



# The Intervale Center

Strengthening Community Food Systems in  
Burlington, Vermont



Travis Marcotte  
July 2012





# Overview

## The Intervale

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

## Farm Incubation

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

## Discussion



# The Intervale

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





# The Intervale - Vermont





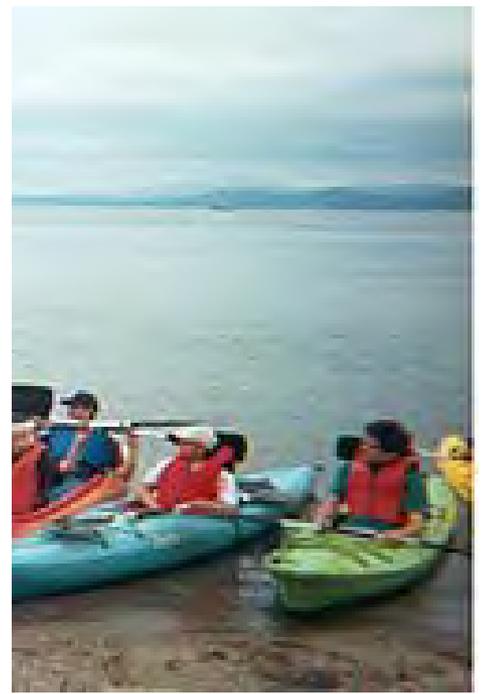
# The Intervale - Burlington





# The Intervale - Burlington

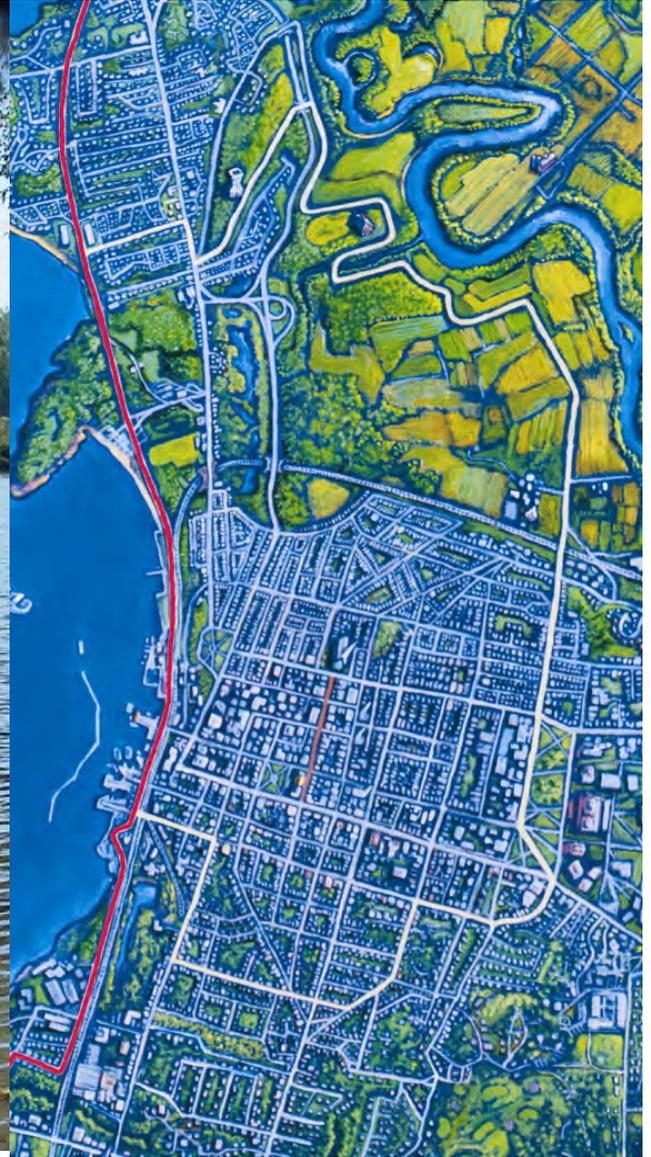








# The Intervale and Our Work





# Our Vision and Mission

## *Vision*

We envision food systems that contribute to healthy communities.

~ Farms and food businesses are producing sustainable profits, products and livelihoods. ~ Land and water are healthy and protected. ~ People support and celebrate their communities agricultural producers. ~ We imagine the Intervale Center as a living embodiment of this vision.

*Our mission is  
to strengthen community food systems*

And our goals are to:

- 1. Enhance the viability of farming**
- 2. Promote the sustainable use and stewardship of lands**
- 3. Ensure community engagement in the food system**



# What is a Strong Food System

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



Profitable Farms



Access to Land



Good Land Stewardship



Diversified Production and Markets



Local Processing/Storage/Distribution



Eaters Who Value Local Food



Local Waste Management Systems



Public/Private/Social Partnerships



Good Food Policy





# How do we strengthen the food system?

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

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

Farms Program - Growing new farmers through farm incubation.

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

Food Hub - Aggregating, marketing and distributing local food.

