



URBAN FARM PARK

2024 Feasibility Study Report



Credits

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Executive Summary

What our team has accomplished through the feasibility study



Heyday Farm, Paul Dunn

Farming and food production have deep roots in the Olympia area, and very healthy conditions exist to support local food and farmers. But farmland is disappearing. Farmers are retiring, and fewer new farmers are stepping into the role.

The City of Olympia and the Olympia Parks, Arts, and Recreation Department (OPARD) initiated this feasibility study as an opportunity to explore the possibility of how an Urban Farm Park (part farm and part park) can, as part of the Parks system, provide an opportunity to stem the loss of farmland and farmers, while creating a place to offer recreation. This is a visionary idea with only a few precedents in the region.

Is an Urban Farm Park feasible in the City of Olympia at this moment? The quick answer is no for several reasons:

*With several major facilities initiatives underway, the City of Olympia lacks the staffing and funding capacity to embark on a full-fledged effort to move the farm park forward.

* While several organizations emerged that expressed some interest in

partnerships related to the Urban Farm Park, none of the potential partners emerged as being ready to operate the project at this time.

* Park land is acquired to meet service levels for future population growth and existing needs identified in the Parks Plan. The concept of an Urban Farm Park is relatively new and has not been prioritized in the parks plan.

In the long term, we see the Urban Farm Park as conditionally feasible. Through several avenues of engagement, we found strong community support for the Urban Farm Park concept. To make the farm park a reality, the City will need to take several steps to move the concept forward. This includes increasing staffing capacity to oversee the planning, design and implementation of the project, developing capital and operating funding strategies, securing operating partners, and acquiring a site that meets the vision.

This feasibility report describes the research, engagement, and studies we completed to delve into the feasibility of the Urban Farm Park.



Small Scale Urban Farm Park Visualization



Medium Scale Urban Farm Park Visualization



Large Scale Urban Farm Park Visualization

“A ***place for learning*** and celebrating the ability of the land to ***feed us and restore us.***”

- Anonymous Response from the
Urban Farm Park Pubic Survey Results

Introduction

Introduction

Feasibility Study Background

The idea for an Olympia Urban Farm Park emerged from recommendations to preserve local farmland by the Olympia Farmland Work Group in 2021 and the Land Use and Environment Committee of the Olympia City Council. The Work Group advised adopting a “no net loss” policy to preserve or mitigate the loss of farmland in Olympia and its urban growth area as the City continues to grow.

One recommendation from the working group was to consider creating an Urban Farm Park as a potential solution to provide a publicly owned facility focused on local food and food

production education. The Olympia Farmland Working Group’s 2022 Policy Recommendations put forth the idea of the Urban Farm Park as a way for the City to acquire and facilitate space that can be stewarded by community partners and dedicated to agriculture education. Partners mentioned included the Thurston Conservation District, Community Farmland Trust, and Olympia School District.

This recommendation aimed to fill gaps in the local food system and provide opportunities for residents interested in access to local food and food production.



Heyday Farm, Paul Dunn



Cloud Mountain Farm Center

Farmland Losing Ground

The City of Olympia and the surrounding areas of Thurston County continue to lose farmland. Like many other regions of the U.S., the loss of farmland acreage in recent decades is an alarming trend.

Several reasons for this loss of farmland are attributable to urbanization and increasing challenges that farmers face with technological shifts in agricultural production methods, succession planning for retiring farmers, access to land, and utility costs.

On a local level, when one parcel is converted from farming to some other non-agriculture-based use, people connected to local food production notice.

Even while both the City of Olympia and Thurston County have planning goals and strategies that support the preservation of farmland to enhance equitable access to local foods, support economic development, and promote sustainability, there is a growing awareness that something needs to be done.

The Urban Farm Park would combine dedicated agricultural and recreational facilities, as a part of the City’s OPARD system, the park would be open to the public, providing community education and programming alongside food production and farmer training.

The City of Olympia is already unique in its awareness toward farming and food production in the urban areas of the city, with its forward-looking [Community Planning](#)¹ approach to urban agriculture ([weblink](#))² and the codified understanding of the importance of agriculture within the city as seen in the Olympia Municipal Code (OMC) ([weblink](#))³.

As a place, an Urban Farm Park combines these two elements – farming and park. Still, an Urban Farm Park brings an essential third element: the community of people going to this place to learn about farming, gather as a collective, grow and process food, and use the active and passive recreational facilities.

An Urban Farm Park combines a collaborative community space and a

farming-focused center within an urban environment. As a part of the City’s parks system, incorporating features that serve the wider community and offer a variety of programming would be an essential part of the Urban Farm Park.

Naming Conventions:

Agriculture, farming, and food production are synonymous with the uses in this feasibility study and the conversation of the urban farm park.

Agriculture is:

In the OMC, agriculture is defined as “The use of land for farming, dairying, pasturing and grazing, horticulture, floriculture, viticulture, apiaries, animal and poultry husbandry, and accessory activities, including, but not limited to, storage, harvesting, feeding or maintenance of equipment, and onsite sales of agricultural products, but excluding stockyards, slaughtering or commercial food processing.”

Introduction

Urban Farm Park Defined

Parks are:

Also, more generally, parks are defined as “a playground, swimming pool, beach, pier, reservoir, golf course or athletic field which is under the control, operation or management of the City, county, state, or federal government.”

Neighborhood Parks are:

Also defined in the OMC, a neighborhood park is “an area suited for passive and active family activities and play which may include facilities such as picnic table and shelters, barbecue pits, playground equipment, basketball backboards, small sized playfields, volleyball courts, and tennis courts.

Neighborhood parks can serve an urban design as well as recreational function and are a core feature of neighborhood centers.”

Introduction

Feasibility Study Defined

Feasibility studies analyze factors that contribute to the viability of a project to determine whether the project is likely to succeed. Once feasibility is set for a project, it can take many years to implement.

Feasibility studies also identify potential issues and problems that could arise while pursuing the project

and prepare recommendations for project continuation or conditional recommendations if other factors or inputs are needed for project success. This feasibility study aims to better understand the potential viability of an Urban Farm Park with a vision rooted in community needs and sustainable management before the City invests in a potential site acquisition and

project development. Throughout this study, we explored and engaged with the community to identify necessary factors and components of an Urban Farm Park and identify recommendations for future steps to bring an Urban Farm Park to life in the City of Olympia. We reviewed precedents of existing farms and farm park-like

Introduction

Feasibility Study Timeline: A Breakdown Of The Project By Month

examples to gather ideas of how this place might take form in Olympia.

Additionally, we worked to incorporate art into the foundation of the ideas of the Urban Farm Park and developed art guidelines for the future place. Lastly, we developed essential elements for consideration during implementation and recommendations for next steps.



Heyday Farm, Paul Dunn



Exhibit 1. Summary of Feasibility Timeline

“The **people** who use the Urban Farm Park should **determine how they want to govern it.**”

- Anonymous Response from the
Urban Farm Park Pubic Survey Results

Community Engagement

Community Engagement

Engagement Takeaways

To ensure that every voice was heard and valued, we approached community engagement in a layered approach.

Recognizing the diverse interests and interactions with agriculture and food production in the Olympia area, we aimed to reach the broadest range of interest, including groups that are lesser known or not traditionally associated with such projects.

Working closely with OPARD, we assembled a list of stakeholders and then expanded it to incorporate other known to be interested groups or individuals.

As our engagement process evolved, we actively sought and added newly discovered interested parties, such as local schools and community organizations, to ensure a comprehensive representation.

We engaged with the community at the individual level through in-person or virtual meetings, workshops, tabling events, and an online survey.

Despite the feasibility study's timeline limiting public engagement, there was a strong sense of general support for the project. If the Urban Farm Park project were to proceed, we would continue to prioritize extensive public engagement.

	DISCOVERY WORKSHOP	STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS	POP-UP EVENT TABLING	ART VISIONING WORKSHOP	PUBLIC SURVEY
Date	• July 20, 2023	• Variable Dates	• September 20, 2023 • October 6, 2023	• October 15, 2023	• September 4, 2023 - October 23, 2023
Focus	Programming ideation and community partnership exploration	Understanding potential user needs and future demand	General community feedback and direct in-person accounts	Art element planning and Urban Farm Park vision statements	Overall gauge of community need for urban farming
Themes	• Prioritization of agricultural related needs for the city • Establishment of initial stakeholder groups and organizational partners	• Past experiences and challenges to the project • First hand testimonials relating to a potential farm park	• Community project introduction and orientation • In person engagement and initial project reaction	• Fostering an equitable distribution of public art • Preferred art elements for the farm park	• Understanding accessibility to urban agriculture • Visualizing general high level trends relating to the project

Exhibit 2. Summary of Community Engagement

Community Engagement

Engagement Takeaways



Discovery Workshop

Starting with the known stakeholders, we invited them to a workshop-style meeting and asked participants to give their opinions and expertise on the Urban Farm Park. Working through activities allowed the participants to work in small groups and brainstorm as a collective to help envision what the space might look like and what partners might engage with it. The main activity in the discovery workshop focused on developing programming ideas for the Urban Farm Park. The workshop participants were randomly split into three groups and tasked with identifying their top five critical programming priorities. These priorities directly influenced our programming elements within the Kit of Parts. The overarching themes from the workshop are summarized in Exhibit 2, and the full workshop results are summarized in the Appendix - Discovery Workshop Summary.



Stakeholder Interviews

The stakeholder interviews were conducted in a safe and confidential environment, with questions shared beforehand to allow for thoughtful responses. To ensure equitable access, stipends were offered to interviewees. The intent of the one-on-one or small group meetings was to create a secure space to open up about past experiences and discuss the fundamental challenges to create a new place of shared intent and use at the future urban farm park. These conversations allowed our consultant team to develop rapport and a sense of connection with interviewees. The overarching themes from the interviews are summarized in Exhibit 2, and the full results from the interviews are summarized in Appendix - Stakeholder Interview Summary.

Community Engagement

Engagement Takeaways



Pop-up Event Tabling

Pop-up tabling is a great way to converse face-to-face with many people—residents, visitors, and stakeholders—in a relatively short amount of time. Also, unlike scheduled evening community meetings, pop-up events are inserted into existing community events and offer the possibility of interacting with a wider array of people.

We hosted two well-attended pop-up tabling events for the feasibility study, one at the Olympia Farmers Market and the other at the Olympia Arts Walk. For each event, we assembled informational boards to provide background on the Urban Farm Park project, presented our initial findings for program elements and asked for input on these items. Also, at each event, we interacted with people and asked for their input on their vision for the future Urban Farm Park. Findings from these events are summarized in Exhibit 2.



Art Visioning Workshop

The art visioning workshop invited community members to discuss the artistic elements of the proposed park. To align with the Olympia Arts Commission criteria, this workshop focused on fostering an equitable distribution of public art within the proposed project.

This workshop also encouraged the discussion of non-traditional public art amenities such as landform arts, interactive arts, and more. Participants self-selected vision statements that resonated with them and split into groups based on preferences. They were then asked to pick their preferred art elements for the possible Urban Farm Park. This workshop and the survey results informed our Urban Farm Park feasibility study and the art guideline recommendations; see Appendix - Art Guidelines.

Community Engagement

Engagement Takeaways



Online Survey

Using the Engage Olympia Urban Farm Feasibility Study page, the online survey was intended to cast a wide-reaching set of questions to seek input. The survey was not designed to be statistically valid but functioned as a questionnaire to seek input from Olympia area residents. The survey hosted on the Engage page was open to anyone who visits the page, and the link was shared through our multiple engagement events using a QR code and on the City of Olympia's social media channels and newsletters.

We utilized the survey tool within the Engage Olympia project page, which was consistent with other city projects and resulted in 218 completed surveys. Major themes from the survey are summarized in Exhibit 2, and the full results are in Appendix - Pubic Survey Results.

Community Engagement

Understanding the Needs of Our Stakeholders

As part of this feasibility study, we endeavored to find the existing and future demand for an Urban Farm Park. This assessment of demand for local food production, agricultural training opportunities, and other activities is intended to help inform potential concepts for the Olympia Urban Farm Park. The assessment is based on qualitative research, including conversations with local stakeholder organizations, community members, operators of similar agricultural education facilities in other cities, and a survey distributed to the broader Olympia-area community.

