talked to us a little bit about the CP, where it is right now, and I had asked him how strong is the duality between the side that want to develop versus people who want to conserve the green-belt area. What would you say – or is there a lot of conflict going on with the plan right now?

TOM: Yeah. The CP committee had reached pretty much an impasse. It was 7-6 on any issue. There had just been a shift on which way the 7-6 went on some key issues. And when it tilted in the direction of development, city council intervened back in November and passed a resolution asserting that they were not going to basically accept a plan that had these planned unit developments in the green-belt, the sort of flash point of the whole process. So the committee in early December just basically decided that we were dysfunctional and we were going to hand off what we had done to the City Council and that was a draft that had some disputed points and then 53 items that we had thought we were going to discuss for the December meeting, but we tabled that basically and we just passed it on to City Council. And the people who proposed this approach said City Council would intervene – they clearly wanted to take control of the project. That process let them basically. So now City Council has those two things, the draft and the list of 53 discussion points/issues that are still outstanding. We, the 6 of us actually produced and gave to City Council actually a completed plan that incorporated what we thought should be in it. City Council felt uncomfortable with simply putting that on the table so they’ve decided they’re going to back off from that and they’re going to work through the 53 things and that’s what they’re supposedly doing tomorrow night. It sounds like a lot, 53, but most of them will go amazingly quickly. It all boils down to 4 or 5 key provisions that are going to be thought up, and based on what council did in December, one should feel confident that they’re going to take a stand against the development of the green-belt but one never knows what pressures they’re feeling and what politics will do. But like I said, we feel like we have a lot of good allies on City Council, and the public has spoken pretty clearly, so guardedly optimistic that that will carry.

JARED: So development in the greenbelt is a topic in the minds of the City Council at the moment. Are there other initiatives with like space in the city that are part of that discussion or relate to that?

TOM: Certainly the… I mean the concept of having a greenbelt that is lightly developed, selectively developed, conservationally developed, and an inner core that continues to have infill building, as you see every month that you’ve been at Skidmore, you’ve probably seen a new building go up. That’s part of the plan. That’s getting more of that… So I would say at large that’s the biggest issue – some people think we’re finished with downtown and that there’s no way we can’t not continue to build into the greenbelt, other people say we’ve gotten this far with this tremendous asset that other communities wish they had. Now’s really the time to think about how best to use it to conserve it as it gets… you know people will develop the properties, it’s just a question of how. And that’s the issue that’s at the forefront. Any of the other issues are fall smaller.

JARED: In those areas that are located outside the inner core, downtown, and that aren’t in the greenbelt, particularly, when we look at the properties on the Saratoga County Map Viewer, we see a lot of vacant lots that the city owns, I think we were looking at the west side of SS.

TOM: That the city owns?  
  
JESS: Owned by Saratoga Springs, who is the parcel owner. That’s all we know so far.

TOM: Can you pull that map up? I’d like to see that. Cause I’m looking for vacant lots for trees.

JAMES: And so are we.

JARED: Well I was aiming toward that question. So if we should find out that those lots are owned by Saratoga Springs and they lie outside of the core and the greenbelt, do you see the city as trying to develop those areas?  
  
TOM: The city government per-se does not tend to develop properties. I mean they are trying to put an EMS station out in the Eastern thing. Are all these things supposedly owned by the City of SS?

JESS: Yeah. If you search by attribute, parcel, it says it’s owned by Saratoga Springs. We haven’t yet investigated each one, but some of them are most-likely.

TOM: There are a lot of properties. That’s a park. Okay a lot of them are parks, but my hunch would be that most of them are probably tax/foreclosure kinds of things that are not parks or not serving some other city function. The city does not own school district properties, the city does not own the hospital… So it owns some parks. It doesn’t even own the East and West side rec. That’s actually owned by the school district and the city leases it or has some kind of relation. So I’ll be curious to investigate this a little more. But small ones I would say may be up for grabs as something. I mean another thing is, are they totally unusable pockets of wetlands or something that explains why nobody wanted to pay taxes on them and why the city hasn’t done anything about them. Are they totally unusable pieces of land would be another question I would ask. Yeah, that must be High-Rock Park. That’s another little park up by Skidmore. That’s Congress Park. No, it’s worth exploring and you’re not looking for much. So if you can find a couple of empty parcels from which you can choose and figure out which one has the most possibility, the most feasibility – that would be, I would think a great step forward.

JAMES: Are you familiar with the sustainability initiatives of the CP like composting, rainwater harvesting?  
  
TOM: Yeah, uh. I mean I was part of writing the whole thing so at some level. I mean some of it’s a little dim. What did you want to ask about them?  
  
JAMES: So based off of the city’s interest in sustainability, do you think people in government would be receptive to the idea of a food forest? Do you think there would be allies we could find in city government? Do you think the plan would support this idea?

TOM: I think there are possibly allies, not because they already know what a food forest is, but I think there are some potential allies. You need to understand that a CP, much like an Urban Forest master plan is full of sort of grandiose language that many people are counting on never being enacted into anything binding, like you know that’s a great ideal to have – affordable housing, a train service to Albany.

JAMES: Even if it might not happen and we can still look at the plan and this advocates what we’re trying to do.

TOM: Absolutely, absolutely. In the very least, it’s… We try to do that with the Urban Forest master plan. We still haven’t gotten a lot of that into law, but we at least try to hold it up as, you know, this is what City Council approved three years ago. And you can do the same thing, absolutely. You take the points that are of use to you and you use them as a talking point. When we were doing the Urban Forest master plan, when we were doing the inventory we were lobbying for the master plan, the mayor’s office was not terribly hospitable to that whole initiative. But the mayor had been there when they applied for the DEC grant, and as part of that grant they had this big flowery resolution – whereas, you know, trees are the best thing that have happened since sliced bread, whereas, we believe that it is in the public interest to have trees, whereas, it is to the benefit of Saratoga Springs to preserve and expand the urban forest. All these things. So we took that “to preserve and expand the urban forest” language and we just threw it in their face every chance we had. We said, “Mayor, as you said so eloquently back in 2008, that it’ll be in the public interest to preserve and expand the urban forest,” so you can use that. Just keep saying, “We’re so grateful that you’re wise enough to say these wonderful things, to adopt these wonderful policies. Now let’s see how we can turn them into a reality.

JARED: Are these just ordinary policies? Where is this language to be found?

TOM: Which?  
  
JARED: That the mayor or previous politicians enacted these things.

TOM: Well the first thing they did when they were applying for a grant from the State DEC was that they had a resolution and resolutions are just sort of flowery documents that have a punch-line. So that was in 2008 and we have a copy of it cause we wanted to make sure we had a copy of it. It was in the 2008 city council minutes, I’m sure. Then there was the grant proposal which is also somewhere in the city archive. But the thing that we got in the past was the Urban Forest master plan which they didn’t print till 2013. It’s an 80-page document or something. It’s full of a lot of detail, a lot of high ideals, but some if it they’re actually doing. We need to get a little more of it.

JESS: In what way is the Urban Forestry Project associated with the City Council?  
  
TOM: That’s a very interesting question.

JESS: Cause what you have been saying makes me think it’s connected in some way. So I’m assuming the grant connects to it?

TOM: Well, it started out the city had applied for a matching grant. They were going to get 25,000 from the state if they put in 25,000 of either in-kind labor or something else, so they were going to put out money. And then the whole financial collapse came and they decided they didn’t have any money and this was a convenient thing to cut so they were going to cut it completely and the headlines in the Saratogian said, “City cuts DEC grant” or something. That’s where Casey stepped in and said, “No, we can do that for you. Keep this idea alive.” So then we got that completed – they couldn’t quite ignore that. We had the inventory, we presented it to them, and the grant was that much closer to being completed. So they felt like they sort of had to work; there was a lot of citizen interest and engagement that they had to respond to. So they put together a small group of us to work on the Urban Forest master plan. We worked with, at that point, the former mayor’s deputy, somebody from the planning office, and a couple of other citizens and a couple of people from Sustainable Saratoga. So we were collaborating on that. Then we got them to pass it. Then we just kept harassing them and the Commissioner of Public Works, he actually has taken to heart a lot of what we’ve been pushing for. He talks about us as kind of a partner in City Council meetings and other council members have that same sense that we’re partnering with them. It’s all pretty undefined, but at the moment we’ve built enough relationships that we’re a partner that doesn’t seem to want to go away, so they keep working with us, you know. There is a… one of the things that would be good for the city to do would be to get to be what’s called a “Tree City USA.” This is a certification from the Arbor Day Foundation and to be eligible, you have to demonstrate that you’ve done four or five specific things, you have to commit a certain amount of budget to trees on a per-capita basis, blah blah blah. And you have to have a tree board, which we don’t have. The only thing that we lack that would make it possible is be to have a tree board, and there’s sort of an open question right now as to whether we should push and just say Sustainable Saratoga will be the tree board, which is the way some cities handle it, or whether they’re going to want to do it the way they do most of their other boards which is to have different council members appoint people, or have the mayor appoint all the membership on a rotating basis. If that happened and we became the tree board, then obviously we’d have a clearer partnership. But it is that we’re sort of de-facto partners and it seems to be working.

JARED: What does a tree board do?

TOM: From the Arbor Day foundation it’s supposed to on an annual basis sort of work with the City DPW or whoever’s responsible for the trees in the city and map out some priorities. It’s sort of one step of planning, to get inputs. So it’s basically what we’ve been doing which is to map out where we want trees, how many trees, get them help with additional resources.

JARED: So the Urban Forestry Project – what causes the city to adopt a good policy towards urban trees because they have so many functions that are essential to the environment and people – they filter air, they collect storm water, they beautify the area – is there any interest to add the function of a tree producing an edible fruit or nut to that list of functions that already come from trees?  
  
TOM: I think we’re definitely curious about the possibility. I think we’re a little cautious about whether it’s the right moment to push in that direction. At the moment we’re trying to push as much as we can to shift the mentality from planting small and medium sized trees to getting back to planting trees that someday will be large trees because that’s where the ecosystem services are greatest, kind of exponentially as you get a larger tree. So that’s been our approach. And there are only so many cards you can play in any year and there’s only so much energy this small group has, so I would say that it’s something that intrigues us and we’re curious about and we haven’t had serious conversations about when and where it makes sense, maybe because we’ve never had somebody who has done the leg-work to show us how feasible it is. I’ll speak for the sort of unconscious fears for the populace at large – they just think it’s gonna be a bunch of peaches lying on their front yard rotting and animals attracting vermin. So anyway, that’s where you come in. If you have a way of putting together a package that sells that makes it possible to sell this to either us, the community, or somebody to run with it.

JARED: We’ve mostly been focusing on the interest on peoples’ part as kind of one of the main measures of feasibility. Do you think there are other pieces that are important in understanding if this is actually feasible in other senses?

TOM: Well I guess you can clarify a little bit – are you talking about sort of a group of designated properties where people would go to harvest or are you talking about something that’s along every street in the city or you know that’s in the street right of way?

JESS: We’ve been talking about one location.

TOM: Okay. In some ways that’s a lot more feasible because you don’t have the homeowners reacting to what happens to the fruit and do I really want all these people coming by and picking in the middle of the night and all this stuff, and they’re leaving their peach pits on my driveway. So in a sense I would guess it would be less NIMBYism, if you will, about having dedicated properties. That’s not to say the other model isn’t a possible model. Most places that you’ve looked that have anything resembling this – are they dedicated properties? Pocket?  
  
JARED: Vacant lots, usually.  
  
TOM: Okay.

JAMES: We don’t want it to be like NIMBY; we do want it to be close to like communities who need it as possible, like preferably low-income communities. It would service – yeah, people on N. Broadway don’t need this thing that we’re trying to do. Like people who get all their food from Price Chopper and can’t afford groceries, fresh produce – kind of help them out.  
  
JARED: At the same time, we’re not discouraging having it on N. Broadway.

JESS: Nor are we assuming it will serve any needs of – at least not right away obviously – of anything food related.

TOM: What your talking about is very different from RADIX though, right? You’re not talking about a building that has year-round productivity. You’re talking about something that’s seasonal.

JAMES: It would be outside, yeah.  
  
TOM: It’s a seasonal thing. Are you reading about a lot of places that have done this?

JAMES: We traveled to Wendell MA last Fall and we helped them plant some saplings for their food forest there. It’s different from Saratoga because it’s a much smaller community, less residents, and people involved in the town government had already expressed a lot of interest in permaculture, sustainable farming techniques and stuff and they already had – it was right behind the city hall, or town hall – was a community garden. The community center had a community garden already there and then they just made this food forest thing right next to it.