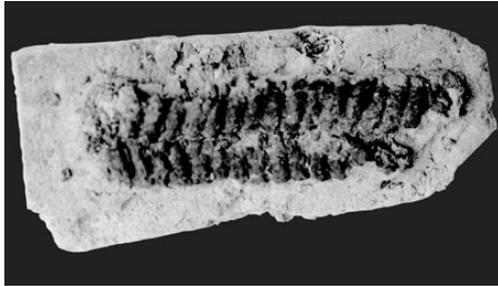
Community Connections – Engaging our community in support of sustainable agriculture.





# Intervale History

500 BC-1700s CE Center of Abenaki Culture



1770s-1940s Family Farms



1940s-1980s Abandonment and Disuse









# Intervale Transformation







# Intervale Preservation











# Intervale Programs





# Intervale Compost Products





# Healthy City Youth Farm





# Success on Farms

Providing farm business planning statewide for existing farms.





# Intervale Conservation Nursery

Growing trees and shrubs for planting forested buffers between rivers and farm fields





# The Intervale Food Hub



The Intervale Food Hub aggregates, markets and distributes local farm product through multi-farm CSA and wholesale.

We currently work with 25 farms to...

- ↑ Availability and Value of Local Food
- ↑ Environmental Sustainability
- ↑ Farm Production and Profitability



# The Intervale Food Hub



Restored 1920's dairy barn and complete Farmstead

1,600 sq ft temp controlled root cellar (12,800 cu ft)