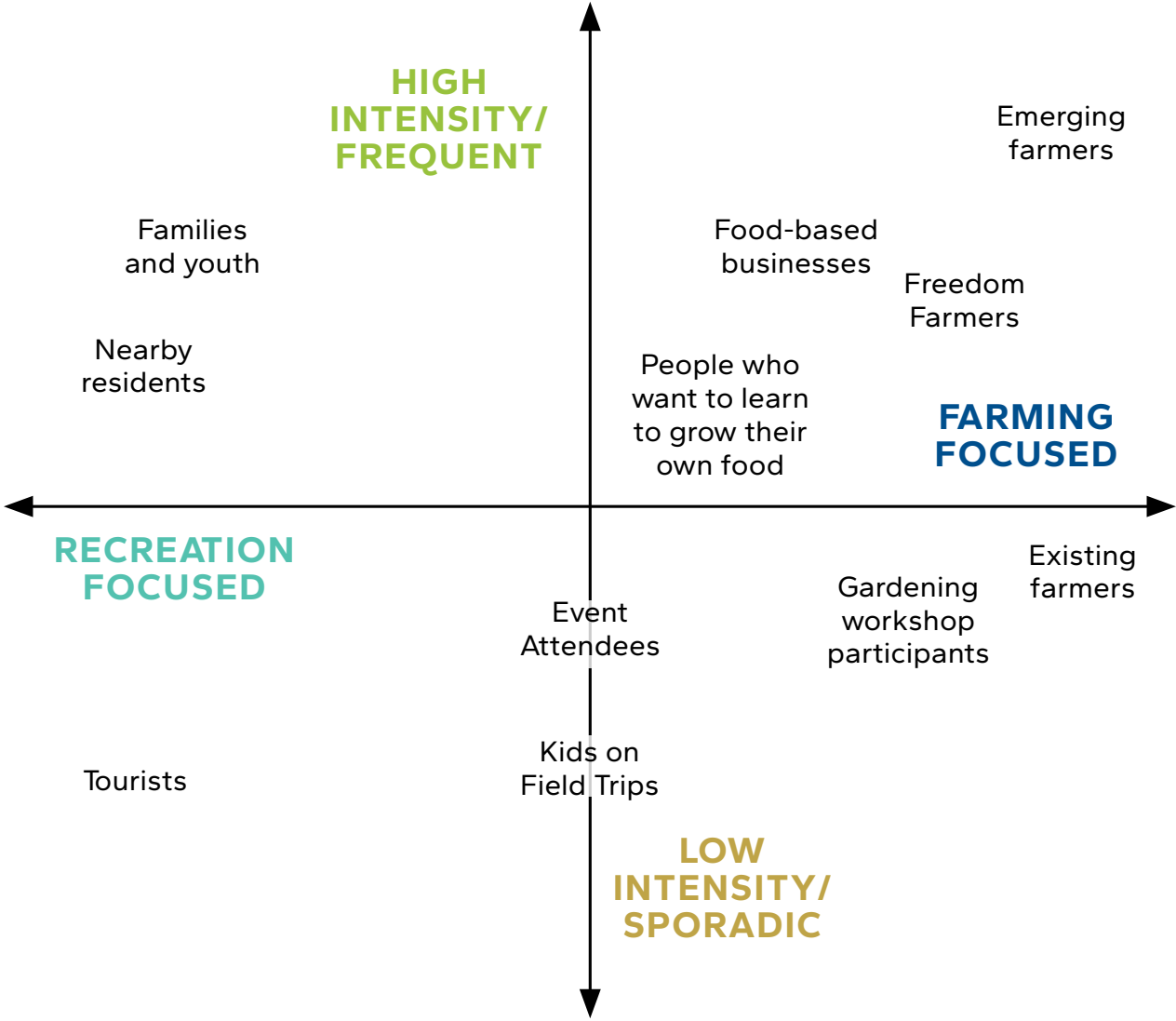
We evaluated the potential for an Urban Farm Park in Olympia and what it would take for a facility to attract a critical mass of users from agricultural producers and like-minded community members. Exhibit 3 summarizes our findings on interested user groups utilizing the Urban Farm Park.

USER GROUPS	DEMAND CATEGORY	WHAT THEY SEEK	IMPLICATIONS
Emerging farmers and youth seeking to gain farming skills	Highest demand, fewest alternatives	Training programs and land for farming	Farming-oriented users may prefer larger sites to accommodate agricultural activities or shared spaces like orchards.
People with farming knowledge who lack land access	Highest demand, fewest alternatives	Reliable, long-term access to land for community farming or plots	- Community partners could help to reach this user group. - Transportation access without a car is a consideration. - A key segment is farmers who want to grow culturally relevant foods.
General public looking to attend workshops / trainings / field trips	Moderate demand, some alternatives	Cooking/ gardening workshops, climate education, school field trips	Many partners may be interested in hosting or partnering on workshops and events.
General public seeking recreation	Moderate demand, many alternatives	Playgrounds, water features, trails	- Accessibility by different transportation options in more urban places is important for recreational users. - Demand will vary depending on location.

Exhibit 3. Summary of Potential Urban Farm Park User Groups

Community Engagement

What could be the primary uses of the farm park? Who would it serve?



With the user groups identified, we then looked at the types of users for an Urban Farm Park and approximate estimates for demand based on these categories. Conversations with local stakeholders revealed more detail about potential uses and users of the Urban Farm Park, summarized in Exhibit 4.

Depending on their nature, these users may have varying demand patterns, with some being more or less frequent, from daily to seasonal use. For example, farmers tending to crops would likely use the space more intensively, while tourists visiting Olympia would interact less with the park.

This is all to begin visualizing how the Urban Farm Park could be used and to plan for the overlapping needs of these users.

Exhibit 4. Intensity of Potential Urban Farm Park Users

Community Engagement

Understanding the Needs of Potential Users



Farming-Focused Users

Users with community or individual plots tending to crops, soil, or livestock would be present daily or weekly, compared with more recreation-focused users who would vary in their attendance based on distance from the park, seasonality, and family structure. Participants in workshops or agricultural education may visit with similar regularity to recreational users.



Community Members Looking to Grow Food

Based on the community survey (results detailed below in the ‘Survey Findings’ section), nearly 150 respondents out of 218 indicated that community garden space was the most desired amenity by their household, followed by an incubator farm and demonstration garden as the second and third highest choices ([weblink](#))⁴. A 2022 report on Olympia Urban Agriculture from the Thurston Conservation District (TCD) aimed at locating and quantifying agricultural resources in Olympia found areas of limited access to where food could be grown, where local food is produced, and where local food could be accessed ([weblink](#))⁵. This report found that access was limited, particularly in areas with higher shares of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and households below median income in northeast and southwest Olympia. A subset of demand will be for new farmers interested in education and agricultural work.

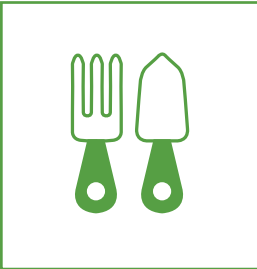
Community Engagement

Understanding the Needs of Potential Users



Youth Programs

The Olympia High School Freedom Farmers program is in high demand, with about 40 students participating. Per our interviews in Summer 2023, more students would participate if additional space were available. If the Urban Farm Park could accommodate these students, it could also host students from other schools to visit approximately two days per week for two- to three-hour blocks. During summer break, youth programs could operate more intensively for interested students.



Existing Farmers

Olympia has several community farming programs and organizations that foster culturally specific food production. This audience is people with farming skills who need growing space and may use community or individual plots. Partners would likely build these connections with existing farming groups or individuals with skills but need more space.

These partners could include culturally specific community groups already tied to farming (like the Haki Farmers Collective) or organizations that do not currently have agricultural ties but have many constituents interested in growing food (such as Cielo).



Nearby Residents

Beyond farming uses, residents not participating in agriculture would still likely use the park for recreational purposes if it offered playgrounds, trails, picnic tables, or other features. Depending on its location and proximity to residential areas, these users may be less likely to frequent the site.

Community Engagement

Understanding the Needs of Potential Users



Food Based-Businesses

Stakeholder interviews indicated demand for kitchen space from food-based businesses that make value-added products (like jams, sauces, or prepackaged foods) and areas to sell goods like a recurring market. On a seasonal basis, participants of training programs or working in plots might also be interested in using this space. A kitchen space that provides the opportunity for food-centered entrepreneurs is likely to gather interest from these businesses semi-regularly to create value-added products.



Educational Program/Workshop Participants

More limited participation in farming and gardening could happen through workshops or limited-run programs, which could occur in coordination with existing educational programs, like the Washington State University Extension or GRuB. The audience for these programs ranges from current farmers looking for professional development and training to less frequent users looking for a lower-commitment way to learn more about agriculture and related topics. Results of a community survey (see Appendix - Pubic Survey Results) show an interest in a wide range of educational topics from climate adaptation to culinary pursuits.



Event Attendees

An indoor-outdoor event space within the park would be a community asset managed in concert, supporting farm activities differently than farming areas. Depending on the events offered, it could draw in a larger audience. Stakeholders listed several potential events, including art exhibitions, musical performances, and cultural celebrations.

Community Engagement

Understanding the Needs of Potential Users



Field Trips

In addition to recurring student groups, field trips could also use the park for various educational activities. Beyond farming, the survey showed a high interest in climate and sustainability education at the park. Conversations with education professionals indicated that the Urban Farm Park could be a site of interest for these day activities and more recurring educational events.



Recreation-Focused Users

Users who visit, recreate, and attend events at the site may have different demand patterns than farming-focused users. Catering to a broader cross-section of the community is good policy, broadens the value proposition, and may meet gaps in the level of service goals outlined in the Parks Plan ([weblink](#))⁶.

Residents may use the park frequently if it contains amenities like a playground or picnic areas. Other groups, such as field trip attendees, event attendees, and tourists, would also use recreational amenities.



Tourists

Out-of-town visitors could be drawn to the farm park as a destination if it were located near other in-demand attractions or hosting events. If the park were in a more rural area away from central Olympia, it would be less likely to have these kinds of users.

If the City wanted to attract more visitors, it could consider pairing the farm park with an agricultural museum (building upon examples like the Central Washington Agricultural Museum.)

Community Engagement

Public Engagement Takeaways: Survey Findings

In addition to the needs identified by the Working Group and TCD, the consulting team worked with the City of Olympia to conduct early engagement with the community and key stakeholders, which helped to reveal the potential gaps that an Urban Farm Park could fill in Olympia. This section summarizes the initial feedback and ideas for the Urban Farm Park engagement work and the implications for the demand of different aspects of the Urban Farm Park.

Assessment from the consulting team showed that:

Educational opportunities should offer different types of training and reach all age groups. Across all open-response survey questions, the top priority was providing diverse hands-on educational programming and learning opportunities at the Urban Farm Park. In particular, survey respondents most frequently indicated a gap for teens and adults to learn about farming but that there is a need for more opportunities for all age groups. The top three types of educational programs desired included farmer training (chosen by 62% of

respondents), climate adaptation/resiliency classes (59%), and youth education (56%).

For agricultural-related uses, space for community gardening and farming is in demand. Community gardening space, an incubator farm, or a demonstration garden were the three highest-ranked choices for Urban Farm Park features, highlighting the importance of agricultural uses. After these uses, a commissary kitchen or public market is the next most desired feature, which could allow users to cook or create and sell value-added products.

Fostering community participation and benefit is vital to meet the demand for urban farming and locally grown food. About half of the survey respondents (48%) indicated they already participated in urban farming activities. Of those 112 respondents who did not already participate, 90% were interested but indicated barriers like insufficient time, lack of space, high costs, and travel distance. Similarly, 100 respondents answered about barriers to accessing locally grown food, with the most

frequent reasons being high costs (42%) or not knowing where to buy it (30%). Integrating recreational amenities is needed to meet community demand and attract visitors to the Urban Farm Park.

The most popular ideas documented in the survey involved integrating recreational amenities with farming activities, with the most popular choices being playgrounds, farm animal interactions, public events or festivals, and pop-up markets. The largest share of respondents indicated that they would likely use the park a few times a month (32%) or once a week (28%) if it included their top choices of amenities and programs.

Community Engagement

Public Engagement Takeaways: User Guide

	AGRICULTURAL USE AND EDUCATION	RECREATION	STEWARDSHIP
Related Uses	• Commissary kitchen for value-added products • Classroom with kitchen • Farmer training • Community farming • Pop up markets • Hub for existing resources	• Interaction with animals • Walking paths with signage • Nature playgrounds • Event space • Public art/music • Wildlife viewing • Lodging/RV sites	• Gathering garden • Prairie grass restoration • Native planting demonstration • Climate adaptation and monitoring
Primary Users	• New and experienced farmers • Students participating in ongoing programs • Food-based businesses	• Nearby residents • Youth and families • Tourists • Event attendees	• Students visiting for field trips • Workshop participants • Scientists

Exhibit 5. Summary of Potential Use Categories for the Urban Farm Park

“Teaching future farmers how to work on large plots of land vs. bringing the community together around farming education. I see the need for it all, but **outdoor community connection is huge.**”

- Anonymous Response from the
Urban Farm Park Pubic Survey Results

Site Design Considerations and Programming

Site Design Considerations and Programming

Precedent Studies: Existing Farm Park Or Farm Park-Like Projects That Inspire

Several precedent studies helped our team explore how other established farming and recreation-based programs function with different user groups at various site scales.

These precedents demonstrate how partnerships and community collaboration have been combined to develop solid organizations and

programs. These precedents also show successful strategies that integrate food production and community spaces and provide inspiration for all the things that an Olympia Urban Farm Park could be.

Each precedent study was chosen for its scale, specialized focus, and regional location. After exploring the programs and resources available at an individual

organization, it was categorized as a commissary kitchen, community garden, conservation farm, educational farm, farming-based foundation, or incubator farm.

Summaries of key precedents are shown in Exhibit 6, and the full results from the interviews are summarized in Appendix - Case Studies Precedents.

Scale

Precedents that showcase different forms and sizes help visualize the space that this project may fit into

Focus

Precedents that have novel attributes can help effectively address community needs

Regional Location

Precedents that are located in a similar geographic region respond to specific environmental conditions

Site Design Considerations and Programming

Summary of Precedent Projects that Inspire

	COMMISSARY KITCHEN	COMMUNITY GARDEN	CONSERVATION FARM	EDUCATIONAL FARM	FARMING BASED FOUNDATION	INCUBATOR FARM
Examples	• Rockwood Market Hall	• Beacon Hill Food Forest • Seattle P-Patches • Olympia Community Gardens	• Rainier Beach Urban Farm & Wetlands • Oxbow Farms • Charlotte's Blueberry Park	• South Whidbey School Farm • Organic Farm School • Freedom Farmers • Evergreen State College Organic Farm	• Feed'em Freedom Farm • Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB) • Black Food Sovereignty Coalition	• Cloud Mountain Farm • Headwaters Farm Collective • Eco City Farms • Zenger Farm • Viva Farms
Scale	Community kitchen for small to medium food preparation	Neighborhood or local community oriented growth space	Variable sized growing spaces specializing in ecological protection and restoration	Small growing area dedicated to a defined user group	Houses programs to make large scale food production change	Specialized farming training on a larger scale
Significance	Commissary kitchens allow for a direct farm to table connection and shared community space	Community gardens provide easily accessible growing opportunities for local residents	Conservation farms protect natural systems and provide integrated food production opportunities	Educational farms teach growing practices and showcase ecological systems to all ages	Organizations cultivate partnerships and provide a multitude of services	Incubator farms provide work force training and skill building relating to food production

Exhibit 6. Summary of Precedent Case Studies

Site Design Considerations and Programming

Site Location Considerations

To best serve potential uses of the Urban Farm Park, intentional site selection will require consideration of fundamental tradeoffs like size, location, current zoning, utilities, and other factors.

Depending on the Urban Farm Park’s anticipated uses, a smaller or larger size may more appropriately serve intended audiences and provide enough space for farming and recreational activities.

The location of the Urban Farm Park is a critical decision that has implications for implementation – namely, how people will access the site and what types of parcels are available.