TOM: There are community gardens in Saratoga. Have you talked to any of those people?  
  
JAMES: There’s only one though, right?  
  
TOM: There probably is only one. Up by the retirement center by Wesley?

JAMES: Yeah. We did identify that the land next to that is feasible because it’s got a lot of southern light. It’s open. So we haven’t ruled that out completely, I guess.

TOM: Did you talk to anybody that’s involved with that?  
  
JAMES: No, we haven’t yet.

TOM: I mean, I think that’s another one that’s kind of… I mean if Wendell did it next to a community garden, presumably that’s because that had some synergy that they thought was useful that’s already a spot where people are going up and caring for – you know it wouldn’t be too hard to try to expand. “Okay, I’m going to have to care for my plot of garden” – it wouldn’t be very hard to expand, put in another hour.

JAMES: And also the thing for the food forest is, unlike a community garden, you plant annuals, you have to replant them every year, prune them and stuff. A food forest, ideally, once it’s established, once the trees have created their canopy an there are shrubs surrounding them, it’s supposed to be pretty self-sufficient. Maybe you have to remove some fallen limbs or something, but it doesn’t really require that much input after it’s established.

TOM: Well that sounds optimistic from anything I know about plants. Plants like to, you know… weeds… the jungle likes to come.

JAMES: Weeding has to be done, but much less than a community garden.

TOM: Yeah, it’s certainly not annuals.

JESS: Going off of that, what do you think city council will think about that sort of space and how it would be used? So what we talked about would be that how the land… it would take, everything would take a while to grow, and so it seems like it would not be very utilized. Do you think their ideas would be on a space that maybe is owned by the city that would not be utilized to some extent? Do you know what their perceptions are on city properties?  
  
TOM: Well presumably if they own it and its vacant now, it’s not being utilized right now, I don’t know. I’m thinking what else… I mean some of those things are probably, you know there’s a police garage, and a place where they take towed cars and there’s a DPW garage out on the West side. I’ll bet some of those at least are also in that category. I guess I’d have to understand the status of the property a little more before I could really answer that question. But it seems to me if there really are a number of properties that have had vacant for a number of years that they would not see it as a huge problem if they had no particular plans and if there’s not pressure to sell them if somebody came up with a purpose that seemed to be serving the community. So I would think that’s not fatal in any way. To me some of the biggest challenges – who’s gonna take care of this thing for the first ten years or however long it takes to get it up online with you guys leaving in two months.  
  
JAMES: Ideally, Sustainable Saratoga or the Urban Forestry Project would adopt our plan after we complete it.  
  
TOM: Yeah, we’re pretty tapped out. I mean I’m not saying it’s inconceivable, but I think you need some new blood. I mean we can lend support in a number of ways – we can help publicize it, certainly, but I actually don’t think that our little old merry-band of Urban Foresters has the capacity to add one more thing at this juncture. So I think we’d be kind of ancillary in support of this. But in being honest, I don’t think that we’re just gonna take a hand-off.

JESS: In terms of management and leadership in this project in whatever avenue it could take for it to actually be a thing, what do you think of the possibility of most of the work and management being from a school like Skidmore, or the high school for volunteering? What do you think of that avenue: having a few people in central management maybe, like an NGO like Sustainable Saratoga or another group, and then other things extending out to a volunteer base?

TOM: Yeah, I mean there are definitely a lot of people in Saratoga that volunteer for things and so it is possible to recruit them. It takes pretty intense effort each spring to have our Arbor Day planting. That’s not to say the public hasn’t been great in responding to it, but it still takes pushing and everybody using their personal network. One reason why I think you should try to talk to people up at the community garden at Wesley is because first of all you said there’s land, and there’s a complimentary use immediately adjacent, they have people who are interested and engaged in that process coming to that site every day during the growing season presumably. As I understand it, they’re actually trying to always bring new blood into that. They don’t keep lots under the control of the same people each year. They auction off a certain number of new people so that you always have the next enthusiastic person coming in. I could send an email to a woman who has been very instrumental in that and ask her if she’d be willing to talk to you guys. If you follow through, I will do that. I really think that’s the most feasible way simply because it has a base that’s very, directly related to what you are trying to accomplish. Whereas the Urban Forestry Project – it’s related cause it’s trees and its environmentalism, but we’re basically focused on street trees. That’s a big enough task in its own to navigate city hall and having volunteers going on that. So anyway, I think it’s possible to find volunteers, but you got to find the glue that will recruit them every year. Out of everything that has been mentioned so far, I think the most likely is the community garden people.

JARED: So Casey mentioned that, when I talked to him, that another issue was liability, and that was one of the reasons why other community gardens didn’t exist. Because people, in the event that something happened, the city would be responsible. And so Casey mentioned as a solution that non-profits have insurance for those sorts of things. Do you think an NGO like Sustainable Saratoga UFP, which draws volunteers, as you mentioned from outside places, could partner with them to offer insurance and support that project in that sense? Whereas maybe that more directive management can come more from the side of the organization. Do you see that as something?

TOM: Casey mentioned that in an email that he circulated to a couple of us who are on the board and he thought he made clear that he couldn’t speak for anything but that it seems something one could have a conversation about and that it’s a possibility. It seems as if Skidmore could conceivably play that role. I don’t know how the community garden solves its insurance problems but it must have insurance. And so if this were just ancillary to that, the insurance may become a non-issue through them. So I think it’s a possible discussion, but I don’t know where it would turn out.

JESS: In terms of the city’s fear of liability, does that only apply on public property?  
  
TOM: I would think so. I mean somebody’s gonna be worried about liability on private property, but it’s probably not the city. I don’t know why the city would have anything to do – if you were on Wesley, which is as far as I know is not a city owned property, I don’t think the city would be concerned. Yeah, Casey may have… I don’t know if he was operating under the assumption as I sort of was that this would be along the street right of ways, but if it’s on city owned property, if that’s your best bet in finding a vacant lot, then the city definitely would be concerned about liability. Whoever’s property it’s on is going to be concerned about liability. Of course, a private person could just decided that they want to take care of that themselves and they could just contribute that to the cause if they were so motivated.

JAMES: Are there any topics we have yet to touch upon?

JESS: I feel like a lot of what we have to do now is just get a few places and specify. Narrow down our choices to figure out what other questions we need to ask.

TOM: Have you been into the city planning office? If you have a connection like that (Emily), I would say use it to get somebody there to explore the properties with you and talk about any that are available. Getting a sense of available properties is, you know, a pretty important step. Kate is the one who’s had the most contact with Skidmore Students because she’s the one that seems to have supervised the interns that they’ve had for a few summers. They’re pretty busy over there, or they do a good job acting that way, so they don’t always respond to emails within three minutes of you sending them either, so you need to be persistent. Anything else?

JARED: I think we’re trying to find leverage points to make this project a reality. Where are the openings? Do you see – are there any things that come to your mind that you think we’re missing?

TOM: It doesn’t sound as though you’ve asked Skidmore if they would allow this to happen on their property, huh?

JARED: That was our bifurcation in the beginning: we either wanted this in Saratoga or Skidmore. It would be a different thing as to how we want the educational side.   
  
JESS: Not as involving, as I’m assuming, as with the community.

TOM: Unless it were open to the community to harvest, Skidmore might not be interested in that.

JARED: There’s one cynical teacher in the ES department who discouraged us from it. I think what Casey was telling us, that mixed use… must extol the most… [unintelligible] serving environmental/community needs and it depends who you’re talking to. I’m not sure. That’s my stance.

TOM: Do you want me to connect you with the people at the community garden? I’ll try to connect you to Susan Bokan, but I’ll let her contact you if she wants to, I’ll send her an email and ask her to invite a conversation. She’s certainly the most involved in that that I know. So you have the choice of a city owned vacant lot, you have a possible choice of Wesley lot, you have a possible choice of private property.

JAMES: Also a school, maybe. High school, Middle School.

TOM: Yeah, I would think. If you want to talk to schools, I would say follow through and touch base with Geyser because again, it’s a parallel initiative. They must have some sense that they’re gonna take care of this orchard and if you can persuade them that they should just add on the rest of the components that will turn it into a full-fledged permaculture edible forest kind of thing, I think it’s always good to start where somebody has the core already up and running and you’re adding to it – it’s either the beginning or totally ground-zero.

Well good luck with this! I look forward to seeing the presentation or reading the feasibility study.

**Marilyn Rivers Interview – 3/4/2015**

MARILYN: So my name is Marilyn Rivers and I am the Director of Risk and Safety for the City of Saratoga Springs. I am the city Safety Officer which is – people here in Saratoga, we have a department of public safety, right, so they think police fire one of them is the city safety officer. It’s not. I’m the civilian city safety officer so I represent the city for all of the regulatory components of health and safety for the city. I also serve on the emergency management team and I am putting together a community safety committee, right? Cause I chair the city Safety Committee for the city of Saratoga Springs. So risk management, do you all know what kind of risk management is? Do you study it in school at all?

JAMES: Lawsuits and stuff?  
  
MARILYN: Um, people think that, but it’s really – it’s probably – risk management is probably the coolest job ever. [James laughs.] Cause I teach on the national level. I facilitate and teach at a thing called the Prima institute. Um, so I teach public risk management from across the country, from as north as Juno, Alaska to as far south as Key West, and probably as far east as…  
  
JAMES: You have to travel there?  
  
MARILYN: This year I’ll be going to Alburquerque [NM] and they come together… they spend…

JAMES: Wow, that is a really cool job.

MARILYN: It’s free. I volunteer. I don’t get paid for it. So I go and I spend – this year it’ll be 3 intensive days of risk management and then I chair the RIMS which is the Risk and Insurance Management Society Standard and Practice Council. So I chair a global council that puts policy together for regulatory matters, so I’m kind of like a closet risk management person. And I have my own blog on Risk and Insurance magazine which you probably – folks here in Saratoga… [Interruption, laughter.] It’s pretty cool. People don’t know until sometimes I’m – because the picture is on the internet – sometimes I’ll be walking in an airport and somebody will go, “Hey! Are you?” and I’m like, “Not really.” It’s kind of like, “No I think you got the wrong person.” But um, so suffice to say, I kind of dabble in risk management across the country and risk management is, um, it is really just the coolest thing because it’s not really claims and litigation. I dabble across the entire spectrum of government. Risk management is about mitigation. It’s about taking a look at the totality of the operations of a system and problems are really not problems – we call them opportunities for improvement. A lot of the folks that are your age are now learning about enterprise risk management in some of your business models and that’s all about seizing and opportunity that may, you know, if a problem occurs, seizing that problem instead of making, you know, something horrible out of it, to make something fantastic and bright and shiny and something that you can sell and move forward. So here in the City of Saratoga Springs I help with policy decisions and do programming. It could be as simple as, “Hey. (snaps) Wear your seatbelt,” or talking about developing the parameters for solar energy or landfill management, community gardens, hockey games, skate parks. So no one day in risk management is like ever the same. Because it’s like – you know that whole thing about the planets aligning [James laughs] – um, depending upon the spin of the planet, the temperature, the humidity, anything can happen.

JAMES: So your traveling involves a lot of astrology.

MARILYN: Um, it’s just, it’s police. People think, “Well, you know, risk management, you stay in your office and it’s kinda yeah, really, come on,” but it’s really not. I mean risk management across the country, you know, we handle police, we handle law enforcement issues, you know we’re all talking about body cameras now and we’re talking about civil rights and we’re talking about the generation of – and I always give this as an example – my son is about 30 who designs jet engines and my generation it was once like I had a calculator in 7th grade. It was 8 ½ by 11 and it was one of the very first calculators they made for kids, right? You know for school. And we had VCRs and you guys are going, “What’s a VCR?” you know what I mean, it’s like, “What?” because now everything, technology, although we might take credit for the foundation of technology, you folks are living and breathing the dream of everything is at your fingertips where we probably had to wait for snail mail, and you know. So risk management is all about embracing the change and never saying no. We, for risk management, risk management should never say no. Risk management should ask, “What are the parameters of what you want to accomplish?” And then go from there. So, my question to you is: What are the parameters for the project that you believe you wish to… I mean what are your ideas or your… and I apologize, you called it a forest? An urban forest?

JAMES: Yeah, the way I explain a food forest to people, it’s very similar to a community garden but it incorporates or it mimics natural ecosystems in the way the plants relate to one another. It uses perennials instead of annuals, so just like shrubs, fruit trees, nut trees. And after its established, after the canopy of trees have developed and everything, should require very minimal input but still produce food and other utilities for the community.

MARILYN: So what are the models that you’re using for your food forest?