8,040 cu ft walk-in cooler

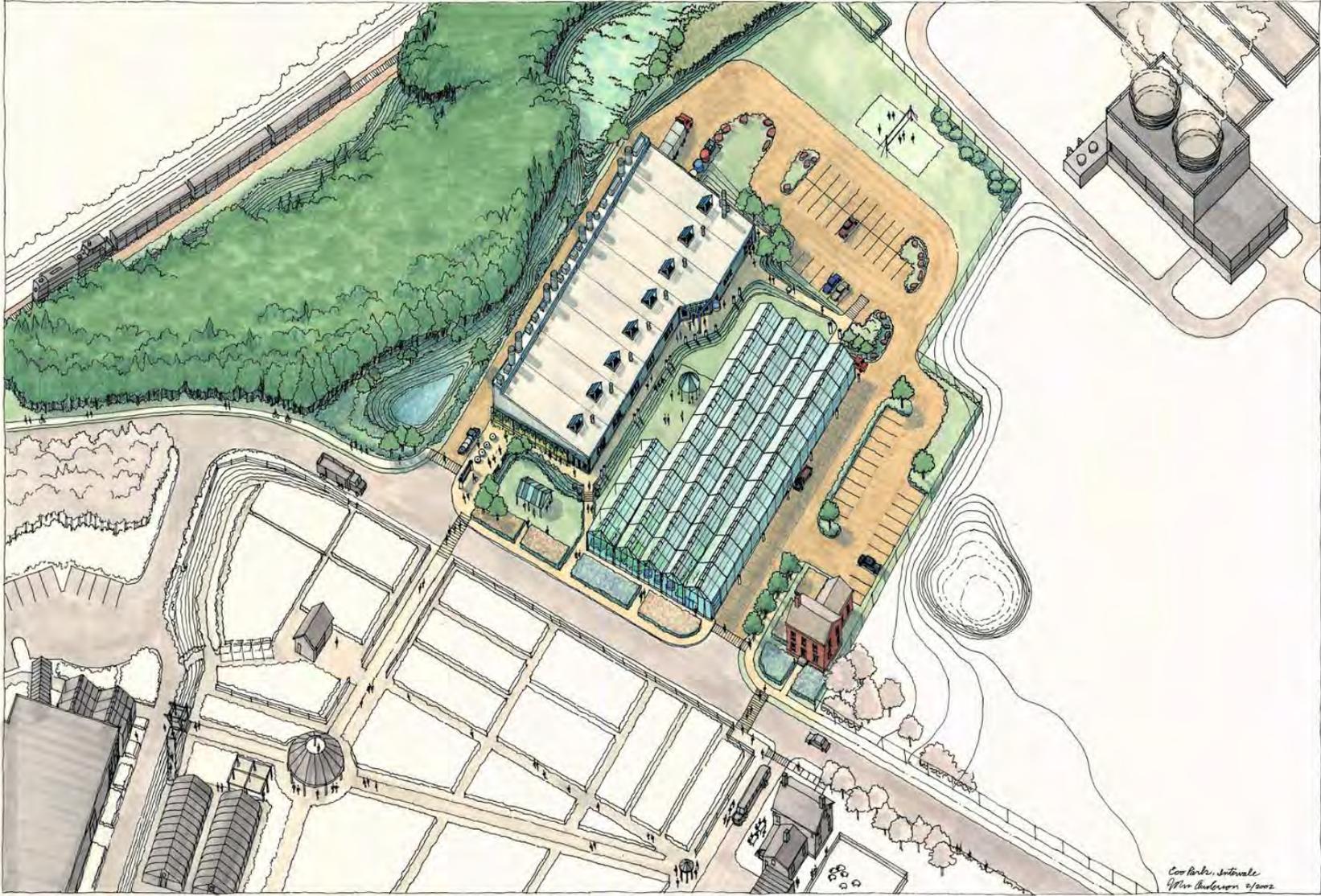
1,000 sq ft packing space

1,000 sq ft office/conference space

Bathroom, wash sinks, heating/cooling, IT



# The Intervale Food Enterprise Center





# The Farms Program

Incubating New Farmers & Growing Food for Our Community





# The Case for Growing New Farmers

- According to the 2007 Agricultural Census, the average age of farmers in the US is over 57 years old.
- In the northeast, there are twice as many farmers over the age of 65 as under 35.
- In 2008, the USDA predicted that 70% of all farmland in the United States will change hands in the next 30 years.
- At the same time, we are experiencing a surge in interest in local and organic food.
- Who will take over this land and fulfill the needs of this growing market?





# History of Incubation

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





# Farm Incubation across North America



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



# The Farms Program: Objectives

- Access to training
- Access to land
- Access to capital
- Access to markets
- Farm experience
- Reduce farmer isolation
- Produce food





“Being at the Intervale with...shared infrastructure and start-up guidance is a huge help. And being around other farmers who have a bunch of experience is the best.” – Bobby Young, Hens and Hands CSA



# The Farms Program: Structure

## Incubator Farms: 1-3 years

Intervale provides 20% cost share on Intervale fees yrs 1-3; none 3-5



## Mentor Farms: 6 plus years

Farmers pay 100% of Intervale fees, offer volunteer time to the program and sponsor an Incubator Farm



## Next:

- Policy development on becoming a mentor.
- Off-site Land Access and support



# The Farms Program: Infrastructure

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

**Next:** transitioning further assets to IFEC





# The Farms Program: Application and Enrollment

- Recruit from local colleges, word of mouth, occasional presentations & open houses.
- May 31 and Dec 31 application deadlines for following year.
- Staff review and development of business plan.
  - Business plan development (farm type, market, risk assessment, calendar, \$\$'s).
  - 1-3 years farm experience (but have never owned a farm).
  - Capacity to absorb risk.
  - Understanding of sustainable agriculture.
- Farmer review and recommendation to Land Committee.
  - Equipment compatibility, markets, traffic, community, financials.





# The Farms Program: Management

- Recruitment and enrollment
- Business planning
- Lease negotiation and oversight
- Land, infrastructure and equipment
- Billing and budget management
- Fundraising
- Regulatory compliance
- Strategic planning





# The Farms Program: Farm Numbers

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





# The Farms Program: Participation history

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

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





# Partnership Programs



FOR LESS THAN  
\$1,000 A MONTH  
YOU COULD BE ON  
THE FAST-TRACK  
TO BECOMING A  
SUSTAINABLE FARMER,  
FARM MANAGER,  
OR FOOD SYSTEMS  
LEADER.



## AN ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACH TO SMALL SCALE FARMING



### FARMER APPRENTICE PROGRAM

APRIL 4, 2011 THROUGH  
NOVEMBER 1, 2011

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:  
[LEARN.UVM.EDU/FARMERAPPRENTICE](http://LEARN.UVM.EDU/FARMERAPPRENTICE)



- Learn all the essentials of sustainable farming in just one growing season.
- Gain access to our network of leaders and organizations that are pioneering the internationally recognized Vermont food & agriculture industry.
- Learn to grow, manage, and sell through hands-on experience from farm-to-market.
- Focus on your unique needs and interests by developing a Personal Learning Plan.
- Rotate between working and instructional learning at successful, diverse farms at the Intervale Center.
- UVM housing is available to program participants.



PARTNERSHIP OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT  
AND THE INTERVALE CENTER



# Partnership Programs

## New Farms for New Americans

Creating opportunity for refugee women & their families





# Partnership Programs



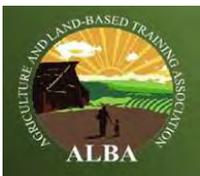
The **National Incubator Farm Training Initiative (NIFTI)** provides support and technical assistance to emerging, land-based farm incubator projects across the country that serve beginning and aspiring farmers.

**Are you starting an incubator project or training new farmers?**

## Our Services

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

## Our Partners



For more information, contact:  
 Eva Agudelo  
 National Technical Assistance Coordinator  
 New Entry Sustainable Farming Project  
 155 Merrimack St. 3rd FL.  
 Lowell, MA 01850  
 P: (978) 654-5731  
 E: [eagudelo@comteam.org](mailto:eagudelo@comteam.org)  
[www.nesfp.org](http://www.nesfp.org)

# The National Incubator Farm Training Initiative (NIFTI)



# Ongoing Program Development

## Infrastructure

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

## Land

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

## Long Term Viability

- Transferability of leases
- Length of leases
- Livestock policies
- Expanded partnerships





# Thank You

Travis Marcotte

Executive Director

[travis@intervale.org](mailto:travis@intervale.org)