Access:

While more rural areas on the edges of the City or in Thurston County provide larger available sites, parcels within more central areas will have better access by bike, foot, and public transportation for populations without access to a private vehicle.

Jurisdictional Factors:

This study assumes that the park would be built within Olympia or the Olympia

Urban Growth Area (UGA). If the site were located in rural Thurston County outside of the Olympia UGA, it is unlikely the City of Olympia would lead the implementation of the park project.

Site Size:

The size of the Urban Farm Park should be relative to the activities it will support. Size is also an essential determinant in acquisition costs.

The size of a potential Urban Farm Park site could differ depending on the uses that will be hosted. Smaller sites under five acres could support small plots or a shared farming space, while a larger site would be suited to more individual plots or a higher volume of users.

A larger site would also be required for some types of agriculture, like livestock or orchards. Larger sites may have greater implications for implementation, requiring more labor for maintenance and upkeep.

Utilities:

Access to a reliable water supply is critical to ensuring that the Urban

Farm Park can meet agricultural needs, particularly related to water supply.

Sites with an existing agricultural well (and water rights) or installed agricultural meter for City water would make costs more feasible than installing new agriculture-scale water pipes, especially for uses with more intense water needs like row crops.

Zoning:

A given parcel’s current zoning and agricultural-specific considerations will also determine what farming uses could happen on a potential Urban Farm Park site. Several zoning categories in the Olympia Municipal Code, including RM 24 (Residential Multifamily – 24 Units per Acre), RMH (Residential Multifamily – High Rise), RMU (Residential Mixed Use), and UR (Urban Residential), only allow specific agricultural uses like greenhouses, nurseries, and bulb farms and are subject to conditions.

In high-density zones like High-Density Corridors (HDC), agricultural uses are permitted but functionally unlikely because of surrounding higher-density

Site Design Considerations and Programming

Site Location Considerations

uses and land cost. If an otherwise ideal site has prohibitive zoning, the City could work to assess potential zoning changes to accommodate the site.

Site Conditions:

Although some sites offer the right size and location, healthy soil and slopes that allow for proper irrigation and drainage will be necessary for farming.

Parking availability and access:

Once a site is selected, early engagement will help solidify interest and initial program elements. Parking size will be decided at this time, with the potential of the site to forecast demand that surpasses the site capacity and available onsite parking.

This could, in turn, change the City’s strategy and program on the site over time.

	OPTIONS	SITE LOCATION TRADEOFFS
Location	• Within Olympia • Within the Urban Growth Area (UGA) • In Thurston County (Outside of UGA)	• Within Olympia or the UGA a site would likely offer greater accessibility by foot, bike, or transit, as well as potential for Parks ownership. • Outside of the UGA a site would likely be able to provide more acreage at a lower cost but require automobiles to access.
Size	• Small (<5 acres) • Medium (5-10 acres) • Large (10+ acres)	• Smaller sites cost less, are generally more available in areas that provide access by bike, foot, and transit, which can accommodate smaller plots/fewer farmers. • Large sites likely cost more, are more suited for larger scale crops, livestock, orchards, and so on for a larger number of farmers, but are generally located further away from central urban areas.
Utilities	• Access to a well or existing agricultural meter • Build out new utilities	• Existing utilities onsite would help to meet intensive agricultural water needs. • Building out new utilities would add cost to the project, but may be needed if current capacity is insufficient on selected sites
Zoning	• Zones where agricultural uses is permitted outright • Conditional-use/limited agricultural use zones	• Areas with lower-density zoning where agricultural uses are permitted may have fewer development barriers • Conditional use areas with higher residential density may offer greater access to more community members, but limit the activities that the park could host

Exhibit 7. Summary of Potential Site Tradeoffs
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Site Design Considerations and Programming

GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

We compiled available Geographic Information System (GIS) information on farmland, public vs. private, utilities, and accessibility for low-income households and marginalized groups. Our review included walkability, sidewalks, and access to public transportation.

This analysis considered land suitability for locating an urban farm park in Olympia and its UGA. This analysis considered similar factors identified in previous studies, such as the Olympia Farmland Analysis ([weblink](#))⁷ and the Olympia Urban Agriculture Analysis ([weblink](#))⁵. These were also considered city-wide and individually for individual parcels of interest for this study.

Six factors were weighted based on their impact on site location: proximity to low-income and BIPOC residents, access to public transportation, park system needs, community garden proximity, utilities, and soil or farmland quality.

Site Ranking Setup



 Denotes that a factor's weight was doubled for the final analysis

Site Design Considerations and Programming

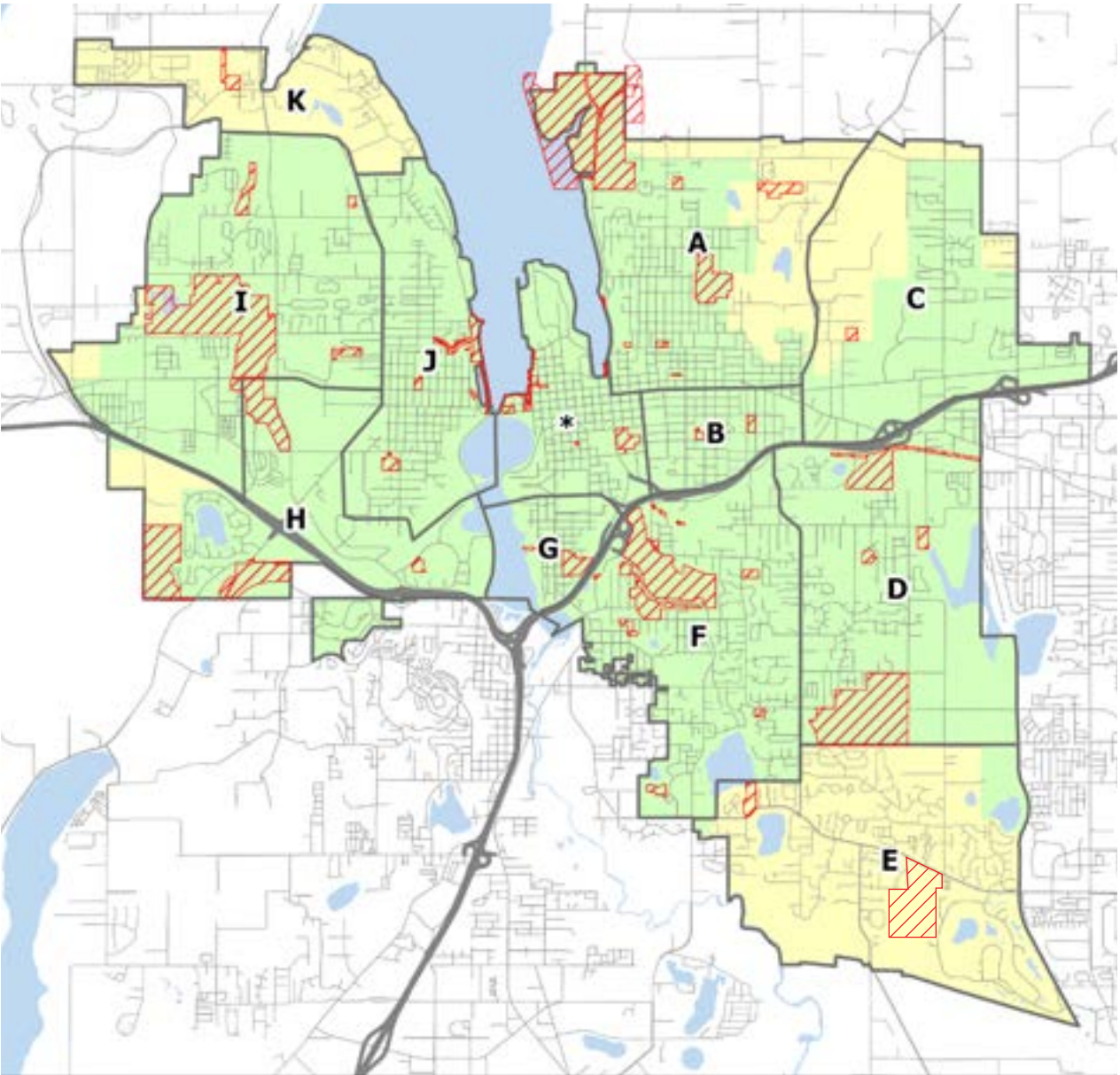
GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

Feasibility Area

The City of Olympia and its Urban Growth Area encompasses a wide range of places, neighborhoods, and interfaces.

This is the area of the Urban Farm Park Feasibility Study.

-  City of Olympia
-  Urban Growth Area
-  Existing Parks
-  City of Olympia Subareas ([weblink](#))⁸



Site Design Considerations and Programming

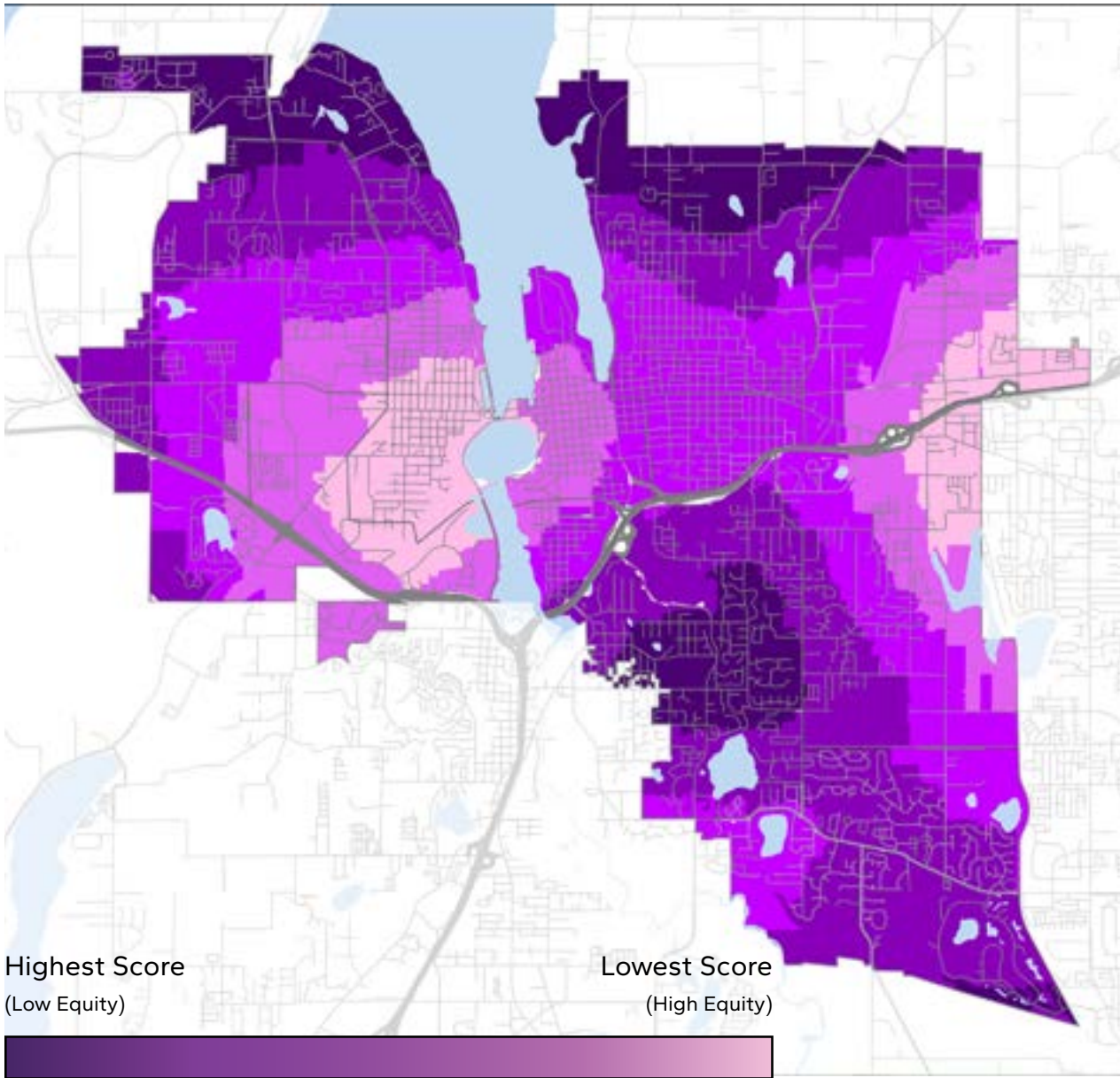
GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

Equity

Equity was measured using two metrics, both of which were used in the Olympia Urban Agriculture Analysis. The first is Median Household Income (MHI), calculated on a census tract basis from 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data, and the second was the percentage of BIPOC individuals, measured on a percent basis for each census block from 2020 US Census data (P2 dataset).

One caveat is that Median Household Income (MHI) data was summarized at a census tract scale, a more generalized scale than the percentage of BIPOC individuals. Due to how data was aggregated, some variation within census tracts for MHI is likely missed. Some census tracts and blocks also cross city boundaries and may be biased due to including areas outside Olympia or its UGA.

MHI and Percent BIPOC were ranked on a 0-9 scale using the Standardize Field tool and then added together. A subtotal was generated and then standardized on a 0-9 scale using the Standardize Field tool.