JAMES: There are many existing food forests in the U.S.

MARILYN: Name one.  
  
JAMES: We traveled to the Wendell Food Forest in MA and we actually, all of us planted some of the trees and stuff there. It was just starting. There’s the big one in Seattle which is Beacon Food Forest.  
  
MARILYN: One of my students is the risk management for Seattle. So Beacon, I’m sorry Beacon?

JAMES: The Beacon Food Forest.

MARILYN: Okay. So yeah and you just thought I was little old me. [James laughs.]

JAMES: And yeah there are many other, just like urban like fruit tree projects where it’s not just confined to one space but there’s just like fruit and nut trees growing around the city. But we don’t want to do that.

JESS: Similar in concept but different in function, kind of.

JAMES: Yeah. And also, one of the – and it doesn’t just have to be to produce food for people. Like we were considering flood mitigation, like we could find an area of land in Saratoga that gets flooded often and use plants that use a lot of water to mitigate the flooding.

MARILYN: Probably not, but okay.

JAMES: In terms of risk, other people who we’ve interviewed have mentioned that liability would be one of the biggest issues.  
  
MARILYN: Liability for [interruption about pen] So flood mitigation, okay. So who have you talked to for risk management?

JAMES: We haven’t talked to anyone specifically about it but Casey Holzworth in the Parks Department mentioned that he thought that one of the biggest things would be liability of someone, you know, breaks their leg or something on the landscape or someone like falls on a lake or something and gets impaled. [Jess laughs.]

MARILYN: That’s kind of um, that’s sad, but ok.

JARED: Yeah, so he said that establishing a community garden in Saratoga Springs, risk is a liability.

MARILYN: I worked here since 2003. Before 2003 we never had a formal risk management program. The city has never had litigation. We’ve had trips and falls but not anything to do with gardening. So the one point is, cause I’m responsible from a safety committee perspective, we have a flood plain but not really. I mean, we have a flood mitigation system – theoretically we have a flood plain that is down, you know where the water treatment plant is by Loughbury Lake. That whole basin area. And I was having this conversation with the department of transportation just yesterday – very few people know. You know when you go over Rt. 50, you come from the mall, and you’re coming on Rt. 50, there’s a four lane highway. Right so you’re coming from the Wilton Mall or TJ Max. So you’re coming into Saratoga, right, and if you look to the right-hand side you see Loughbury Lake. That four lane highway is a dam. It’s an earthen dam. Not really, cause it used to be a railroad trestle and the State decided to make it a dam. So they made a four lane highway and we use that four lane highway as a natural earthen dam, which is really not natural cause it’s a four lane highway. On the other side of it is where the flood – that went. Then it would go into that flood area. But most of the city of Saratoga Springs sits on a shelf and I don’t know if you remember your geology – the best way to describe it…

JAMES: Are you talking about the High Rock Park?  
  
MARILYN: No it’s actually a shelf underneath all of the soil for the city of Saratoga Springs. So city hall is actually, when you look at the basement level of city hall, the hill, the rock underneath all of the soil, when we blast it like “choo” it could go for like blocks cause the bedrock is pretty solid. So we are on a continental shelf that has silt on it and it’s higher on West Avenue and gets lower toward the racetrack. So it’s really high. We don’t have water issues.

JESS: Skidmore’s the highest point, correct?  
  
MARILYN: Skidmore’s probably higher on the shelf and then you know, spring run trail would be lower or where um, I always call it the Skidmore party house, it’s the yellow house.

JAMES: Oh on Woodlawn?  
  
MARILYN: Is it on Excelsior? The police department always used to call it Skidmore Party house. It’s that old mansion as you’re going to the new, it’s not new anymore, but those suites near Veterans Way. But anyways it goes down so this is the low part. There is an old aqueduct that goes from near the water treatment plant, you can actually drive through it. Very few people realize it follows High Rock Park and the aqueduct goes under Canco Cacino so in some places you can drive a huge truck through it. So we don’t really have a lot of flooding. We don’t have flood plain I guess is what I’m getting to. It’s mostly hilly. The only thing that really floods is that if we have a bad storm sewer situation and we’ve got a lot of rain and the ground is frozen. Boston’s about to go underwater because they have 115 I think this week and they’re supposed to get another storm. They’re projecting that Boston will have 118 inches of snow and the biggest issue now is that there is no capacity for the state of MA or Boston to remove the snow. So literally they will be underwater and no one has flood insurance. Cause remember, they’ve never had that much snow in the last 100 years so there are literally millions of uninsured folks in the state of MA in the eastern seaboard so it’s a crisis situation. So we really don’t have flood zones because we don’t have major water going through.

JARED: Yeah, if they did result, it would be from overdevelopment, like impervious surfaces and high water storm events, like peak storm events where it clogs up.

JAMES: Not like serious, real floods, but just an area that was kind of wet …

MARILYN: Have you looked around the city of SS and thought about where you would contemplate putting a FF?  
  
JAMES: Yeah, we thought about many.

JESS: Yeah, so one of them was actually the area that you mentioned kind of near the wastewater treatment plant, near Loughbury Lake. It’s by East and Rt 50 and Excelsior, that area. [Shows pictures]

MARILYN: So here’s the water treatment plant. Stewart’s owns this. Well Saratoga dairy, but. We have – because these solar panels are unfortunately on Stewart’s property, not ours. But this is all… it’s a basin area, so you’d have to fill it in. It’s all rocky and yucky and there’s really no lawn. You’d have to get fill in there. The fire department uses this creek.

JESS: Is there any purpose for this area that you know of? Cause I know there’s this ridge here that’s a wall.

MARILYN: No. Right because this is all low land, all crummy. If you were going to plan anything here, you’d have to fill.

JAMES: I think ideally, a location would be in the middle of the city, surrounded by a residential area so that people could just walk to it from their houses. Kind of like a park or something.

MARILYN: We could not do – well Congress Park is off the table. Do you know why? Seriously, it is. It’s on the national historic register. We tried a community garden and it miserably failed. The issue was we had a small group of people that wanted to use a portion of Congress Park near where the creek runs and it was just totally unkempt. They planted it then they lost interest and nobody came back. And remember we have indigenous ducks there that are literally called the Congress Park ducks and they are specifically protected by the NY State DEC. They were born there.

JAMES: There’s that video of them all walking into CVS last summer.

MARILYN: Yes. If they’re stuck in a storm drain, we’re obligated to get them out. If one of them gets injured, cause I’ve been called down to CP if one of them gets injured, you know, nature has to take its course. We’re not allowed to interact with them. We try and save them but… So the ducks were eating. We can’t stop the ducks from eating the garden.

JAMES: You said Congress Park was out of the question, but there was a community garden there.

MARILYN: We did it as a tiny experiment and then the purists, the fine art purists, said this is a historical landmark and its not a community garden. We’ve got the historic carousel; we’ve got the Spirit of Life. Her counterpart is Abraham Lincoln’s (unintelligible). We’ve got the Katrina Trusk stairs. There’s a huge major renovation project going on for the park because its our centennial this year. Congres Park is not free to be you and me friendly. So all I’m saying to you is that it’s not conducive to inviting the community in and saying help yourself.

JESS: Around what year was that garden created?  
  
MARILYN: I’ll bet you it was circa 2010, maybe 2009. I remember because I used to be called down there because the ducks were eating the peas and then I’d have to explain that the ducks are inhabitants, they’re protected. Like I said it’s a funky job, right? So I have to protect the ducks as well as I have to protect the police officers and the firemen. See what I mean? If there’s a special bug or an endangered butterfly. If there was a Karner Blue Butterfly that was living in CP, it would belong to me and I’d have to go down there. You know, what I always thought though, is… but you see the problem is the recreation field are so overused. So we have the indoor recreation center on Vanderbilt. Have you guys seen?  
  
JAMES: Is that by the Jefferson Apartments? Ok, yeah we actually visited there.  
  
MARILYN: So there’s a spot there, but we try to fit as many baseball games and as many soccer games in there. We have East Side Rec. Do you know where that is? They have basketball courts. That’s where they have the baseball fields, they’ve got a football field there, a skate park. So again, that’s all recreation. We have the West Side Park, which is on the west side near Division St. Now that is not as utilized as the east side or Vanderbilt. It’s near the Division St. School. So it’s one of the city’s parks but it’s not an overused park. It’s central to a certain population. It has baseball fields.

JAMES: Do you think we would be able to use one of those lesser-used parks for our idea?  
  
MARILYN: Well I think that if you have the potential of… So the West Side park is owned by the school system and we manage it for them. The east and the west we manage for them. But it’s a thought to talk to Kurt Yeger, who’s the business manager at the SS school district. So this city would work with Kurt on developing a plan. That’s something that they might allow you to utilize, but again you’re looking for park that’s surrounded by neighborhood. That one is. It’s by Franklin Square and Division. It’s past Franklin Square. You go up past like Division and Rensselaer. It’s near that intersection. Geyser Crest Park is near the industrial park but there’s a spray park out there and there are playgrounds. Geyser crest has more open area so it has the capacity to have different uses cause there’s more land. He’s on vacation this week and he’s one of my team members. His name is John Hirliman, have you spoken to him? He’s the Administrative Director of Recreation for the city and he is located at the indoor rec center at Vanderbilt and he is the person that manages all of those parks. So if you folks wanted to have a meeting, he would be the person to talk to and investigate whether or not that’s an appropriate use of that type of land. But I would say of all of the parks the city maintains, there are two potentials for the open land – Geyser and West side.  
  
JESS: What about – I think you already mentioned it – the area by the farmers’ market.

MARILYN: High Rock is a heavy-use area. The farmers market, we use it on a regular basis which takes up that whole area. The bigger problem, it’s not really a problem, is that we’ve got the 9/11 statue there, that’s kind of a shrine.

JESS: The area I had in question was the most northern section of it. It’s kind of a grassy area but still has trees in the back near the road on top.

MARILYN: That’s where the statue is.

JESS: Yeah.

MARILYN: I mean there are issues over what color flowers get planted there. The city is different to different people, so we meet multiple needs and multiple interests so it’s always a balance. Whether or not we successfully strike that balance in any given day is the risk. So what other opportunities do you have on your list?  
  
JAMES: The Wesley – there’s already an existing community garden at Wesley for its residents. It was mentioned that we might be able to place our idea right next to that, which is their property. We’d have to contact them.

MARILYN: What about. Have you talked to NIRA, the racing association? And the other place is the Saratoga Casino and Raceway. They have some open fields over there. They have some fields that are contiguous to Jefferson Terrace which would be beneficial to that population. I’m just thinking of the open land.

JAMES: Even Jefferson apartments had a lot of open space inside them, but we figured we’d have to contact the owners of that.  
  
MARILYN: I’m actually (unintelligible) his name is Paul Feldman. He is the new executive director there of the SSHA. So he’d be someone. He’s a part of my Community Safety Committee so you can say that we had a conversation and I referred him to you. There’s not much open land in the city of SS, and I mean that’s the issue, if someone were to benefit from it. Cause even the area on West Ave is being developed. You want it to be urban, or no?  
  
JARED: Either or depending on what’s available.

MARILYN: Well if it’s not – if you’re not stuck on urban, then there is a potential, have you been over on Weibel Avenue where the ice rinks are? So on the other side of Vernon, there are 2 ice rinks. Stewarts is on the corner. This is Lake Avenue and then Stewarts is here and then you take a Left onto Weibel. The first one is Vernon, it’s the older one, and the one immediately next door is Weibel, but John, and I know I’d get invited back to the conversation, but suffice to say, that there is an open lot there. And he’s always looking for opportunities - community projects. You might have to put some topsoil in because it’s a little bit shale. But you’d have to get someone to donate. It’s near Weibel and Vernon. It’s the ice rinks there. And I would say it’s the green space that’s on the south side of the Vernon rink because the shooting range is on the north side. But theoretically, the sunlight is good. The soil is not. You’d have to get someone to donate soil but it has the potential for irrigation because we have the water line out there so theoretically if you had somebody donate an irrigation system, it wouldn’t cost much to pipe in, does that make sense?

JESS: You mentioned earlier that there were many instances of community gardens that you had to deal with in terms of, you don’t deal with any lawsuits or anything like that?

MARILYN: Because we don’t have any. We don’t have the experience of having any I think that the issue is when you start talking about the sort of food forest, you always have to be aware of the fact that there’s a capacity for vandalism and that although you may care deeply about the environment and look, I did my senior thesis on acid rain in the Adirondacks, so there are some of us that are earth muffins but there are some people who are just very tragic individuals who just – damage is their middle name. So the concern would be that you have the capacity to put it together, and actually, this would be a terrific boy scout project, an Eagle Scout project. So see you thought Risk Management was boring. But boy scout’s, girl scout’s. They’re always looking for eagle scout projects. Perfect eagle scout project.