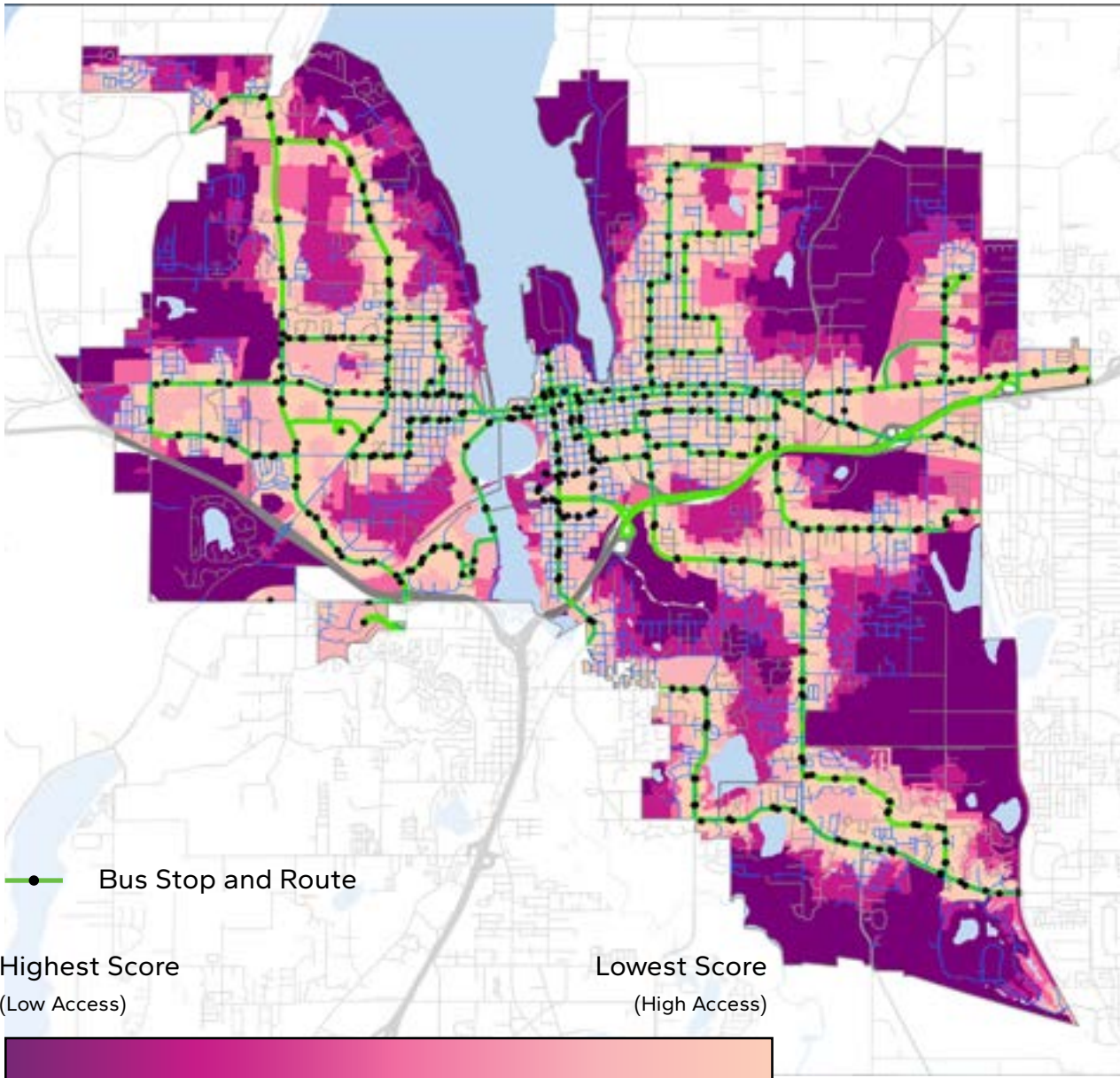


Site Design Considerations and Programming

GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

Bus Stop Accessibility

A bus stop data was obtained from Intercity Transit. This information was used to generate a service network to determine walking distance to nearest bus stop.



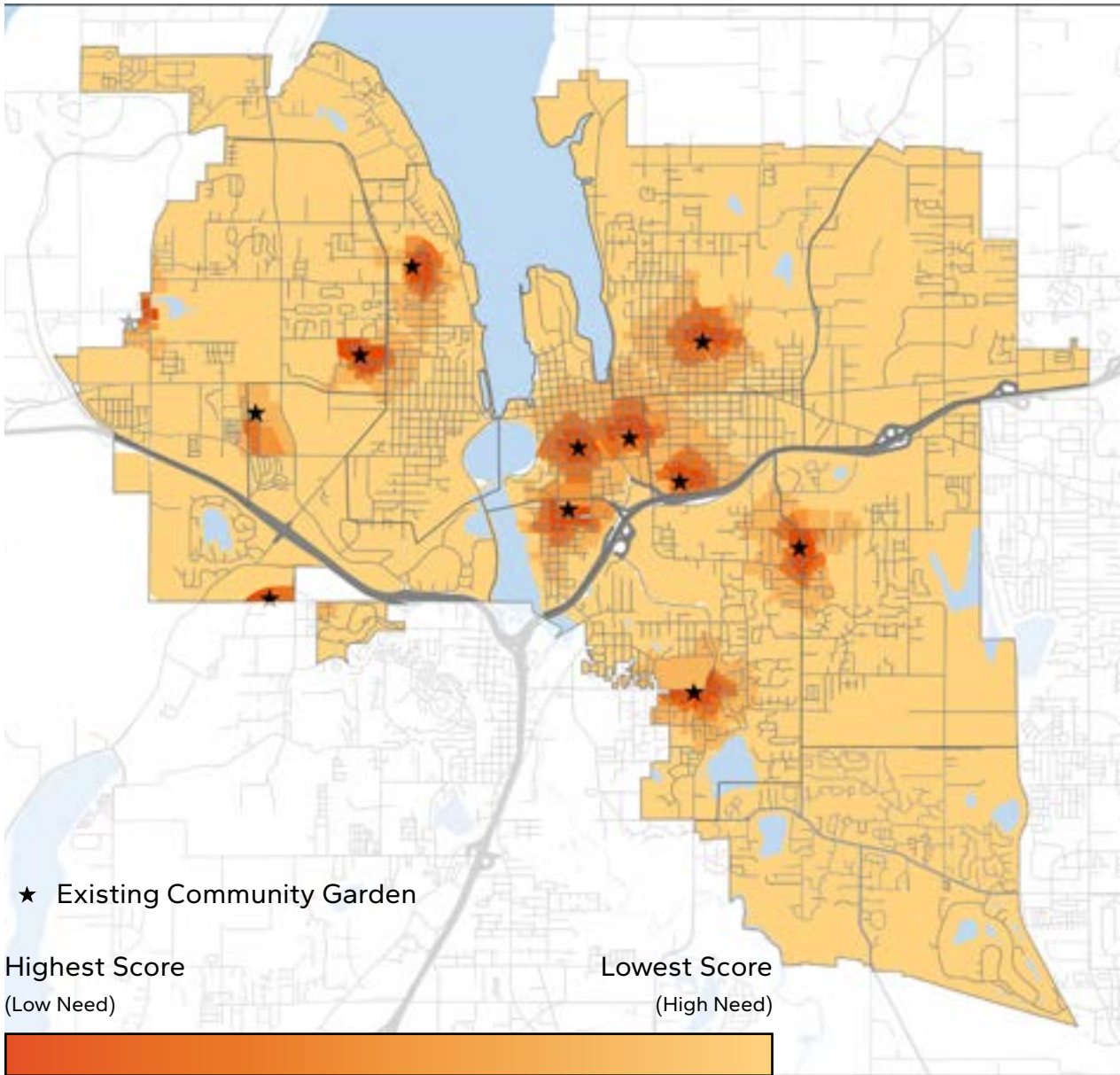
Site Design Considerations and Programming

GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

Community Garden Need

Proximity to existing community gardens was measured by drawing on the Olympia Urban Agriculture Analysis service networks. Areas within a 1/2 mile walking distance of an existing community garden were already considered to have access to community gardens, thus reducing the need to fill in gaps within the City.

The ranking shown was developed based on this distance. Areas beyond 1/2-mile walking distances were classified as having the highest level of need.



Data Source: TRPC, Thurston Geodata, and the City of Olympia

Site Design Considerations and Programming

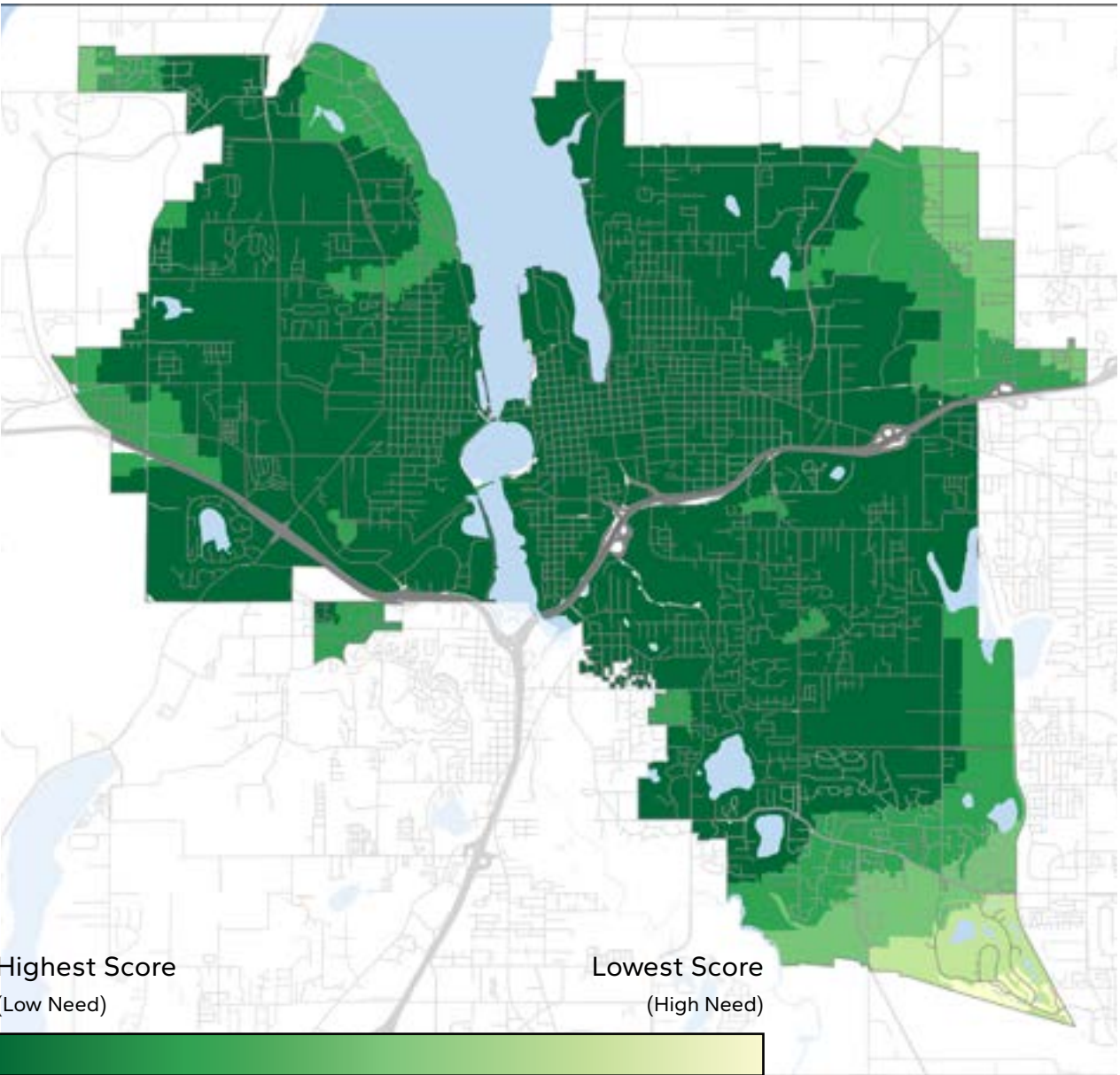
GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

Park Need

Park need was determined by measuring the direct distance to existing parks run by the city of Olympia. Olympia City park boundaries were considered in two ways. First, parks listed as “Open” or “Open or Closed” by the city of Olympia were considered existing parks. Second, any parks listed under Thurston County’s Parks layer and within the city’s or its UGA’s boundaries were also included. This latter data source often provided more accurate boundaries for park boundaries in certain areas, such as along the waterfront.

Because some parks that could potentially be developed are already existing parks with public access, developing these areas into an Urban Farm Park resulted in no improvement to their ranking in this category, resulting in the lowest ranking for candidates in this category.

** Analysis generated based on developed and undeveloped parks



Data Source: TRPC, Thurston Geodata, and the City of Olympia

Site Design Considerations and Programming

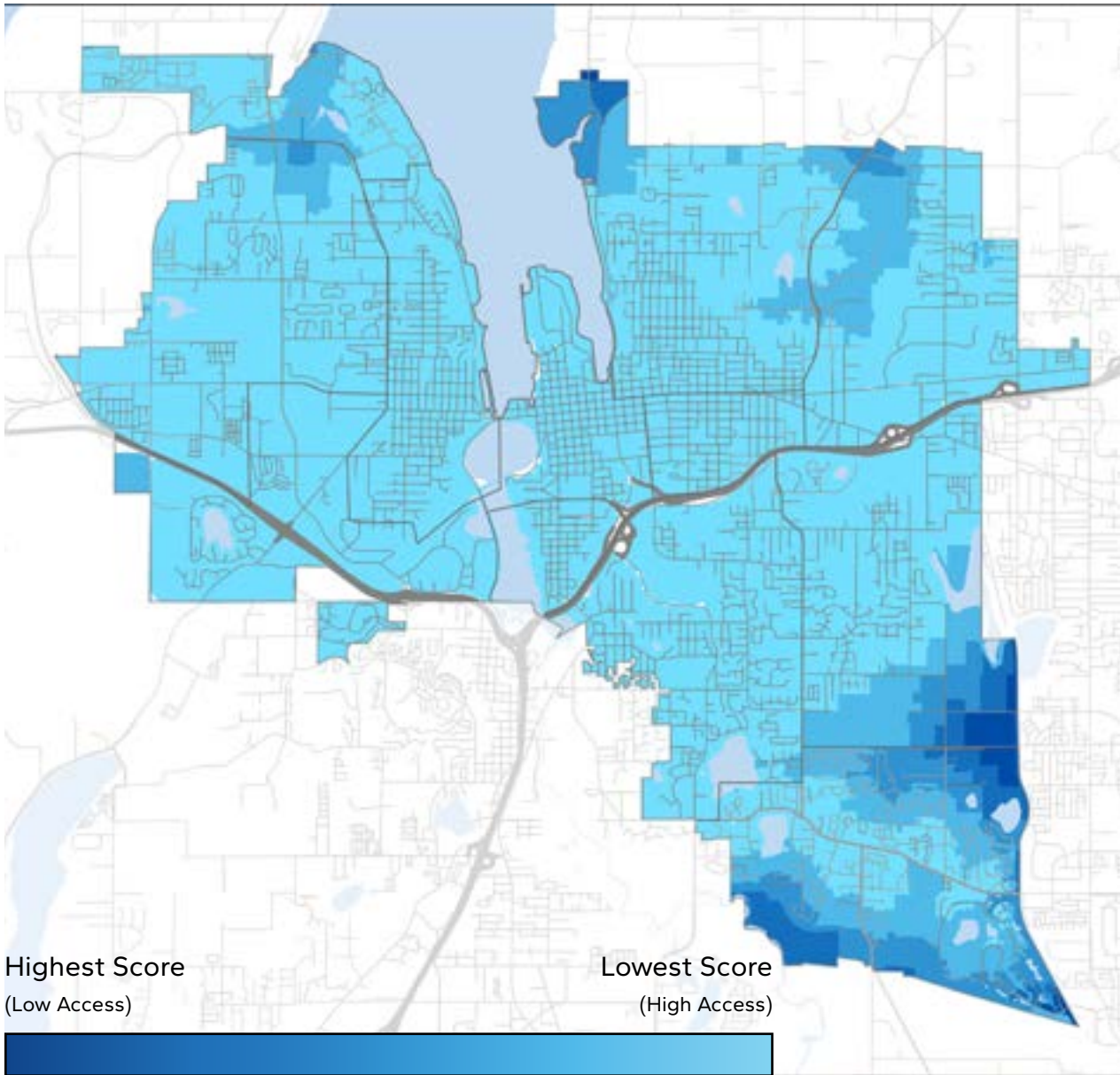
GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

Sewer Utilities

Sewer access is essential for any on-park facilities.