JAMES: We’re actually looking for some group or organization to pass our idea on to because we only really have time to do a feasibility study, but we want to see it carry out after we graduate.

MARILYN: Yeah, so what I’m saying is boy scouts, girl scouts, but I would say boy scouts because they’re pretty active around here and they’re always looking for a project. Instead of building something, it’s better that they could really do some forestry stuff. I would check with boy scouts cause there’s someone that would definitely if you had – I think what you’d want to create is an idea or a blueprint so that someone can – you’re trying to create the beginning of a legacy. So where are you getting your trees from.

JAMES: We haven’t done that yet.

JARED: Where are we getting our money from, for the trees?  
  
MARILYN: I might have an idea. So there’s this organization called Sustainable Saratoga. So they want to plant trees. So just say that instead of planting them on Caroline Street where I don’t want them to plant them, you should plant them wherever *you* may want to plant them cause they have some money to do that. The other avenue is, have you checked the Tree Farm on Rt. 9? They still have a tree farm, you know it’s with the DEC. Another avenue you might want to pursue is Finch Pruyn it’s in Glens Falls [it’s a Paper Mill] and they have moneys available for sustainability – for forests. The other piece is that the city does business with some of these folks in town – it was just on the city council agenda, some of the horticulture folks – they sell flowers. Home Depot is a good source. They give to the community. They have trees and they have fruit trees there. So you might be able to ask for a donation and they do give trees. I’m not sure about Lowes but I know Home Depot does. They’re very community minded. So I think those are opportunities if you want to reach out to do that cause in some sense we all want to give back to the environment before we – cause the Earth is a pretty damn small place. I almost think its Dehn’s but I don’t know. That’s where the city buys all of its trees and flowers. So I guess if you went to the local tree and shrub places, they may be able to assist. But I think that if you were going to do this, you’d have to, for consideration, if you were going to hand this to the boy scouts and the boy scouts were going to come talk to us, we would want to see what the schematics were. You can’t just plant trees haphazardly. You talked about the biology of it from a pollination perspective. We’d want to know the type of trees you’re planting and their longevity and the interrelationships they have with what you’re trying to achieve. Because remember, once it’s donated, it’s left to us. Then do you expect, who do you expect to maintain it?

JAMES: Um, hopefully an organization like Sustainable Saratoga and possibly future capstone students, like the next year’s environmental studies seniors.

MARILYN: You’re sure? You see what I mean because people change.  
  
JARED: We’re trying to figure that out. At the moment, we do actually have three next-year’s students who are pretty interested.

MARILYN: Like in going out and feeding and making sure the trees are not dying or taking care of the trees or shrubs and bushes.

JARED: Well, that process we see being pretty far ahead. We still haven’t figured out how to fund it. I think those students would focus on the logistics and then we would get to who would be the caretakers for it.

MARILYN: So I can, cause Skidmore is constantly on Loughbury Lake. The biology department does a lot of work on Loughbury Lake. So all the students sign disclaimers – if you go out and fall through the ice, whoops, sorry. So there would need to be, from a risk management perspective, if I were going to take a look at it, I’d need to see a map of the trees and I’d need to see what the planning was of how you intended on bringing in the dirt or the plants or the trees, what the intent was, who’s going to be responsible for it. Signing an identification agreement for someone to go in to take care of the trees is not rocket science. To allow people on a lake to do lake studies and whatnot is actually – Skidmore has been a tremendous partner to the water treatment program with all the studies they’ve done over the years it’s been invaluable. It’s recognized at the state level for all the work that it does. So there’s a capacity to try to do that, but I think that you have to…

JARED: Sorry, to have to do what?  
  
MARILYN: To develop a program like you’re doing that matches the longevity of that water study for Loughbury Lake. But I think that there has to be a champion. Skidmore has a champion, a professor – and I apologize, I don’t remember her name, but she’s a tremendous individual. She gets students excited. She loves Loughbury Lake. She’s been there forever. Every year she plans. Maybe it’s Cathy. But you know, from a Skidmore perspective, which of your professors has the capacity to get interested and embrace it? Who’s gonna be that counterpart that interacts with myself?

JARED: Do you see a professor as being foundational to this longevity?

MARILYN: Well because there are always politics involved in anything, not necessarily our politics, but you have politics. Every school has politics associated with it, right? Politics are a form of life – in your families. So you want somebody to champion… Getting future students involved but then becoming a champion within Skidmore itself so that you have the capacity to obtain funding or you have the capacity to continue the interest or expand the interest. You’re creating almost a capstone for what you want to see for future generations. It depends on what you want. Is it a senior project or is it something that you want to have a lasting impact? I mean I get asked that question all the time: Why do you take a week of vacation off and why do you go not get paid and spend 7 days with strangers from around the country? It’s not about me, it’s about the achievement of someone, you know sometimes it’s as simple as an e-mail you get from someone whose life you’ve changed that you think you don’t change anybody’s life and then you get an email that says, “you rock.” But you don’t think you rock cause at the time you’re trying to figure it out. Eventually something clicks so what do you want to – is it just a senior project? And I’m not trying to be offensive by that but you just have to determine and that sets the framework for what you’re trying to accomplish. (Talks about son, Virginia Tech, Rolls Royce Jet Engines.) It depends on do you really want to be remembered, or do you want to be remembered? I don’t know. Only you can answer that question.

JARED: Yeah, we want to have an impact, but it’s not an egotistical thing for us.  
  
MARILYN: But I’m not saying that it is. I’m saying that the framework that you set up, the time that you put into the foundation of it creates the – it’s not necessarily about you, I’m just saying that it’s about what you hope to achieve with the project. Is it a short term, “I need to do this for my grade,” or is this something that lives beyond that you pass on. The Loughbury Lake water studies had for all of these, someone like you came up with that so many years ago. It’s not the same professor, it’s just that the professor took it up and the professor has carried it and actually made it a central part to the biology program at Skidmore. So somebody had an idea like you is all I’m saying so it’s not necessarily your name will be remembered, it’s that your idea will. It depends on how far you want to do it. So you can integrate yourself with the boy scouts. There’s plenty of corporations out there that will fund your endeavor should you decide to conteact them. We have the capacity to look at the space. Stewarts has land here in the city of Saratoga Springs. The risk manager there is Maryann Macecis, she’s the risk manager there. If you do phonetically and you call Stewart’s, she’s in the offices on Rt. 9 near exit 13, their corporate offices, if you contact them. The Goleb Foundation out of Schenectady has environmental programs. So it depends on how you want to, and that I think goes in your report or your plan. Do you do it cookie cutter nationally, or do you want to do it just for the city of Saratoga Springs.  
  
JESS: We would design it specifically for Saratoga Springs in terms of choosing specific plants. Food Forest specific in our zones.

MARILYN: So anything is possible. Remember, risk management is not about saying no. It’s not worrying whether or not someone is going to fall over on a rake. Risk management is about how a program can integrate into the city or the community, what protocols you’re going to put in place, who plants there, what gets planted there, how does it get maintained, is it indigenous, are you introducing a new species that contraindicates what was in the environment, so I don’t know. (Asks about our major and ES program.) I have that discussion with people. I mumble, “I work for the government.” Yeah cause we’re supposed to be the big bad people. God bless political activism in the USA but please don’t tell me you’re going to ride in on a white horse and you’re gonna rock my world, it doesn’t work that way. Government is all about the people that sit behind the desks or go out and hold umbrellas while someone’s trying to fix the electrical box to make the street box work. So I don’t want you leaving here thinking that risk management is about a no, it’s about deciding, being able to integrate – you create a vision and the rest of us try to and make that vision a reality. That’s kind of what risk management is. We’re not really interested in the politics. We drill down into the nuts and bolts of it, the protocol, the standards, the expectation, and the delivery.

JARED: Could you say it’s the processes that allow it to happen without making it risky or dangerous?  
  
MARILYN: You know everything is risky. You could get up in bed wrong and get a brain aneurysm. My son survived Virginia Tech that day by 15 minutes and I made a commitment to him that day never to ever use the word risk management control or loss control or loss prevention. I always and I made that commitment to him as I was saying goodbye to him and not knowing whether I was going to keep him. It’s about mitigation. Risk is all about mitigation. We can’t control anything. We can’t prevent. We can try but anybody who says they can control and prevent, it’s pure bullshit. It’s all about mitigating. It’s all about the alignment of the planets. Everything is in flux. If you come to me and say, “I was on the job and I hit a water main and the water main exploded and the whole block flooded.” I may ask you to go through the series of tell me what happened, but I can’t be you, I can’t go back and change it. I can’t think what you were thinking because I’m different. My perception of reality is different from yours – we all share it. So the Food Forest is about a mitigation of all the perceptions of reality that are going to utilize that and trying the best as possible to provide a baseline so all of those perceptions of reality can coexist but not clash. So I guess the point of the matter is that I would let your imagination create your project, but I would try to find what the reality is in that project, meaning that it sucks to have reality but sometimes you need the paint to paint the picture.

I mean there’s a lot of resources, but from a senior project perspective, I know, I mean I did all these charts. This is who I am – if you have any other questions, you can come find me. I’m pretty cool about helping out. I like to change people’s perceptions of what risk management is.

I think before you even pick your land, you have to draw your picture, your trees, your bushes, your butterflies, your herbs. I really think you need to come up with your concept of what the achievement is.

JESS: So you’re saying it’d be better to have a design ready generically?  
  
MARILYN: I mean, how many trees are we talking about? Are they going to be blueberry bushes, raspberry bushes? They attract different types of birds. What kind of trees? Nut trees? Are you going to have a fountain, benches, walkways, flowers, big flowers, little flowers?  
  
JARED: How much of this is actually important to that big picture, I mean we could go very much into those details, but what sorts of details do you think are necessary to communicate our vision?

MARILYN: Well I think that you need to have a mission statement for what the project is. And then I think you ened to come up with some basic communal responsibilities as to “this is how we play nice”, from a public perspective. Can anybody just pick the strawberries? Who gets to pick the blueberries? From a maintenance perspective, what’s the expectation of once you build it and they will come, then how do we continue to maintain it so that it’s there. Is it supposed to be a one shot wonder, or is it generational? I don’t know. But I think that you, and I don’t know how long your report or project has to be, does it have to be a formal report?

JAMES: Yeah, it’s a formal paper and then we have a final presentation.

MARILYN: Yeah, so if you’re going for the grade you want it to be flashy. I think that it’ll be important for you to talk about those trees and bushes from a – because people like to see what you’re talking about. 360 degree. It could be any kind of park. Just a thought. As you’re doing your project I can be any additional help you need. Hope I didn’t bore you.

**Scott Kellogg Interview – 3/5/15**

SK: … in ‘Sheradan Hollow’(?) right now, which is a part of Albany where there used to be a tannery and there was mercury contamination in the soil, and they want to build a food forest there. So she’s done a lot of preliminary research into it and in instances where there’s contamination, food forests are actually a pretty good bet because there’s a fair amount of studies that show they’re less apt to uptake [contaminants]. And even EPA recommends that in particular thresholds of … contamination that perennial trees and bushes are better choice than annual vegetables.

JH: Yea, I think there are some marginal lands here that could be included. Do you think that, I haven’t read the studies, but I know trees are less likely to uptake [contaminants], but what about perennial bushes like currants?

SK: Yea, generally, it seems to be as a rule that you’re going to have the highest levels of concentrations in root crops and then above that would be leaves and above that would be fruiting bodies. It seems to make sense to me that woody perennials are simply going to be less apt to uptake soluble pollutants than fleshy plant tissues and EPA seems to concur with that. One great thing to do is try and conduct a web review specifically of that question and compile what studies are out there, because I can anticipate a lot of people having concerns and objections. It would great if you could just cite this study, this study, this study… just right there and ‘nip it in the butt’. So that’s one level, the other’s a … I think culture is another one too,.

Somebody good to talk to would be Amy Klein from Capital District Gardens (formally known as), now Capital Roots in Troy… They do a program called Squash… at Capital Roots in Troy where they have people going around gleaning fruit from urban fruit trees, collecting it, because the thing is in Albany there’s a lot of fruit trees and lot of that fruit is just dropping on the ground and rotting. That one be one thing to look into, is just look at what’s already there, because sometimes cities will object to fruit trees because it will make a mess. Have ever heard of the Guerilla Grafters?

JH: No.