Distance to sewer mains was calculated using an Euclidean Distance tool. This resulted in city and UGA-wide raster layers calculating the distance from existing utilities. This was then summarized for each parcel to provide an average distance within each parcel.

Distance to sewer pipes were each ranked separately, standardized on a 0-9 scale, and then added together. This total score was then re-ranked on a 0-9 scale for a utility-wide ranking.



Data Source: TRPC, Thurston Geodata, and the City of Olympia

Site Design Considerations and Programming

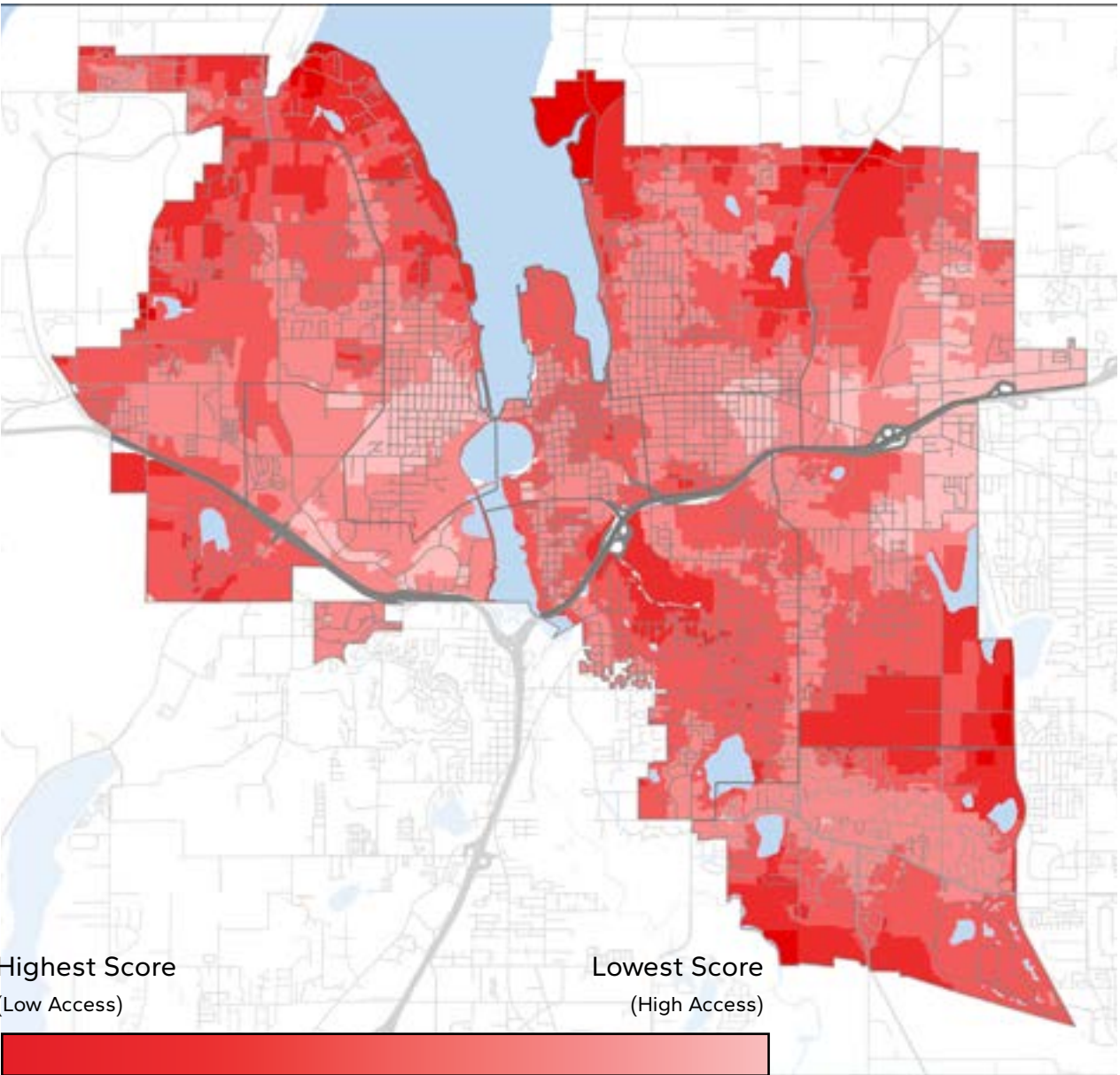
GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

Water Utilities

Access to water is crucial for a successful Urban Farm Park. In western Washington's seasonally dry summers, irrigation is required to grow many crops.

Distance to water mains was calculated using an Euclidean Distance tool. This resulted in city and UGA-wide raster layers calculating the distance from existing utilities. This was then summarized for each parcel to provide an average distance within each parcel.

Distance to water mains were each ranked separately, standardized on a 0-9 scale, and then added together. This total score was then re-ranked on a 0-9 scale for a utility-wide ranking.



Data Source: TRPC, Thurston Geodata, and the City of Olympia

Site Design Considerations and Programming

GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

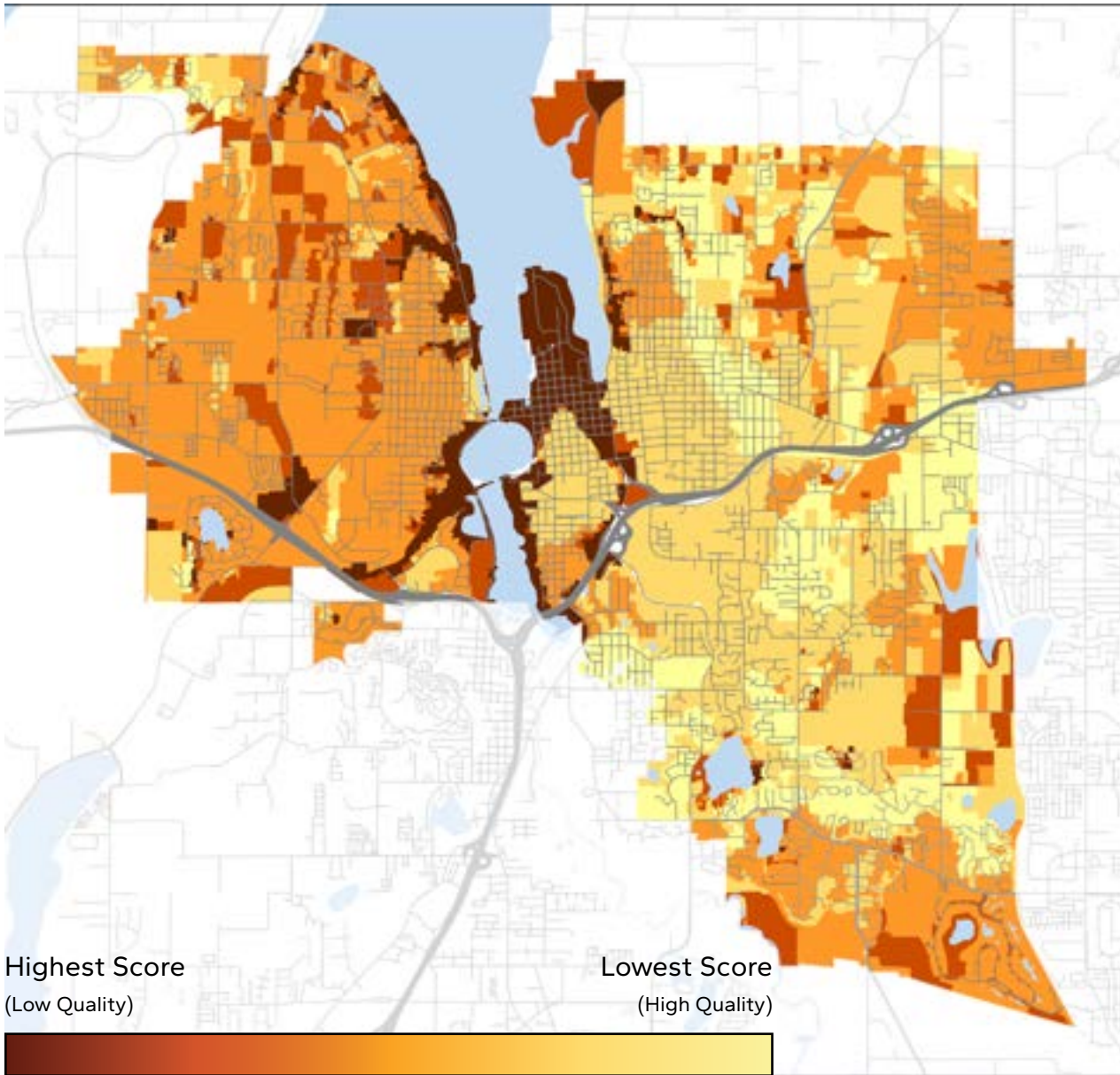
Farmland Quality

The quality of land was also considered as a factor. NRCS Soil Survey data contains classifications of farmland quality, and the following classifications were converted into rankings.

Areas of prime farmland are recognized nationwide and ranked higher than farmland of statewide importance. Similarly, irrigation is more accessible to secure than drainage, so “Prime farmland if irrigated” was given more points than “Prime farmland if drained.”

In some areas of Olympia, high-quality soils are shown in areas that have been developed or paved.

While the entire city was ranked to provide a city-wide view of these factors, not all locations in the city represent opportunities for establishing a farm park. This map should be understood to show the potential quality of open land, wherever its located.



Data Source: TRPC, Thurston Geodata, and the City of Olympia

Site Design Considerations and Programming

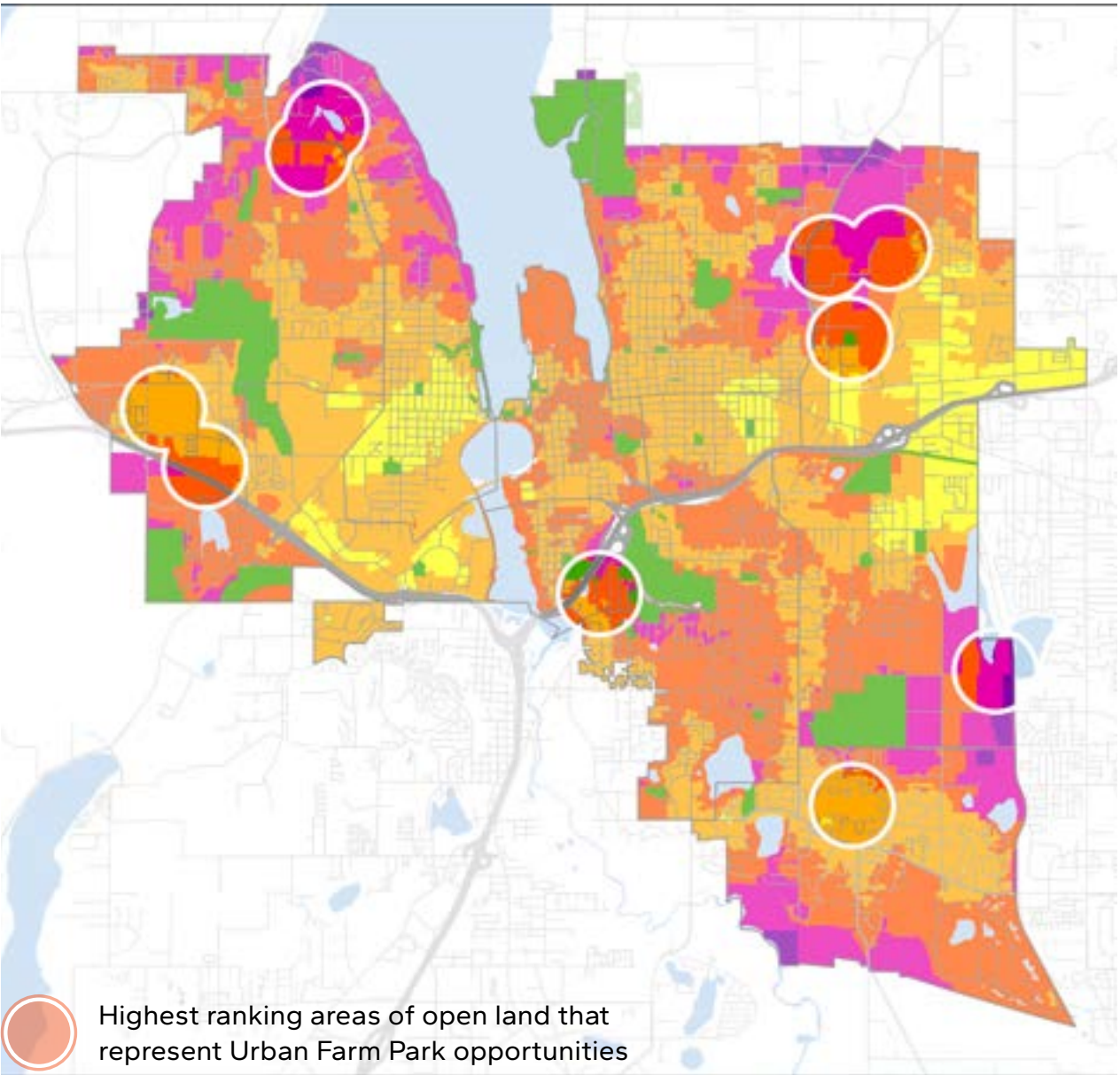
GIS Analysis: Layers of Information

Total Score

After this ranking was determined, parcels were re-ranked using the “Standardize Field” tool.