SK: I think they’re in Chicago. They go to existing street trees and graft fruit branches onto street trees and they’ll have just a fruit-producing branch and they make a deal with the city like, ‘OK there’s somebody who’s going to come and collect that fruit, and if it ever goes unmanaged, they’ll just come and cutoff that one branch’, just as a way to appease them, that’s kind of an interesting model, because that seems to be like in the city they’re just like, “Oh more management for us, it’s more mess”.

JH: (Inaudible question)

SK: I guess are always concern is that people start something with the intention of doing it and then stuff changes, then it falls upon them [city] to be responsible for it. So I don’t know maybe you need approach that put a time limit on it or lease it… But fruit and nut trees, you’re looking at 20-30 years before some of them are even productive anyway. Berry bushes is going to be a shorter time. Currants are going to get fruit in the first year or two…

(much later)

JA: I’m curious to know, you said you’ve a part in influencing the city of Albany?

SK: I’m on this committee and I meet these other people every couple of months.

(much later)

JH: What do you think is a good way to engage people or get them on board with a food forest, be it a stakeholder or (inaudible)? How have you gone about it? This could be for a food forest or a sustainable technology thing (inaudible).

SK: Like stressing the educational component of it, that’s a good way to cut through a lot of the political garbage. I mean if you talk about education, it will get people’s ears, especially framing it in the context of STEM education which is what everybody’s obsessed with right now. Kids can learn about biology, physics by planting trees, try to get them like that (inaudible) … and whatever are the new political sort of ‘buzzwords’ are at the time… ‘food security’, ‘food access’, ‘health’, ‘nutrition’, ‘obesity’.. that’s a big one right now.

You know to some extent it’s like playing a game of just trying to get people to see the value, because it you approach it from a multipointed (inaudible) nebulous perspective, [people] can just be like, “well I just don’t see how..”. But if you go into a board room with politicians, you get a couple seconds to like get their ear about it.

It also depends on your audience.

**Eliza Hollister Interview – 3/20/15**

JAMES: How long were you [Skidmore’s Community] manager?

ELIZA: For last year’s season, starting when i got back from study abroad which was in May. So may until December (2014)

JAMES: Were trying to implement, but that’s not feasible in our time-span, so were trying to do a feasibility study of if someone could implement a food forest in Saratoga Springs, which is kinda like a community garden but it uses lots of permaculture, so everything is perennial, and its supposed to mimic a natural forest ecosystem, and it could use other sust. practices like rainwater harvesting, composting. It could even be used for flood mitigation if we used wet-loving plants. We’re trying to find people in town to help us implement this in the future, and you have experience managing a shared community space. Could you talk about that? What are some problems you encountered as garden manager?

ELIZA: Problems with community space and what it’s like to work in that space? (JAMES: Yeah) okay well it was definitely tricky at times getting things approved. Finding a place to do what you wanna do and getting the approval to do it, that was tricky. Generally we were lucky that the garden was received really well by the community so we had a lot of people that were supporting it.

JAMES: Who went into the decision to create the garden where it currently is?

ELIZA: The planning for that was mostly students and Levi Rogers, and other people in the Sustainability Department.

JAMES: And then it had to get approved by the administration?

Eliza: yeah

JAMES: The way the garden is managed, how do you please all the stakeholders you have. Is there competing interests among people?

ELIZA: There’s not too much competing interest on campus because once we got the approval to do it, we kinda had free reign to do it as we wished, as long as we didn’t grow outside the parameters or grow really stinky or ugly things (laughter). But i think that what you’re doing might be a lot more difficult. For what we’re doing the stakeholders are pretty much the students and the faculty involved in the creation and maintenance of the garden. And then getting things through the administration. And then there’s the community too, which has a say in how they like it and if they wanna see it continued and if they’re getting something out of it, and then the Saratoga community too.

Its honestly pretty easy and we’ve been lucky in that regard because it’s been met with a lot of positivity by all of those stakeholders. So i guess id like to hear where you’d be implementing this and who your stakeholders would be.

JAMES: So we’re trying to get Sustainable Saratoga, and the Urban Forestry Program involved, but yeah we’d need some kind of NGO or some group in Saratoga. Maybe the City would have to be the parent-organization for it for legal liability, provide funding and stuff. For places that we’re considering, we have a lot of empty lots in Saratoga. (flood mitigation, it could create food and other things for the community)

ELIZA: So you’re looking for my insight and advice given my experience here?

JAMES: Yeah cause it’s kind of a similar thing. I guess it’s more clear to set it up at Skidmore because you just have to go through the administration, not through the city or a third party or anything. Have you had any problems with the garden being ransacked by drunk people?

ELIZA: No actually! Everyone thought we’d have a lot of issues with that, that there would be vandalism and people would steal our vegetables, but it really didn’t happen which is surprising.

JAMES: And no animals or pests?

ELIZA: Those were our main problems honestly. We had some rabbits and a lot of bugs, but that’s to be expected. In a way that’s encouraging that the bugs and the mammals were a bigger problem than the humans, because we kinda thought it would be the opposite. Who knows, that could be insight into what you’re doing. I don’t know i guess it depends on your location. Would it be a public access area?

JAMES: yeah we want it to be as open to the community as possible. Basically once it was established, and the fruit and nut trees had grown and established their canopies and were producing fruit then hopefully anyone could just walk in.

Did you experience any problems with not having enough volunteers? How many people had paid positions?

ELIZA: Three. For me it was 30 hours a week (in the summer) and then 2 other people who were the Northwoods stewards had 6 hours a week for the 10 week period we had in the summer. But honestly finding volunteers wasn’t a problem because of our location. Before we moved we always had trouble finding people to come and help...

JAMES: Because it was out of sight, out of mind?

ELIZA: Exactly. So that’s probably something to consider for your location.

JAMES: So you always had people showing up who were eager to work?

ELIZA: Yup, which was largely due to social media, and getting people aware of what we were doing.

JAMES: hmm social media… and networking?

ELIZA: Definitely, and promoting it through posters, and having meetings

JAMES: You guys had an opening ceremony at the end of last year right?

ELIZA: Yep we did

JAMES: I remember there were snacks and stuff, it was cool.

ELIZA: Bribe people with food. People like that.

So location is a big thing to think about, visible location. Bureaucracy is gonna be your toughest thing to get over. Getting approval and getting land, which is hard to do.

JAMES: A big thing that someone else we interviewed mentioned was liability, so what’s the legal liability of Skidmore Community Garden? Is it covered by Skidmore’s insurance?

ELIZA: I think it’s probably under the blanket of Skidmore, but I don’t know. That hasn’t really been an issue, cause were not working with power tools or anything, just shovels and rakes.

JAMES: Did you employ any sustainable practices?

ELIZA: Companion planting was one of the things we tried to do, plants that have a symbiotic relationship with one another. We tried to maximize space in that way.

JAMES: Do you have any perennials in the garden?

ELIZA: We do, we have a lot of perennial flowers. (JAMES: are the flowers just for aesthetics?) Yeah, and we’re thinking about selling the flowers, selling bouquets next year. And we also have a couple perennial edible plants, which are asparagus and rhubarb. And blueberry bushes, raspberry bushes, and strawberries.

JAMES: Would the bushes be the largest plants you have in there?

ELIZA: Yeah, they’re being used like a border, so it makes the fence a little less ugly, and produces fruit. And composting (referring to sustainable practices)

**Robert Curry Interview – 3/26/15**

Works 7 days a week at Shelters of Saratoga doing maintenance, also works at lumber yard. Is planning on doing advertising using his ELF -organic transit vehicle. Born in 1960, He grew up on Staten Island south shore when it was still rural, used to go trapping for furs there.

ROB: ...they all work with the Shelter. I know the bankers, I know the Mayor, working at the shelter I meet everybody. We just had a gala the other night, and everybody was there. This is a very money town, everybody’s rubbing elbows, but there are very generous people in this town.

JAMES: So Shelters of Saratoga is interested in creating a Food Forest on their property?

ROB: Well, I’m already creating something similar to that. I just bought a greenhouse. (brings up the books Edible Forest Gardens and Permanent Tree Crops).

If you do something like [a food forest] field mice and rabbits will girdle your seedlings so you need to wrap them with hardware.

I was just about to order Pawpaws, (local stuff etc.)

There’s a lot of resources in this town, and a lot of likeminded people. You know, local produce, organic, I go to the farmers market….

JAMES: so do you think people would donate seedlings and plants?

ROB: I just got a big donation from Seed Savers Exchange, I might have some perennial vegetables from FedCo, they’re up in Maine. (Looks at back of Gurneys catalogue?)

(talks a lot about genetic diversity of seeds and how they were spread by native Americans. Talks about cold-hearty kiwis)

We probably can source this stuff (plants) cheap if we go through wholesalers. I was wondering if someone like Gurney’s, if we contact them and you tell them you’re Skidmore students, and you’re working with a nonprofit, maybe they would donate stuff. Like i just got Seed Saver’s exchange to donate, and Susan Johnson in town, she just donated 120 packs of seeds and huckleberry was in there…

JAMES: How big is this space? I’ve never been to shelters of Saratoga

ROB: See I don’t know about long-term. I can propagate material, but I was thinking a location over at Skidmore, is there any place they could… I dunno something like this (food forest) is so long term, like they were talking at Centennial Trees, ‘where can we put these trees where they won’t be disturbed? My idea is plant as many as possible and then you have a better ratio of surviving trees.

JAMES: So Shelters of Saratoga, that land will be owned by Shelters of Saratoga for a while, like the next decade or so?

ROB: It should be more than that, indefinitely…

JAMES: so there shouldn’t be any problem planning on that?

ROB: Mike Fonacchi, the new director, he’s a sweetheart, but you see there’s a board of directors and stuff, I mean they let me do whatever I want. If we put in a garden and it ends up getting bulldozed down the road then there’s nothing we can do about it.

(around 11 minutes in)

(talking about Elon Musk)

ROB: People always butt heads over “you can’t do it”... what do ya mean you can’t do it? It’s crazy, the paradigm. That old archaic way of thinking…

JAMES: Yeah like ‘we gotta make money, so we gotta do it this way’

ROB: Yeah but you can still make money at it!

(Starts talking about jimmy carter and the oil embargo, lectures us about how oil comes from fossilized algae. Jumps to discounts on ordering seeds)

(talks about seed saving, and selling citrus seeds in Florida. talks about how trees are a long-term investment.

JARED: How many stakeholders are there in your property?

ROB: Well I don’t know that’s why I thought you guys had something lined up over at Skidmore, they’re not into it?

JAMES: We wanted this to be for Saratoga Residents

(talking about pioneers, black locust wood, foxfire, municipal water, capitalism, etc)

ROB: But um, I don’t know if the shelter would be a good choice for something like this…

JAMES: Well cause I thought you were just saying that you’re planting things on that property.

ROB: I am, I’ve got fruits, nuts, berries,...

JAMES: So all of that food would be for people in the shelter?

ROB: We try to show that we’re environmentally friendly, we’re trying to produce our own food, trying to teach better habits to a lot of these folks,

JAMES: Another big thing we talked about with our project was education, so educating the people in the shelter, or just general Saratoga residents about sustainable agriculture.

ROB: (reccomends stonequist)

JAMES: So you don’t think we’d be able to do a food forest garden on the shelters of Saratoga land?

ROB: I don’t think so, because we’re dealing with people who have a lot of substance abuse problems. We have school kids come and volunteer but there’s always a supervisor, it’s not like kids can just wander in. There’s insurance issues and legal issues. We were running code blue the homeless shelter over at the church and there was real clash of problems, people were like ‘what are these homeless people doing around our kids?’

(talks about BOCES)

JAMES: So we only have a month left and we’re just laying the groundwork, taking about potential locations and making connections with people in town like you. So even though were gonna graduate in a month we still really want this to happen in Saratoga,

ROB: I really think this idea could take off. I know a lot of people in this town, I’m meeting a lot of people who have money and have property, but I can’t just go to them and say “we need this tomorrow” I have to plant the seed in their brain. (talking about community involvement, using local banks and the YMCA etc)

ROB: I don’t wanna freak you guys out but there’s an energy vortex here…

ROB: (talks about involving Skidmore more, the new Davis woods land/ solar array land, possible locations for Skidmore implemented Food Forest.

Rob talks about how important it is to prevent girdling.