Standardization and Total Scores
All factors were standardized on a scale using the “Standardize Field” tool. Bins and parcels receiving the highest score received a nine ranking for that factor, while bins and parcels receiving the lowest score received a 0.

All factors were added together and standardized on a 0-9 scale. This provided an overall ranking for all parcels, alongside subtotals for each factor.



Data Source: TRPC, Thurston Geodata, and the City of Olympia

“I really do believe that if this can happen, even if it was a small garden ***it would benefit the community.***”

- Anonymous Response from the
Urban Farm Park Pubic Survey Results

Implementation Options

Implementation Options

Development Costs - High Level Overview

Creating an Urban Farm Park is similar to other park facility development. To better understand the future costs of creating this place, we compiled a range of high-level expenses to help in future planning efforts and to set understanding levels for what that development cost may mean.

Site Acquisition and Infrastructure Costs:

Several factors, including site size and programming, will significantly affect the development cost for Urban Farm Park. Depending on the goals and prioritization of available resources, the final project could take on several forms and scales. The following section provides an overview of potential development costs for a range of urban farm parks based on regional precedents, with details shown in Exhibits 8.1 - 8.5.

Program Elements:

While the program elements selected will support the Urban Farm Park, they will also add costs. So, applicability and prioritization must be part of the future planning efforts. We are noting the most essential elements, others may

be identified as the planning process continues.

Site Amenities:

From our research and outreach, we identified amenities that will help create an urban farm park that is both a farm and a park. While these elements can directly support the needs of Urban Farm Park users, they can also be utilized by a wide range of other park users.

Building Infrastructure:

To create a most functional place, the Urban Farm Park will benefit from buildings that support additional program elements, and these buildings will need additional connections to utilities.

Building Elements:

The specific mix of the buildings and their core working elements is to be determined. We heard from the community that one desirable element is a functioning commissary kitchen. Also, having the ability to host indoor events felt important to many as we explored the function of the Urban Farm Park throughout the year.



Jonathan Kemper, Unsplash

Implementation Options

Development Costs - High Level Overview

Site Acquisition + Infrastructure Cost

PROGRAM	UNIT	SIZE/COST RANGE		SMALL SCALE		MEDIUM SCALE		LARGE SCALE	
				3-5 ACRES		5-10 ACRES		10+ ACRES	
Site Acquisition Cost	AC	\$100K - \$200K	\$150,000	4	\$600,000	8	\$1,200,000	15	\$9,000,000
Fencing	LF	\$50 - \$100	\$75	1000	\$75,000	5000	\$375,000	10,000	\$750,000
Irrigation System (controller, pump, laterals, heads/drip)	AC	\$60K - \$100K	\$225,000	1	\$225,000	1	\$225,000	1	\$225,000
Parking	STALL	\$20K-\$30K	\$25,000	16	\$400,000	50	\$1,250,000	60	\$1,500,000
Pedestrian Paving	SF	\$5-10	\$8	5000	\$40,000	10000	\$80,000	20,000	\$160,000
Power (meter, underground to site, panel)	EA	\$300K - \$500K	\$400,000	1	\$400,000	1	\$400,000	1	\$400,000
Water (point of connection, agricultural meter, mainline)	EA	\$150K - 300K	\$250,000	1	\$250,000	1	\$250,000	1	\$250,000
Subtotal				\$1,390,000		\$2,580,000		\$3,285,000	

Exhibit 8.1. Development Costs - Site Acquisition

Implementation Options

Development Costs - High Level Overview

Program Elements

PROGRAM	UNIT	SIZE/COST RANGE		SMALL SCALE		MEDIUM SCALE		LARGE SCALE	
				3-5 ACRES		5-10 ACRES		10+ ACRES	
Art Elements	EA	\$10K-\$25K	\$17,500	1	\$17,500	5	\$87,500	8	\$140,000
Garden Beds	EA	\$500-\$2000	\$1,000	30	\$30,000	25	\$25,000	20	\$20,000
Hoop houses	EA	\$15K-\$25K	\$20,000	0	\$0	3	\$60,000	6	\$120,000
Incubator Farm Field Preparation	AC	\$10-30K	\$20,000	0	\$0	6	\$114,784	9	\$183,655
Tool Share Structure	EA	\$5K-\$75K	\$10,000	1	\$10,000	1	\$50,000	1	\$75,000
Subtotal				\$57,500		\$337,284		\$538,655	

Exhibit 8.2. Development Costs - Program Elements

Site Amenities

PROGRAM	UNIT	SIZE/COST RANGE		SMALL SCALE		MEDIUM SCALE		LARGE SCALE	
				3-5 ACRES		5-10 ACRES		10+ ACRES	
Playground	EA	\$50K - \$500K	VARIES	0	\$0	1	\$200,000	1	\$400,000
Exploration Paths	LF	\$10-\$25	\$15	1000	\$15,000	3000	\$45,000	10000	\$150,000
Outdoor Event Space	EA	\$150K - \$500K	VARIES	1	\$200,000	1	\$300,000	1	\$400,000
Subtotal				\$215,000		\$545,000		\$950,000	

Exhibit 8.3. Development Costs - Site Amenities

Implementation Options

Development Costs - High Level Overview

Building Infrastructure

PROGRAM	UNIT	SIZE/COST RANGE		SMALL SCALE		MEDIUM SCALE		LARGE SCALE	
				3-5 ACRES		5-10 ACRES		10+ ACRES	
Water (meter, extend potable water to building)	EA	\$150K - \$300K	VARIES	0	\$0	1	\$250,000	1	\$300,000
Sewer (connection, extend onsite)	EA	\$200K - \$350K	VARIES	0	\$0	1	\$300,000	1	\$350,000
Power (extend from onsite connection point, subpanel)	EA	\$50K - \$100K	VARIES	0	\$0	1	\$75,000	1	\$100,000
Subtotal				\$0		\$625,000		\$750,000	

Exhibit 8.4. Development Costs - Building Infrastructure

Building Elements

PROGRAM	UNIT	SIZE/COST RANGE		SMALL SCALE		MEDIUM SCALE		LARGE SCALE	
				3-5 ACRES		5-10 ACRES		10+ ACRES	
Commissary Kitchen	SF	\$1,500 - \$3,000	\$2,200	0	\$0	400	\$880,000	900	\$1,980,000
Indoor Event Space	SF	\$250-\$400	\$325	0	\$0	5000	\$1,625,000	10000	\$3,250,000
Subtotal				\$0		\$2,505,000		\$5,230,000	

Exhibit 8.5. Development Costs - Building Elements

Implementation Options

Operating Costs - High Level Overview

Operating the Urban Farm Park would require significant staffing and financial resources. The City will need to understand how to best achieve its overall goals while ensuring that entity operating the farm is financially stable and can operate long-term. The following section provides an overview of operations costs and staffing structure for five urban farms across the U.S., with one in the Midwest region and the rest located in the Pacific Northwest, with details shown in Exhibit 9.

Total Expenses: Expenses for operating these Urban Farm Park vary based on factors like location, size, and organization types, ranging from \$867,487 to \$3,938,217. The exception is the City of Fishers, where the operating budget in 2023 was estimated to be \$143,749 (including the salary for 1 full-time Operations Manager and other supplies and additional infrastructure).

Structure: Four out of five of these examples operate as a 501(c)3 non-profit. The AgriPark in Fishers, IN, is the only facility that is operated by a governmental entity (the City of Fishers).

Management: Typically, one dedicated staff member serves as an Operations Manager/Coordinator to oversee day-to-day management. Additionally, park operations usually rely on seasonal workers and volunteers from the community.

Staffing: Among the three farms focused on education without a larger umbrella organization, total staffing ranged from around 12 people at the Cloud Mountain Farm in Everson, WA to 19 staff at Zenger Farm. Staffing costs account for at least half of organizational expenses for all of the nonprofit farms.

Operational Scalability: With one dedicated staff member, the Rainier Beach Urban Farm provides an example of an entity that operates with some economies of scale, drawing upon the 36-member staff, governance structure, volunteer base, of the overall nonprofit Seattle Tilth Alliance. The Tilth Alliance also manages Bradner Gardens Park, Good Shepherd Center, Children's Learning Garden, McAuliffe Park, and Giving Grove Community Orchards around WA. The Fishers Agripark, owned and operated by the City of Fishers,

Indiana, also has one dedicated manager, but draws upon the maintenance staff and equipment provided by the City of Fishers.

Farm Scale: The parks range in size from 10 to 33 acres, with the primary goals of providing local food sources and environmental education opportunities for the community. The cost of maintaining different scales of recreation and intensities of food growing will greatly affect the operating cost.

Revenue: The Urban Farm Park could potentially generate income as an event space as an additional revenue stream to support operations and programming. Hourly rate for event space around the City of Olympia varies significantly and can range from \$39 to \$313 per hour.

Implementation Options

Operating Costs - High Level Overview

LOCATION	TYPE OF FARM	SUMMARY	EXPENSES IN 2022	STAFF
Cloud Mountain Farm (Everson, WA)	Incubator Farm	The 20-acre Cloud Mountain Farm Center in Everson, WA is dedicated to building a dynamic local food community that is open and accessible to all.	\$867,487 <i>63.8% on staffing</i>	12 staff and 12 board members <i>1 Operations & Facilities Manager</i>
Zenger Farm (Portland, OR)	Urban and Organic Farm	Zenger Farm is located on a 24-acre combined farm and wetland in Outer East Portland- a working urban farm that models, promotes, and educates about sustainable food systems, environmental stewardship, community development, and access to good food for all.	\$1,936,005 <i>66% on staffing</i>	19 staff and 8 board members; <i>1 operations manager</i>
Garden-Raised Bounty (GRuB) (Olympia, WA)	Urban Farm/Youth Education Center	GRuB seek to support members of the community in gaining resources, building relationships, and growing good food together.	\$1,157,409 <i>56.7% on staffing</i>	15 staff members <i>1 Operations Coordinator</i>
Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands (Seattle, WA)	Community Farm/City Park	Rainier Beach Urban Farm & Wetlands is a 10-acre city park in Seattle, WA, where people come together to organic food production and distribution, environmental education, and wetland restoration.	\$3,938,217 <i>46.8% on staffing</i> <i>(Entire Tilth Alliance organization)</i>	36 staff and 12 board members at Tilth Alliance <i>1 Operations Manager at Rainier Beach Urban Farm & Wetlands</i>
Fishers AgriPark (Fishers, IN)	AgriPark	A 33-acre urban farm in Fishers, IN, the Fishers AgriPark features public fields and gardens, livestock, a playground, nature trail, tree nurseries, and more, all managed by Fishers Parks.	\$143,749 <i>based on 2023 Budget</i>	1 Agriculture Operations Manage <i>4-5 Part-time seasonal workers</i>

Exhibit 9. Farm Parks Summary Table

Implementation Options

Conceptual Visions

The Urban Farm Park has the opportunity to take on several different forms. Depending on evolving community desires as well as the development of other City of Olympia parks projects, the Urban Farm Park will fill service gaps and help satisfy unmet needs.

Our team has envisioned three conceptual layouts for a future Urban Farm Park. These layouts consider

different spatial sizes, programming emphases, artistic integrations, and implementation costs.

The following renderings aim to give a sense of what the Urban Farm Park could be rather than express a concrete design strategy. As this project progresses past the feasibility stage, the concepts can be conformed to site conditions and altered by participatory input from the community.



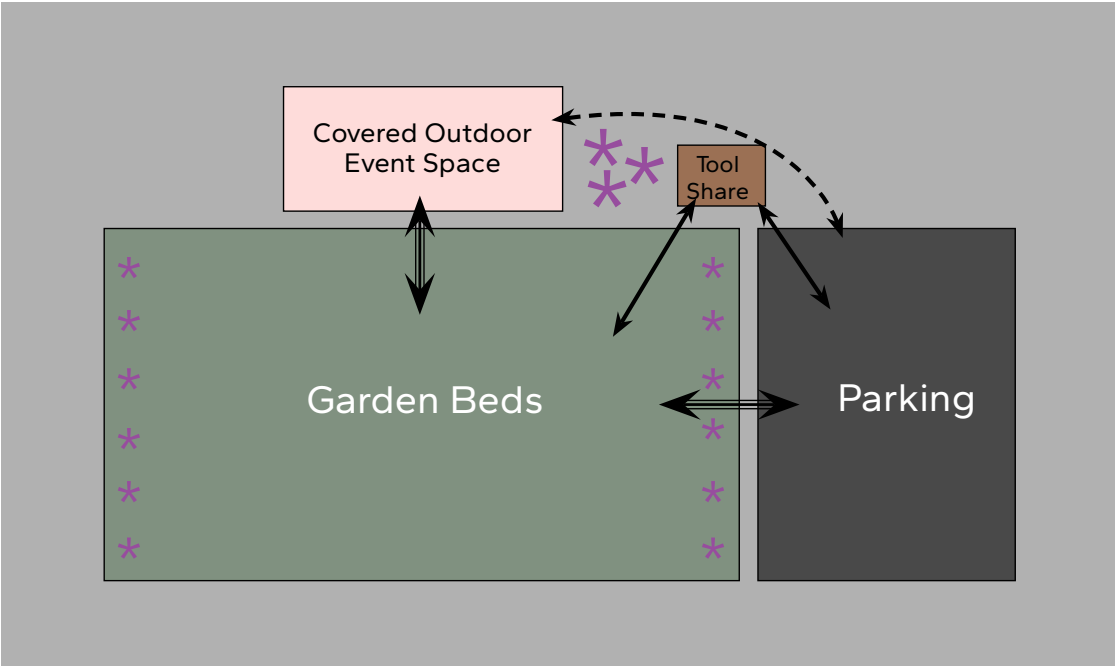
Implementation Options

Conceptual Visions



Implementation Options

Small Scale Option



Concept Vision:

Olympia's Urban Farm Park emerges as a small and dynamic growth space focused on farm to table interactions. Crops from this park are grown in specified garden beds that are organized and maintained by a non profit partner on behalf of the community. Food is either directly consumed by the growers or donated back to the local community. Communal tools are shared in an effort to help alleviate some of the barriers to entry for small scale food production. At it's heart, this vision of the Urban Farm Park seeks to create a common knowledge surrounding food systems through growing opportunities, tool accessibility, and basic trainings.

Small Scale Option Summary

This small scale option explores what the Urban Farm Park might look like with minimal land area and proportional growing space.

Approximate Size: 3-5 Acres
(130,000 - 215,000 sf)

Program Elements:

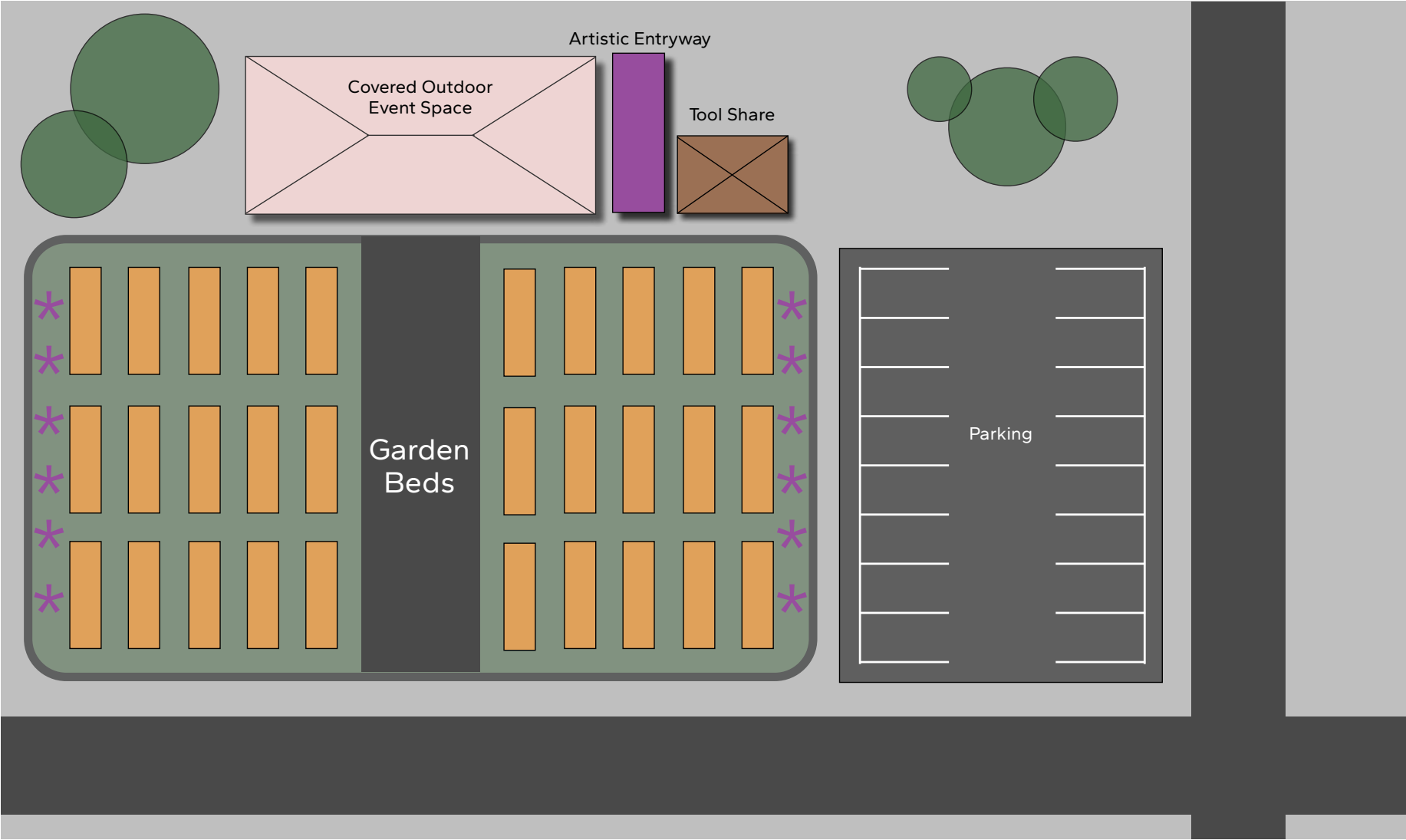
- 5,000 sf Pedestrian Paving
- 1,000 lf Exploration Paths
- 1-2 Art Elements
- 1,200 sf Covered Outdoor Event Space
- 10 ft x 10 ft Tool Share
- 30 Garden Beds

Development Cost Estimate:
\$2,000,000 - \$3,000,000

Program element sizes are relative to the Kit of Parts as shown in Appendix Kit of Parts and were used to estimate costs

Implementation Options

Small Scale Option



Implementation Options

Small Scale Option



Implementation Options

Small Scale Option



University of British Columbia Botanical Garden - Box Garden



Skylar Ziika - Orchard



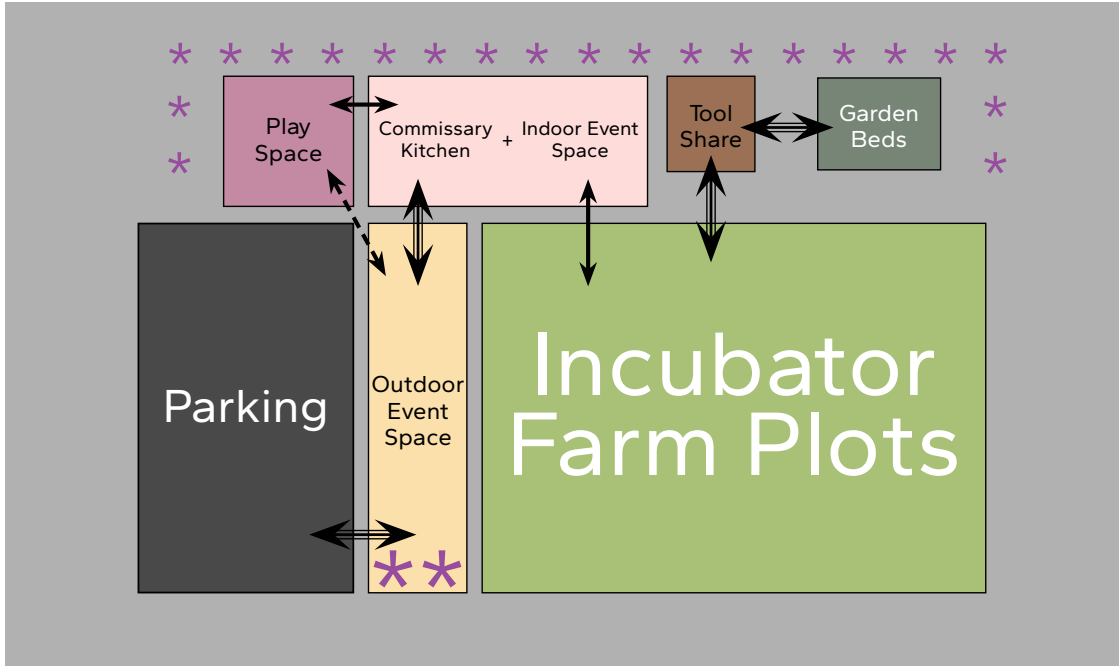
Carolina Timberworks - Small Covered Event Space



Tool Share

Implementation Options

Medium Scale Option



Concept Vision:

Olympia’s Urban Farm Park is a pioneering facility committed to farmer training, incorporating climate adaptive practices, and cultivating community connection to farming. The facility would access to traditional, new, experimental, and innovative farming equipment and tools that are otherwise cost-prohibitive for educating potential/future farmers. With a focus on empowering farmers with the knowledge and skills for sustainable agriculture and agroecology to foster a skilled workforce, the park aims to cultivate a thriving and resilient agricultural community for a sustainable future.

Medium Scale Option Summary

This medium scale option explores what the Urban Farm Park might look like with a mix agricultural spaces and community spaces.

Approximate Size: 5-10 Acres
(260,000 - 435,000 sf)

Program Elements:

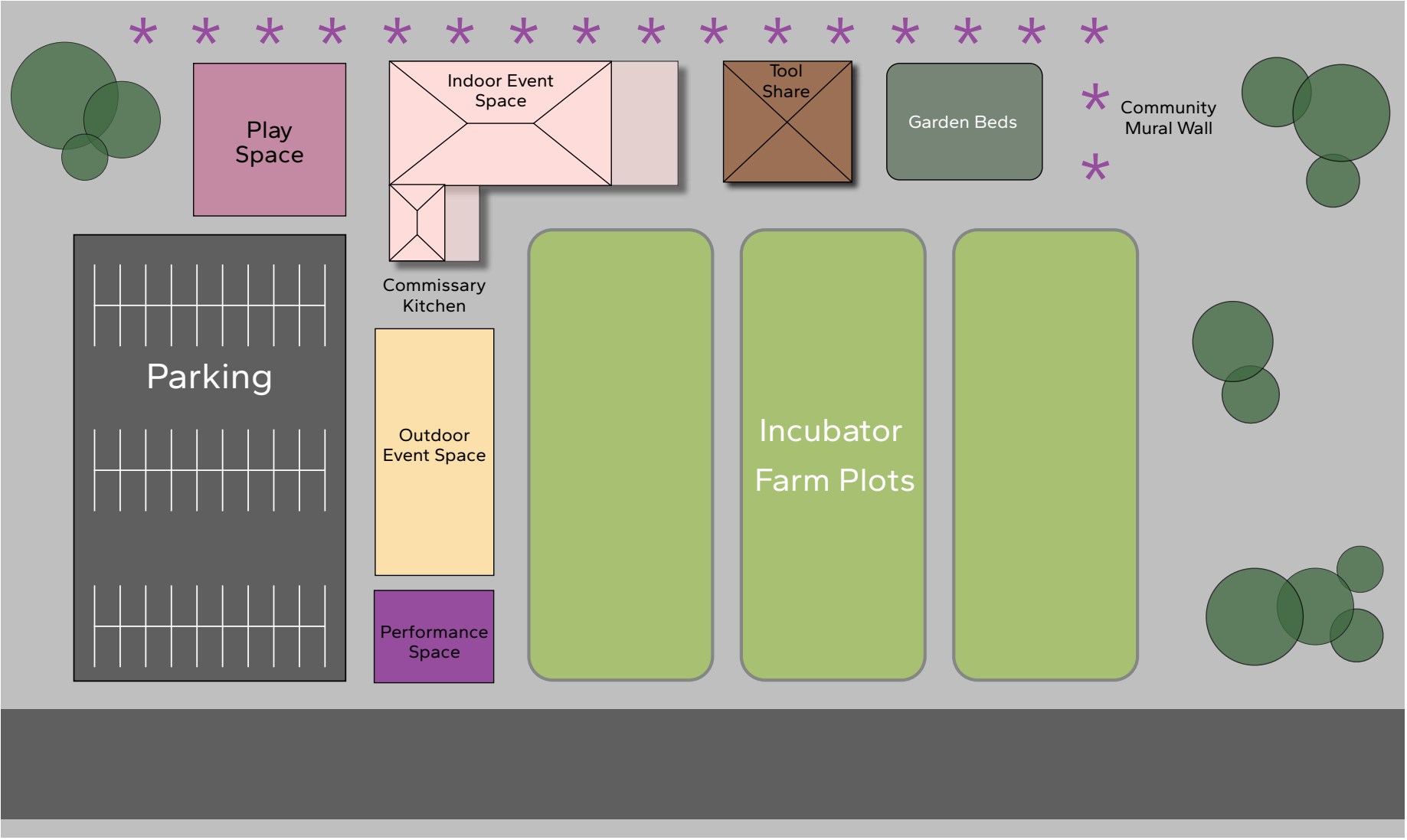
- 10,000 sf Pedestrian Paving
- 3,000 lf Exploration Paths
- 4-5 Art Elements
- 2,000 sf Play Space
- 400 sf Commissary Kitchen
- 5,000 sf Indoor Event Space
- 20 ft x 30 ft Tool Share
- 25 Garden Beds
- 1,200 sf Outdoor Event Space
- 6 Incubator Farm Plots

Development Cost Estimate:
\$3,000,000 - \$15,000,000

Program element sizes are relative to the Kit of Parts as shown in Appendix Kit of Parts and were used to estimate costs

Implementation Options

Medium Scale Option



Implementation Options

Medium Scale Option



Implementation Options

Medium Scale Option



Dan Ryan Woods - Nature Play



Bootstrap Farmer - Greenhouse



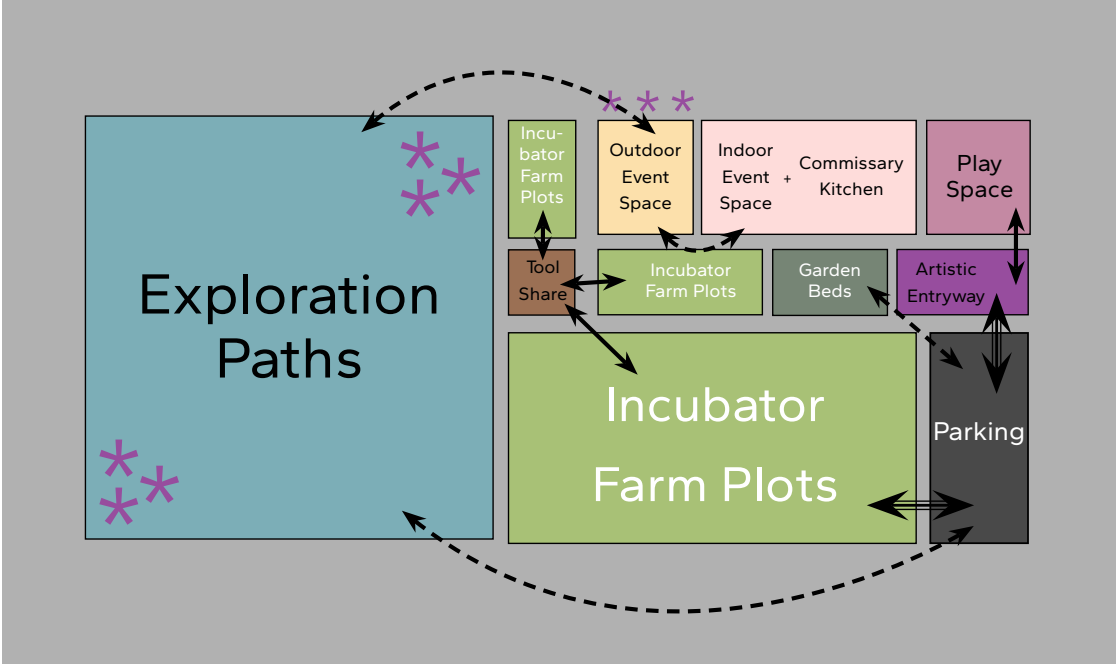
Seth Siditsky - Row Crops



Seeking Farmland - Farm Stand

Implementation Options

Large Scale Option



Concept Vision:

Olympia’s Urban Farm Park is a large, multi-purpose facility to combines, community recreation, individualized farming training, and ecological conservation. This space has designated areas for both large and small scale growing practices as well as more integrated productive landscapes such as orchards and food forests. A commissary kitchen and adjacent event spaces provides processing space for harvested food and educational workshops. The Urban Farm Park actively complete with several types of active and passive recreation opportunities. A focus on long term sustainability and climate sensitive practice is woven throughout the entire campus.