ROB: I used to specialize in citrus in Florida I had 38 different varieties, (starts talking about seeds he wants to grow in Shelters of Saratoga, using permaculture techniques)

**Michael Kilpatrick Interview - 4/1/15**

MK: I first started working on this project back in 2010… (later)

(Use map of property as picture for presentation)

You can kind of see that whole 35 acres or so behind the tract which is actually woods right now and then the back part of the property is all creek and small forests. I feel that something like a Food Forest would definitely work. I think one of the things we struggle to look at on this property is we have 35 acres of woods and yes we’re thinking of things like doing pasture pork production back there and we want to do walking trails but obviously it’d be really helpful if we could find another community aspect of the woods.

MK: I think right now the current thing is we have to raise a lot of money by this fall to purchase land and then hopefully the closing will happen sometime this fall and then we can start doing things on the property. So right now we’re doing a lot of planning on our end, we going to try to do a site evaluation, get someone to come in and do a ‘sustainability plan’ for the whole property. There is a lot work that needs to be done.

JB: And Saratoga PLAN is purchasing the property, correct?

MK: Yes so what Saratoga PLAN is doing is they’re the ones who are purchasing the property simultaneously the city will be purchasing the development rights which means they will be purchasing the ability to put houses on it – basically which means they ‘extinguish’ them, so they’ll spend money and make sure that no one can put ballfields, houses on it, you can’t put stores on it, you can’t do anything except agriculture related. So that’s one thing we’re working with right now to make sure we figure out exactly what is agriculture related. For like our farmer’s market building we’re trying to make sure that still fall’s under ‘agriculture’ – so that’s a key aspect of what we’re doing.

One thing that we’re also looking to do is hopefully work with ACC up in Glens Falls, they have a sustainable agriculture program. They would like to be able to use the land or doing teaching on it and stuff, so that’s one thing we’re (inaudible)…

JB: ACC as in Adirondack Community College?

MK: Yes, that’s actually called SUNY Adirondack now.

JB: Ok, because we were hoping that education would be a large part of the Food Forest.

MK: Yea, so I think that would tie right into it.

JB: And it’s also right across from the High School

MK: Yea, and the ‘Y’.

So I don’t think I can say like “Yes, we can put this here” (laugh). But I think that this is something that the site would work well with. This is definitely a possibility, there’s definitely enough space for this, especially with woods in the back. Or even in some of the front area, because we would like to create (for part of this) areas… because it’s a huge 120-acre field and that’s kind of large open area… so in this area, to create maybe a small area of trees, maybe 2-3 acres that would have a ‘food forest’ aspect to it. So I think that would be ideal, to do some of that. And shade for people who are biking or riding or something like that.

(Jessica asks question )

MK: So the aspect would be to have teaching farms, so ‘teaching farms’ would a 1-2 year program where they come and learn how to farm. One of the big aspects for us is to teach them the business side of farming because many farmers go to a place for an apprenticeship or intern and they learn how to grow vegetables, but growing vegetables isn’t farming. So we give to them aspects of how to manage a business, how to sell your product, how to make sure you’re making a profit, how to make sure you’re putting enough away for retirement, for business investment, that kind of thing.. But after they graduate that program, our goal is to hopefully have ten or twelve 1-2 acre spots where the graduate can then grow their own crops but also be overseen by the person who’s running the farm. So he’ll just walk through once a week and if they have a question they can call him over and he’ll able to walk them through what’s going on, “what’s the problem with the crop” or something like that. So the beauty of this whole property is that this would all be built around the farmer’s market site so that these students could then sell that product to the farm stand store or farmer’s market.

JB: Liability is another obstacle we’ve encountered when trying to find a place. So if there was a Food Forest on your land, I’m assuming liability would cover anything that would happen to it?

MK: Yea, this property will be very consumer and very community-heavy, so we’re going to have a very expensive liability policy. But what it will do is cover everyone to be able to come and access the land. Yea but I think it would super cool if we could have a food forest there and also through that food forest have signs that explain the different crops being grown, the different trees there and talk about what season they would be available. It would also be cool to hook this to an ‘app’, [to notify people] when the apples are ripe or the chestnuts are ripe, send everyone alert saying, “Hey, the chestnuts are ripe in the food forest, you can go check em’ out!” That would be something really cool you could add to that.

JH: Regarding money, we’ve also considered for our next capstone group, they can focus on the money-raising aspect for the food forest.

MK: We have about $700,000 we need to raise to acquire the land and then we got all the money to raise through all the (inaudible). So I’m thinking something like Kickstarter would be more effective in raising money for the programming and after the initial acquisition, right?

We’ve already got a couple bikers in town, cyclists, who are really interested because they want to use this property to connect some trails. So they’re already looking into some fundraising for that. That would helpful in getting access to the property.

(Regarding support)

Even up to the federal level where we’ve got Elise Stefanac…

On all levels we’ve got great support and I think the big thing is making sure we all can come together and support this and figure out how to do the fundraising to get this property purchased. It’s got a wide range of support.

JB: Would you say that fundraising is the biggest hurdle for implementing this?

MK: Yes, we’ve got a ton of experience ‘on the table’, we’ve got multiple farmers who have experience internationally of how to build farms, of how to do education, we know what we want for a farmer’s market building, it’s just a matter of finding the funds to do this. That’s the absolute biggest hurdle right now.

JA: So when we explained the system of the Food Forest, we’ve kind of envisioned it to be a not-for-profit system, so what are your opinions on those types of open-to-community [approaches]?

MK: The whole project is going to be a non-profit. So the goal of it’s not to make money, the goal is to serve the agricultural community and the general community, as well. Specific aspects of this project will have to be ‘for-profit’, like the farmers. The obviously need to make a living, so that’s the aspect that does. Something like the Food forest, we would want to make not-for-profit and that would be obviously be something we’d figure out how to sustain and how to bring in enough income to keep it going, but this would be something I feel is just there more for the community than anything.

**John Hirliman Interview – 4/7/15**

JH: We have the rec. center here, we have two ice rinks that we manage over on Weibel Ave, the area that I think Marilyn mentioned to you. We have East Side Rec Park which is by Lake Ave, corner of Lake Ave and Grainger, across the street from St. Clemen’s Church. West Side which is over by the Division Street Elementary School, we have that park. And then Veteran’s Memorial Park out on Geyser Road, headed out Southwest of the city. Then we have Northside park, the park which is connected to Skidmore, so there’s the athletic fields and the turf, the open space [near it] is about 4 acres, that’s the Recreation Department’s. So those are the parks that we manage here and the locations that we manage. We have the Waterfront Park which is going to be opening this summer, that’s down off of Crescent Ave. That’s a lot smaller piece of property and right on the water, so there’s not a lot of opportunity probably over there. But I think we would be receptive to trying to do something and be apart of it. We’ve tried to start community gardens. We’ve tried to do some other community partnership programs and things like that. So we are definitely on board, we’d just see if it would fit with us and be able to make it work. I think the biggest thing for us would be to know basically the size and scope and what our role would need to be in it if it’s maintaining it, if it’s designating the land for people to be able to come and go. All of our parks are closed at night, if that’s an issue or not an issue. Our parks are also not… they’re closed, but we don’t lock any gates or shut anything down, just fear of if we lock someone in or if someone did get in we want to be able to get them out. I think we’d have to work through kind of that piece, I think the size is probably the biggest [aspect]. Most of our space that we deal with is all rec. fields, soccer, baseball, lacrosse fields, things like that… and just how it would fit in the landscape of that.

JH: I think the biggest thing would be to, “how much space would I be taking up?” and then for us, how much would be willing to give up for… I think if we find corners where we’re not using then I think it would make sense. I think if it looks at further expansion of our athletic fields, that would be a challenge. But I think, looking at our parks and kind of thinking about it, we’d have to really investigate where we’d put it and how we’d put it. Northside park would be probably the best for the relationship between Skidmore and the city as it’s right on campus, it’s right there, it’s right next to …

James: So who’s decision would that be?

JH: It would be a combination between the city and the school (Skidmore’s). The property belongs to the city, it borders Skidmore’s. So if the property was on both sides, it could go kind of between both.

In my role I have seven board members who oversee our facilities. So they would be the approving board who would say, “Yay or nay, let’s do it”. So I would bring this recommendation to them, they would go through and they would look at the blueprints and ask 6,000 questions (laughter) and table it for a session and come back and (inaudible)… In order for your project, the number one thing you need to do is know if there’s a space that you can do it and what size space you can have…

Unfortunately, it has to be close to something so that someone can police it. We’ve had vandalism. If you let it go a day or two days, then you’re out of luck. You have to fix it the next day… to keep everyone’s spirits up so that other’s won’t come in and do the same thing... and it shows that someone cares. If you just knock it down then the residents where we were, they’ll just be like, “Oh, management doesn’t care, they don’t care if it’s broke”.

**John Hirliman Interview Notes**

* Rec Center
* East side rec park – corner of lake ave, across street from church
* West side park – Division St
* Veterans memorial park –
* North Side Park – connected to kid more by fields
* Waterfront park – this summer, Crescent ave.

Size, scope, role of Rec Dept.

All parks are closed at night – gates aren’t locked, though

Community garden was going to happen, but funding fell through

Behind Ice Rinks

* Old septic tank fields – don’t know if they’re still in the ground, plumbing was put in in 2012
* Land behind ice rinks is one option, but not very accessible

West Side/East Side

* Small area between fields
* Owned by the schools, managed by city

North Side Park

* By school – extending the tree line, long narrow areas
* Combination of Skidmore and City

Potential Management from DPW

* Manage, watch, trim

Glens Falls Community Garden success – started up by John

**Susan Barden Interview Notes – 4/7/2015**

* “We thought the Pitney farm area would go to development, and it didn’t, which is really exciting. You don’t see working farms in an urban area.”
* The old chicken provision was never yanked, so that’s what’s unique about us.
* Can’t have roosters or pigs, but YES to goats, sheep, horses, chicken.
* People have a hard time with community gardens in the comp plan.
* Some people get weirded out by mixed use – cities are going back to that and getting rid of Euclidian Zoning.
* We have a very active community and sometimes it’s good, sometimes it’s not so good.
* She is in favor of mixed use.
* Lake Ave Elementary has a garden
* Front Lawn of Water Treatment Center could be an option!
* West Side Rec by Division St could be an option!
* Geyser Rd
* Ice Rink – That would be pretty cool! Nice area behind the rinks.
* National Grid area on Excelsior *could* be an option – she thinks it will be a parking lot for the Spring Run trail
* Dog Park on S. Broadway may have potential – open field area
* There’s a group that wants to fix up South Broadway.

Procedurally, we would talk to the DPW

Commisioner of Public Works – Chiraco – FIRST STOP to pass this!

“I don’t think it necessarily matters if its city-owned property or not, but if you show them a few ideas on a few parcels, you could take it from there.”

Letters of Support & Assistance from NGOs, Professors

**Paul Feldman Interview – 4/8/15**

Director of Saratoga Springs Housing Authority

(introductions, reminding Paul what a food forest is, talking about how much space we’d require.

PAUL: We would probably have residents that would volunteer.

PAUL: I think I told you in my email, I have no problem looking into being able to give you some space and helping to facilitate some of this stuff but I really wouldn’t be able to dedicate my staff time towards doing it. So if you guys wanted to organize meetings you could have them in the community room here because there would definitely be some residents, we have a garden with little plots out back where they plant vegetables and stuff already. So I know we have some people that would be interested and willing to help do whatever you needed to do to maintain it. Im sure we have spaces at the terraces also…

JAMES: Jefferson terrace? We were exploring that land

PAUL: There is definitely some large areas that we would be willing to allow you guys to do that in. And you would probably have some interest over there too. Are you the guys who said you’re handing this off to the next class or something?

[yeah we have an interested student next year. (explains feasibility study, etc. explains how were presenting our findings on the 29th)

PAUL: You can say that I’m willing to offer some space for the project. You could use the community room here, we also have an office that our resident council is gonna be using if you wanted to have meetings over there if you wanted to. I would also put you in touch with the leaders of our resident councils and resident advisory boards because it would probably be best to work through them to try and gauge a level of interest with the residents. And they’d also probably be willing to do a little bit of ground work in terms of drumming up support for participation from other residents. That’s something the kids could probably even be involved in.

US: Liability???

PAUL: I’d run everything by our housing authority attorney, he would require whoever was going to do this to provide the insurance. That’s generally what we do. Have you guys talked about a non-profit or through Skidmore?

US: Possibly through Saratoga PLAN, or sustainable Saratoga,

PAUL: Actually sustainable Saratoga is coming to my next resident meeting to talk about their program or something

US: Urban forestry?

PAUL: So were gonna let em [urban forestry] plant trees here too. So I don’t know other than that what you might be looking for but as far as offering space to kind of organize and you know things like that, space to actually put the project on, I’d be willing to do those things.

US: What’s the maximum amount of land that you’d be willing to let us use for this?

PAUL: Umm, it would be hard for me to say because I’d have to have my board approve it, I’m confident enough that my board would be in favor of allowing some level of activity. I can’t say for sure how much because we are looking at, yo know one of the Skidmore groups was doing something about affordable housing. We’re looking at putting another building behind the field, possibly more housing there, and then there’s a plot at the terraces that were looking at putting some more [houses in]. So I’d have to factor in where they’re going to figure out how much space you guys could have. But I could foresee, you know, at least probably… like a thousand square feet at least.

US: Yeah that would be great!

PAUL: Maybe, yeah we’d probably be able to give you a pretty decent sized piece here and over there [Jefferson]

US: The food forest is a long term thing, the trees have to grow and develop their canopies,

PAUL: What type of trees are you guys thinking about?

US: Chestnut trees, which are local, berry bushes, any kind of plum trees,

PAUL: Plum trees grow around here? How big do plum trees get

(discuss heights of plum trees)

JARED: We can do dwarf trees, we can ask the residents what they’d be interested in.

JAMES: The design process for what we want in the food forest would come after we find the land because it would have to be built around the specific conditions of the land, so right now finding land is our biggest obstacle and after that we can make more decisions.

PAUL: the most likely place here would probably be out past our maintenance garage, between the main fence that borders our garage, between the fence that borders our property and the maintenance garage, that’s probably where I would look for something like that to be put. I think it’s pretty much in the sunlight the whole day. and then there’s a couple places at the Terrace where I could see allowing it, even a couple spots if you wanted to do more than one and do different things or something. I think a lot of residents would probably be into that.

JAMES: Also another component of our project is education, so we’re thinking Saratoga HS or maybe even college students would come and learn through experiential learning, would schools be able to come in and check it out?

PAUL: Yeah I wouldn’t see a problem with that. Again I’m kind of tentatively saying yes, everything would be based on my attorney saying ‘yeah there’s not a problem with that’ but I don’t foresee that. I know that there’s high school kids who come over and work in the back here with our community garden, and till the soil and get it ready for people, so yeah I don’t think that would be an issue.

JARED: What are the interests of your residents? What do they like to do?

PAUL: It’s hard for me to say we got 176 apartments here, 176 different personalities, some of them like to organize some bus trips to go to casinos, some of them like to go gardening, some just keep to themselves. We’re renovating our website to get more information on there about things to do. I’ve only been here 3 months but I’ve been in the industry for a long time and I’m trying to integrate our residents with the community. A lot of housing authorities are kind of segregated from the rest of the community, and I don’t like how that is. I want our residents to realize they’re residents of the City of Saratoga not residents of the Saratoga Housing Authority. In our newsletter and our website, were transforming those to offer information about activities going on around the city so people can get out and do more stuff. We have quite a few people who like to bike, (bike racks in back are full) 35 residents here who own bicycles.

There’s a core group who get together and do 50/50 raffles, and they have dinners and things like that so, like I said, if you guys ever wanted to have a meeting or even appear at one of my resident meetings, and then schedule something after that as a follow up, you’d be welcome to do that.

JAMES: It’s great that you mentioned including residents as part of the Saratoga community, because one of the goals along with education, sustainable agriculture, of the food forest is to provide a green space for people in the community to meet, just to share this common space. So you think aside from schools, other people who don’t live in the housing authority would be able to come pick fruit from the trees?

PAUL: Oh yeah I’d have no problem with that. As long as you guys have no problem with it!

JAMES: yeah we want it to be as inclusive as possible

JESS: How much of an issue is vandalism?

PAUL: I was waiting for you guys to bring that up. As I said I haven’t been here long, but I came from Schenectady, and we had all kinds of issues with vandalism, graffiti there. I don’t see that here on nearly the same level. There’s some, but from my understanding they used to do the “beautification program” here and I’m going to try and do it this year. We’re going to buy flowers and mulch for residents and then they’re going to each fix up their own little area, or as many people want to do it in front of their apartments at the terraces.

PAUL: (vandalism wouldn’t be a problem) One of the other things were doing, I’m starting to install cameras,

JARED: What are certain areas of Jefferson you have in mind?

PAUL: (Paul pulls out map, discusses potential housing development and potential locations)

Jared: Hypothetically, can we have it all?

PAUL: To tell you the truth, a lot of the amount that id OK would depend on what my resident advisory councils wanted to see. Because if the residents like the idea, like I said it might be a good idea to meet with them at some point too, if they like it, and I have a feeling they will like the idea, if they support it makes me a lot easier for me to OK it and get the board to approve it.

JARED: If we wanted to talk to them, would we do that through you?

PAUL: (gives us names of resident advisory boards and their leaders)

(Jared mentions they should come to April 29th presentation)

PAUL: There’s pretty much 3, maybe 4 leaders that we have contact information for and I’m sure they’d be interested in the project. I can’t imagine why they wouldn’t. There’s one person here, and here name is Elizabeth Powers,

and well id give you her name and Ollie Wescot, he’s our resident board commissioner, the housing authority board is made up of 7 commissioners, two are resident commissioners who are elected by residents. So Ollie is one of our residents and Susan Christopher is our other residents and she lives in Jefferson. So I’ll give you contact info for both of them. Bill Bloom is very active, Peter Berrios is active, and Elizabeth Powers is very active here, so it’s a total of 5 people i could give you contact information for. I’m sure they’d all be willing to meet with you. Yeah if you meet with them and they support it and they want it, it makes it really easy for me to put this through. Because the biggest barrier would be me presenting this idea to the board, and having residents say “oh you’re going to take up space we want to use for something else” so to have them on board would be a big help.

JESS: Longevity??? (Trees, Jared talks about berry bushes yields, and tree yields. long term, not instant gratification.

PAUL: How do you envision dividing up the soil? The fruit?

(we talk about how unpicked fruit is a problem, so popularity of picking is good)

PAUL: There are people here at housing who would probably have an entrepreneurial attitude and think “hmm I can sell these” (laughter all around) so they’ll be picking them and putting them in baskets. I don’t think you’ll have to worry about that here, not picking.

JARED: That’s a good thing though

PAUL: People here would love to be able to go pick pints of berries, and make pies or do whatever they wanna do with them.

JESS: Do you think people here would be leaders?

PAUL: There’s some people here who love to be the boss of things, so you won’t have trouble with that. I don’t know what level of competency you’d be looking for in that, but I know you’d find people who would love to say they were in charge of this and the boss.

JAMES: As much community involvement as possible, it’s not a problem if people are too interested.

PAUL: I’m into blueberries and raspberries so if you plant those, I’ll be happy with that.

**Glen Herlihy Interview – 4/9/2015**

JARED: We read your website, the how to start a food forest page, and I guess I wanted to start off and ask you – you mentioned you kind of catalyzed interest for the food forest project by sending out emails, doing tabling, trying to find a core group of believers. How did you communicate the concept of a food forest to the larger public and were there any specific techniques or phrases that you used?

GLEN: Yeah so beyond finding a core group, you’re interested in having a larger community with the concepts.

JAMES: Yeah, maybe explaining the concept of a food forest to people who are unfamiliar with it.

GLEN: Right. So we had a drawing that came out of the permaculture design class that showed a food forest type garden on the land we ended up getting permission to use, but it basically demonstrated – it was a mapping, a design drawing showing all different kinds of food forest techniques. It was basically a roadmap for us to show the community. So whenever we did present the idea, even before we had permission to use the land and even before we did a community design for the final garden, we had this tool that allowed us to explain a lot about food forestry. It was good to have and we brought it everywhere. So if you have sort of a dream idea map ready to go to show different concepts or different ideas, methods, then you can explain a lot visually about what a food forest is. Now we took that beyond that, and we started sending out flyers, post cards, and mass mailings that we were able to afford by a grant to do outreach and that went out to entire zip code areas. It was 7,000 or 8,000 households. Got small information postcards explaining what we’re thinking about doing and what it would kind of look like and who would benefit, and then that was a major push in our community engagement. But most of it has been through the media, social media, gathering our email addresses and just keeping people posted.

JAMES: We’ve been apprehensive to create a design for the food forest because we’re not sure exactly where the location will be. So you think having a blueprint or a drawing of the design would be helpful?  
  
GLEN: Well I think you could take several designs off the web and show as examples. It really helps people get excited when they can actually see something that would happen or might happen. Just talking to them is a little different unless you’re very descriptive in your language. So yeah, I would recommend strong visual aids about the beauties and the benefits of a food forest.

JARED: Would you mind if we used some of your illustrations on your website to show people?  
  
GLEN: Yeah, off our website, there’s our schematic design that was the community’s design and that is not very detailed. It’s basically a placeholder. It has many elements that are placeholders for us to design by. It does not look like that so much. It changed a lot during construction drawings and in reality, but you’re welcome to use that. It’s a possibility if you’re explaining components. It doesn’t really get into the hugelkultures and the swales and so forth and the details of putting in a food forest, but if you want to use it, you can.

JARED: Cool, thank you. In this process of working with the SPU [Seattle Public Utilities] and the city, did you need to prove that this would be successful? Did you draw upon any successful examples to show them?  
  
GLEN: Ultimately, we had to show them we’re successful and continuously we have to show them that we’re going to be successful, but in the beginning we really just needed to show them we needed community support. So when we did our design party for designing the schematic, we saw an exponential amount of people show up at each of the meetings. There were 3 or 4. By the last one there was over 100. So that in a way kind of demonstrated to them that we had community support. But we were required to do postcard mailing and we actually even hired community ambassadors for different cultural groups within the community to go out and talk to their communities. So we had a Vietnamese, we had Chinese, we had a Latino community ambassador that went to each of their communities and talked about it whenever they were having an event or whatever and they would also help us interpret when we were holding a table somewhere, so that’s above and beyond. That definitely was a requirement by the city that was a lot for us to manage. Not necessarily would be required anywhere else, but it helped. It helped engage a lot of ethnic diversity. So it was all about proving that we had support. A large email list, that we had gone through a lot of the hoops in engaging other communities, and then having coming up with a community design plan showed that the community was engaged in actually helping to design what they want to see and what they could incorporate within a food forest. So that was one of the permissions to use the land.

JARED: How has securing long-term management been? Has that been successful?  
  
GLEN: Well, it’s doing great. This year our biggest management is finding volunteers to show up and help manage it. We actually have been blessed with a plethora of people who are willing to show up monthly for work parties and weekly for meetings. You know, it’s all about the people. If you can manage the people, the garden will come easy. And we have had no problems with that. So far it has been great. A lot of support and a lot of active people coming in constantly asking for what they can do to help. The hard part is that we’re a bunch of volunteers trying to manage this and because we are volunteers we are slightly forgiven if things don’t turn out as planned. So what more can you expect? If we were all paid, we’d be under the direction a little bit harder.

JARED: Sure. And you’ve been able to maintain this volunteer support through e-mail lists and that sort of thing?  
  
GLEN: Yeah, and that volunteers are coming to us because they want to work. They want to get their hands in the soil. They want to learn about trees and food forestry. They want to probably just hang out with other people and play some music too. How you entertain that at your work parties or how you educate them will bring back volunteers, cause that’s what they’re ultimately looking for, is some connection. If you can engage them in something they’re very interested in and they feel that they have become a part of or have helped lead or teach, then you’re more likely to see them come back over and over again.

JARED: Good. This is a question about how successful the plantings have been. Have the initial plantings been successful? Has it kind of evolved?

GLEN: Yeah, they’ve been overly successful. We’ve gone above and beyond what we planned for phase 1 putting in all kinds of components that were sort of community asked for. Mushroom huts, outdoor kitchens, different stones, better built compost bins, all kinds of guilding methods and guilds that we built that turned out better. In order for us to move to the second phase, we have to calm down the amount of construction we’re doing to just prove that we finished phase 1 instead of keep adding on to phase 1 so we’re looking to slow down a little bit actually and just maintain regularity and from there we’ll be able to approach the city again for phase 2.

JARED: How does phase 2 differ from the first phase? Just curious.

GLEN: Phase 2 was a requirement by the city to get that up and running basically to prove that we can do what we said and that these volunteers will show up and help prove what we can do what we said, and that is since above and beyond what we expected. So that’s fulfilling our requirement with phase 1, to build it and maintain it according to our management plan and so forth, and then after that we have to ask again.

JARED: To continue planting more?  
  
GLEN: Yeah. The SPU [Seattle Public Utilities] has many – they’re maintaining the other part of the lands, it’s all grass now still and we have to develop the next phase according to how they can maintain their grass and that we all kind of work together by it. So we’ll be doing it types of construction fences around it and all kinds of stuff again by law. There’s all kinds of requirements we have to do.

JAMES: Have you had much productivity with food yet or is that still to come in the coming years?  
  
GLEN: This is our 3rd growing season this year and we got several hundred pounds of produce cause we did a giant sort of annual bed just to produce all kinds of free forage for our neighbors for the food banks – 450 pounds. Got produce out of that and there’s been innumerable amount of perennial harvesting: herbs, shrubs that have produced small berry batches and so forth. Everything is pretty young still, so. In 5 years we’ll see an exponential amount of yield.  
  
JAMES: Would you recommend planting annuals in the beginning few years then?

GLEN: Yeah. So you get your trees in first, that’s what we did. That’s what you want to get established because you want to get over your watering cycle of getting them established. Once they’re established, your land around you is open for whatever. I mean perennials will be small; your shrubs will be small. You can introduce a lot of legumes and nitrogen fixing annuals that will help fix the soil for later years. So that’s kind of what we did. We just planted a lot of peas and grew them up right up into our little trees and so forth and then chopped and dropped them right below there for nitrogen.

JARED: So you think this will follow through to the very last phase and this will be a success?

GLEN: Well so far it has been a success, so I’m counting yes that I’ll continue on like that, sure.

JAMES: What would you say that the greatest obstacle for securing the land and the initial implementation was? Was it volunteers? Was it getting approval for the land?  
  
GLEN: I think the biggest obstacle is gaining the confidence of the city agencies that own the land that we are able to do what we say. What’s your experience base of all their volunteers? Have they done any farming? Have they done any gardening? That was something they really wanted to look at to see that. As long as you have some core people who know what they’re doing, I think you’ll get some confidence and then anybody with or without experience can join in and become part of the numbers to help and learn. The idea is we educate a big base of people to help maintain. We taught hundreds of people to sheet mulch – how to turn grass into a forest and plants, so that right there, we got hundreds of people set up and knowledgeable to go to phase 2. Obstacles were political as well. I mean there was: Why do we get to use this land? Why is it a single purpose? Why can’t this be a multi-purpose land use? So we had to convince them of that. It’s pretty easier out here because there are a lot of gardeners and a lot of agricultural people in politics. And then city council and so forth, they realized that there are massive benefits from public gardening, not only land regeneration and habitat renewal, but also physical exercise and community building. That’s very important for society and small communities. It was a bit of a struggle. There were land use rights because there was a new park and our land was part of the new park, but ended up being dropped from the parks department and sent back to SPU [Seattle Public Utilities] and so SPU wasn’t set up. They’re not a company or an agency that interfaces with a lot of public, so they’re not set up to really help us. They can’t advocate for us because they are a public company, not a private company. So we had to pretty much do it on our own, but we found an umbrella organization through the city, P-Patch [P-Patch Trust/GROW] which runs 90 public gardens in Seattle, and they kind of serve as our 501 (c)3 and our over lookers for the SPU. And we’re fine with that. That’s working out just great.

JARED: I guess that’s all we have to ask. I think that answers most of our questions.  
  
JAMES: This has been very useful, though. Do you mind if during our presentation, if we include a headshot of you next to some of your quotes?

GLEN: Sure, that’s fine.

JAMES: Oh, I guess I have another question. So right now basically our project is a feasibility study because we only have month before the three of us graduate. So we have one student who wants to take this project for her senior capstone next year and continue it, so do you have any advice about transferring the leadership of it? Because we really want to see this actualized in Saratoga, but we’re not going to be around, really.

GLEN: Right. Well, set up public access documents. So any policies you come up with, or ideas, or any clear methods that you want to use, make sure they’re accessible by everyone – Google Docs or however you want to do it, or a website or something so that you don’t wind up going backwards on any kinds of decisions that you’ve already made. That will slow you down and get frustrating. So just make sure that your documents are clear about what you discussed, how that was voted on, how you’re making decisions, and that this is the decision that you made because that’s what needed to happen. We’re constantly working on that – making sure that the decisions we make are available to everyone. All these projects – it’s not so much about the food forest itself, it’s more about the people. You know, people are the hard part to work with, so you need to make sure people are connected and they feel like they’re useful and that you can rely on them as best as possible. In your situation I don’t know what I’d say about transferring it off to somebody else. That’s great. You should try to keep it going. For sure, especially if it’s a feasible project that may find some land. Everything will probably change when you do find land because you’ll have a landlord or somebody who is going to have some indications and demands, but nonetheless if you can find a design or create a design or at least create an interest group that would eventually find land and a design, then make sure they’re set up with good ideas.

JARED: That’s good advice. Cool.

JAMES: Yeah, so I guess that’s it. This has been very informative. We have a lot of data to use now. This is great, thank you so much.  
  
GLEN: Good luck with it, I hope it works out. At least you pass your course.

Appendix 5: Saratoga Springs 2014 Comprehensive Plan Draft Notes on Relevant Material

**Saratoga Springs 2014 Comprehensive Plan Draft Notes**

“The City’s population in the 2010 Census was 26,586. During the last century, the City had a slow population increase with a growth rate near 1.5%. There was a large increase in population from 1970-1980 at almost 27%, but the rate leveled off between 1980-1990 and 1990-2000 at just under 5%. Within the City, the largest population group is 50-59 years. Every age group over 55 years is growing and all but one age group below 55 years is decreasing. It is important to plan for the aging population as well as attracting younger citizens and families” (p. 3).

“The overriding philosophy that will guide future development of our "City in the Country" will be sustainability. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development makes investments that yield long-term benefits for our community. Sustainable development enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting the human and natural resources, upon which the future of our economy and our community depend” (p. 8).

**VISION STATEMENT**

**2.2 Environmental Health and Resiliency**

* To preserve and enhance a City that protects the natural environment allowing all residents regardless of income level to live and recreate in an area that is beautiful, healthy, vital and safe
* To maintain a City that is prepared for the impacts of climate change, that does not contribute to the degradation of the environment, that recognizes the blessings of its natural resources and protects and maintains them for the good of this community and future generations
* To create and maintain a City that obtains its energy needs more on the use of alternate energy sources that do not contribute to greenhouse gas emissions

**WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?**

*UNIVERSALITIES IN SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES AROUND THE GLOBE*

**ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND STABILITY**

**Recommended Actions**

Agriculture (p. 17)

3.1-42 Foster connection between City residents and local/regional farmers.

3.1-43 Investigate locations for the current Saratoga Farmers’ Market to grow and expand including additional parking.

3.1-44 Develop a plan to continue promoting sustainable agriculture within the City.

3.1-45 Consider allowing commercial agriculture uses within the City to further support agriculture as an economic driver in the City.

3.1-46 Encourage active and passive agricultural activities and agritourism.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCY**

The principle guiding environmental health and resiliency is:

*To preserve and enhance a City that protects the natural environment, allowing all residents regardless of income level to live and recreate in an area that is beautiful, healthy, vital and safe.*

**Trends**

**“**In 2011, the City adopted the Climate Smart Communities Pledge, which is a public declaration of leadership and commitment to reducing emissions and adapting to a changing climate via 10 focus areas, or “pledge elements.” The Pledge demonstrates that local government is acting to protect the future of its citizens and of coming generations and invites everyone to take action regarding climate change. By preparing for a changing climate, public health and safety is protected, and a secure economic future is supported” (p. 18).

“The Urban and Community Forest Master Plan was adopted in May 2013 by the City of Saratoga Springs. The plan builds upon the vision outlined by the City Council in its June 3, 2008 resolution, in which they declared that ‘the preservation and expansion of the Urban Forest will serve the public interest by improving the community’s physical, social, cultural and economic environment’” (p. 19).

“A number of local and regional organizations are partners with the City as it continues to strive for environmental health and resiliency. Those organizations include but are not limited to the following:

* Sustainable Saratoga – a not-for-profit organization that promotes sustainable practices and the protection of natural resources, through education, advocacy and action, for the benefit of current and future generations in the Saratoga Springs area.
* Saratoga PLAN – a nonprofit land trust that helps communities make long-term plans for conserving our region as a great place to live, work, visit, and farm. PLAN assists landowners with fulfilling their conservation goals for their land and provides stewardship for over 3,500 acres of farmland, forest, natural habitat, trail corridors, historic places, and water resources in Saratoga County.
* Sustainable Skidmore – Works to promote and advocate for sustainability on campus Skidmore College, and off campus in the community and beyond. Various topic areas of involvement through researching, discussing, planning, and creating policy around include: local food, energy and climate, recycling, composting, diversity and justice, and land management. (Campus Environment Committee, Environmental Action Club, Sustainability Committee (SuCo), Sustainability Rep, North Woods Stewards)” (p. 19-20)

**Challenges and Opportunities**

“The most obvious challenge is balancing development with the natural environment. The key to future growth is focusing development near the City’s core and existing infrastructure resources. However, if development does occur beyond the core, it needs to be harmoniously incorporating into the natural environment. It is not necessarily natural versus built, but the integration of both that will make a sustainable community to live in and provide a supporting tax base. Another challenge is to think creatively about how development can be designed to work in concert with its natural surroundings, as opposed to against or without consideration of it” (p. 20).

**Recommended Actions**  
Open Space

3.2-5 Encourage the preservation of agricultural land as a means to preserve open space.

3.2-7 Continue to implement the City’s adopted Open Space Plan (2002).

3.2-11 Create and preserve civic spaces within the urban area such as courtyards, gardens, plazas and pocket parks.

3.2-12 Partner with other jurisdictions in the County to implement the county-wide Green Infrastructure vision.

Recreation

3.2-13 Work with local and regional departments and clubs to evaluate and identify the community’s recreational needs.

3.2-17 Establish an on-going dialogue with adjacent communities and the school district to identify opportunities for inter-municipal recreation programming and facility use.

Water and Stormwater

3.2-27 Promote and encourage the use of green infrastructure techniques, including the expansion and preservation of the urban forest, to manage stormwater.

3.2-30 Promote rainwater harvesting for residential and public use, such as flower programs.

3.2-31 Promote water reclamation systems.

3.2-32 Pursue demonstration projects for green infrastructure best practices.

Natural Resources

3.2-38 Educate the public on the important roles that natural resources play.

Resiliency

3.2-59 Develop and implement a Climate Adaption Plan to anticipate ways the City can adjust its resource management, land use planning, and infrastructure improvements in an incremental way to address and respond to future climate changes.

**COMMUINTY CHARACTER**

**Recommended Actions**

Community form, design and quality

3.4-1 Maintain and promote the “city in the country” form that includes an intensively developed urban core, vibrant central business district, well defined urban edges and an outlying are comprised of open lands, landscape or rural character and low density development.

3.4-2 Preserve the rural greenbelt of the community concept by maintaining an urban design character in the core area of the city and a rural character in the outlying areas.

3.4-9 Increase the development of public and private plazas and meeting spaces to enhance the sense of community.

3.4-11 Create new landscape design guidelines for neighborhoods that add safety, comfort, and beauty, while maintaining or enhancing ecosystem neighborhoods.

3.4-16 Continue to provide linkage between and among community neighborhoods.

3.4-17 Continue to provide linkages and interconnection with and among all the various social, employment and commercial activity centers.

3.4-19 Allow for and encourage community gardens, rooftop gardens, urban gardening and backyard agriculture and sustainable agriculture within the city limits.

Arts and Culture

3.4-37 Promote volunteer opportunities and participation in all sectors of the community.

3.4-42 Implement creative placemaking tools to engage residents and contribute to a healthy sustainable community.

3.4-43 Use creative placemaking as a tool to animate public and private spaces, improve public safety, and bring diverse people together.

Education

3.4-44 Encourage community inter-relationships with higher education institutions.

3.4-45 Encourage more coordination and sharing of all public and private educational and institutional facilities to complement community and neighborhood needs.

3.4-46 Promote more sustainability-based and civic curriculum within community education facilities.

3.4-49 Promote more school participation in cultural and educational opportunities.

3.4-50 Provide opportunities for higher education students’ involvement in the community.

**FUTURE LAND USE**

“To maintain and improve upon the City’s current position, a close look was given to the City’s future land uses and the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (Map). The Map sets the direction for future land uses within the City. It illustrates the City’s vision by identifying broad categories of land use. The Map is not a zoning map. However, the zoning map must follow the direction set forth in the Comprehensive Plan in accordance with General City Law §28-a. The zoning ordinance is typically the regulatory document that addresses densities, area, bulk and specific permitted uses” (p. 49).

“The concept of the greenbelt, which was represented by the Conservation Development District (CDD) in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, is reinforced in this updated Map” (p. 50).