Large Scale Option Summary

This large scale option explores what the Urban Farm Park might look like with the greatest volume of program elements.

Approximate Size: 10+ Acres (435,000+ sf)

Program Elements:

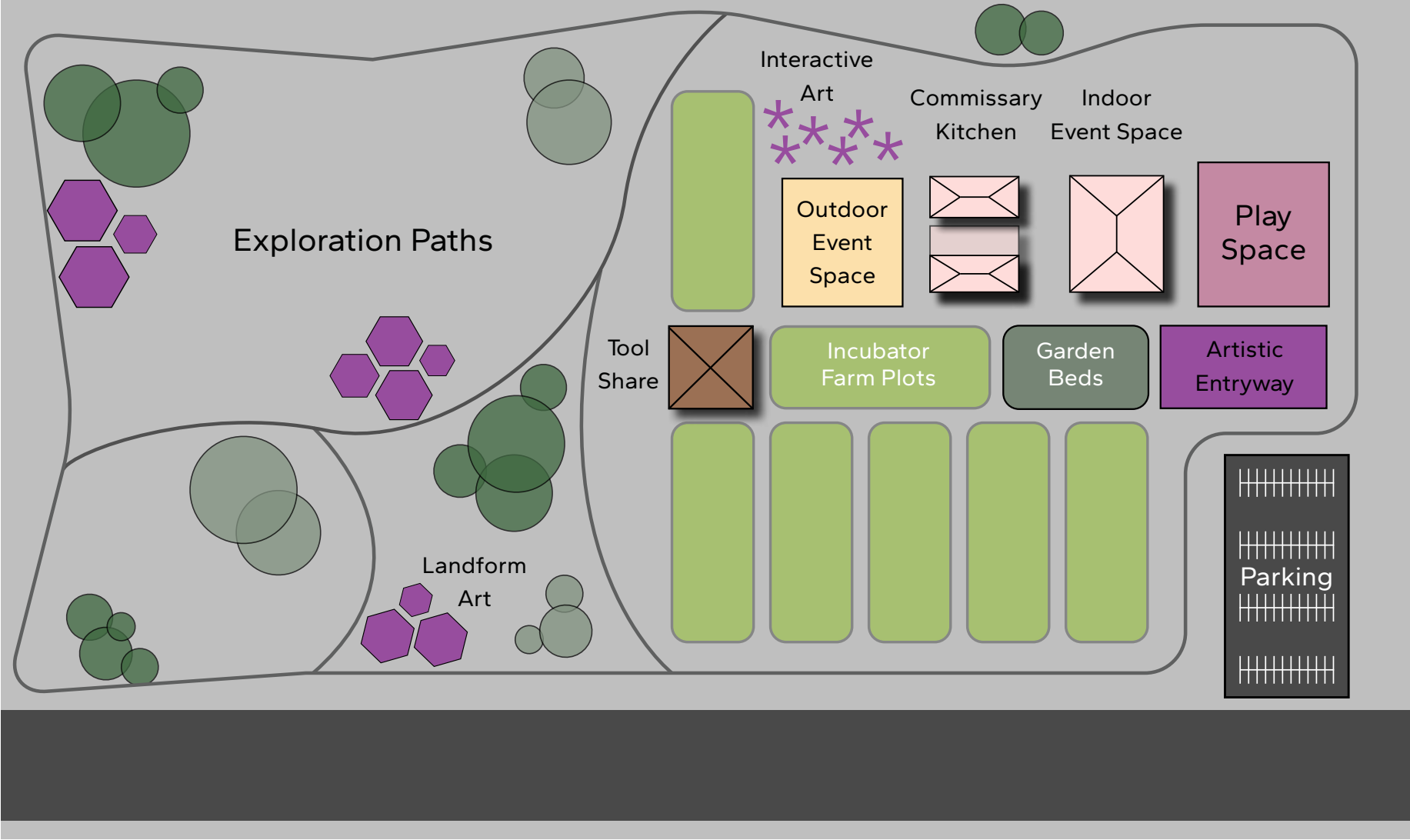
- 20,000 sf Pedestrian Paving
- 10,000 If Exploration Paths
- 7-8 Art Elements
- 2,000 sf Play Space
- 10,000 sf Indoor Event Space
- 900 sf Commissary Kitchen
- 30 ft x 40 ft Tool Share
- 20 Garden Beds
- 2,500 sf Outdoor Event Space
- 9 Incubator Farm Plots

Development Cost Range:
\$15,000,000 - \$30,000,000

Program element sizes are relative to the Kit of Parts as shown in Appendix Kit of Parts and were used to estimate costs

Implementation Options

Large Scale Option



Implementation Options

Large Scale Option



Implementation Options

Large Scale Option



Carl Heyerdahl - Event Space



Mt. View Grange - Tool Share



Meron Menghistab - Row Crops



Sweeney Custom Landscaping - Exploration Paths

“This is a means for the community to **experience invaluable connections** with the needs and the abundance of our earth.”

- Anonymous Response from the
Urban Farm Park Pubic Survey Results

Next Steps and Findings

Next Steps and Findings

Bringing the Urban Farm Park to Life: Conditions for Investment

This study aimed to understand the factors that drive the feasibility of an Urban Farm Park in the City of Olympia and to explore community sentiment regarding the potential investment in an Urban Farm Park.

Through this work, we have found that an Urban Farm Park would be a visionary investment in the City's park offerings and agricultural infrastructure. However, constructing and operating such a place will require public and philanthropic subsidies, which will take time and

persistence to identify, secure, and invest. Similar to how the City is undertaking large-scale public investments in the Regional Aquatic Center and the Olympia Armory Creative Campus redevelopment, this initiative will likely reflect the pattern of previous significant investments in the City of Olympia Parks, Art, and Recreation system. For this place to materialize, it will take unwavering champions within the City and the community.

As outlined below, several conditions must align before the Urban Farm Park can proceed.

Our team has identified several hurdles OPARD must overcome when master planning for an Urban Farm Park moves forward. These recommendations will help navigate the future process. However, they may only address some potential challenges that could arise during the progression of the urban farm park project.



Heyday Farm, Paul Dunn

Next Steps and Findings

Feasibility Conditions

Condition 1: Community support that leads the City to prioritize the Urban Farm Park, among its many other priorities

Key Findings

Our study found clear community support for the Urban Farm Park. As visionary as this idea is, it must also meet the ground and merge with long-term planning elements that the Olympia Parks, Arts, and Recreation Department and the City use to guide growth and development.

Recommendations

- **Include the Urban Farm Park in the 2045 Comprehensive Plan.** It is recommended that during the 2045 Comprehensive Plan update, staff seek feedback on urban agriculture from the broader community, capture ideas that support locally grown food,

and where appropriate develop goals and policies to support the community's vision. This will help continue the community conversation around urban agriculture and anchor what was heard throughout the process of developing this feasibility study.

- **Include the Urban Farm Park in future planning processes.** The 2022 Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan drives the park system investments for six years (2022-2028). The kick-off for the next Parks Plan update will start in the next year or two. It will be the perfect time to include the Urban Farm Park in public surveys and outreach to gather additional feedback that will assist in the prioritization of future projects and if appropriate include the Urban Farm Park in future Capital Facilities Plans.

Olympia Urban Farm Park would address several agricultural goals and policies currently in the Comprehensive Plan

GL25, PL25.3, PL25.4, PL25.8, PL25.9, PR9.1, PN8.7



Heyday Farm, Paul Dunn

Next Steps and Findings

Feasibility Conditions

Condition 2: Identify a stable and compatible farm operator

Key Findings

Stakeholder engagement for this feasibility study underscored a vision for the Urban Farm Park that balances **training for emerging farmers, environmental stewardship, community engagement, and food access**. Many farms receiving substantial public support prioritize broad community education and farmer apprenticeship programs. This theme emerged repeatedly during our outreach efforts, with interviewees emphasizing the gap between farms and the urban community and the potential to instill lifelong interests in healthy food and environmental stewardship through core childhood experiences. The City should aim for a balanced approach that aligns educational objectives with the practical needs of working farmers on the site. Ensuring the safety of visitors

and minimizing disruption to the farmers' work will require careful planning when accommodating the public on the site.

Addressing food and land access can further fulfill community needs, particularly for underserved populations. The Urban Farm Park could designate areas for community farming, catering to organizations like the Haki Farmers, alongside a more accessible area managed by a nonprofit organization. Additionally, efforts to "normalize fresh food" among underserved populations could draw inspiration from existing initiatives such as the Thurston County Food Bank, GRuB, Growing Home Collective, and Freedom Farmer programs. This may involve cultivating culturally specific foods better to meet diverse communities' dietary preferences and needs.

Questions of how the Urban Farm Park is managed and governed are critical to its success. The most likely operating model is one in which the City manages the recreational aspects of the park while providing an inexpensive ground lease for the farm aspects of



Markus Spiske, Unsplash

Next Steps and Findings

Feasibility Conditions

the park to a nonprofit organization. The City and nonprofit would operate in close collaboration to ensure that the community's needs are met.

This feasibility study did not yield definitive findings on who should operate the farm. However, several promising partners emerged.

- The Thurston Conservation District (TCD) offered continued help as an advisor on the farm portion, and there could be opportunities to explore as the TCD identifies a site and develops its Education Center.
- Olympia School District must explore a new home for their Freedom Farmer's Program. While the timing might not align to locate the program on the urban farm park site, the City could support the School District's efforts.
- Cielo is interested in establishing ties between the people they serve (many of whom come from agricultural backgrounds) and the farming community. They are also interested in programs that help budding

entrepreneurs and could be a partner in several aspects of the urban farm park, including the commissary kitchen.

- Growing Home Collective would be interested in being a partner in education.

Recommendations

- The City should consider an educational focus for the urban farm park, extending beyond just the education of emerging farmers to encompass youth education, field trips, and "open farm days," especially if significant public funding is involved.
- Before the following Parks, Art and Recreation Plan planning process, the City should continue to serve as a steward for the Urban Farm Park concept and dedicate staff time to deepen relationships with key organizations that may be interested in partnering on future physical urban farm park. Long-term conversations will be vital to creating an urban farm park that feels welcoming



Steven Weeks, Unsplash

Next Steps and Findings

Feasibility Conditions

- and culturally relevant would be immensely informative.
- In developing agreements and vetting potential operating partners, the City should hone in on the mission of the Urban Farm Park. When establishing strategic collaborations with other organizations, the City should ensure that the organization's goals align with the Urban Farm Parks. This will help to prevent potential challenges arising from disparate objectives. Questions about design, management and governance are critically important to moving the concept forward with organizations.
 - Explore capacity-building grants for organizations that are interested in deepening their ties into Thurston County's agricultural ecosystem.
 - Initiate a round of engagement that expands the organizations that this process did not reach and seeks to meet the needs of organizations with immediate unmet land needs for farming, including the Haki Farmers. This could occur as the parks master planning process begins in 2026.

Condition 3: Funding to support the acquisition of a site to house the Urban Farm Park

Key Findings

The City cannot lead the development of an urban farm park at this time, given several other large-scale investments that the City is making. To advance the urban farm park over the next five to ten years, the 2028-2034 Parks Plan must prioritize this investment (among many



Markus Spiske, Unsplash

other important parks and open space investments). Once prioritized, the next step will be to identify a funding strategy for the different segments of the project, starting with acquisition purchase and development of the site. We have some funds set aside for land acquisition, but development and operating costs are more constrained.

Recommendations

- Continue to explore creative partnerships and funding opportunities for the Urban Farm Park site.

Next Steps and Findings

Feasibility Conditions

- Processing space
 - Recreation space
 - Restrooms
- Using the “Kit of Parts” we tested three site configurations with these short list of site program elements. While keeping costs in mind, and overall site function, there appears to an optimal site size range - too small is inefficient, while too big is too costly to manage and maintain. The Goldilocks range is for sites in the 9-12 acre size.

Recommendations

- General Site Design:
- Design flexible spaces that can be transformed over time as needs change or new opportunities arise.
 - Be thoughtful about exterior space planning. For example, the Rainier Beach Farm includes an overhanging roof on its event space, allowing for outdoor programming during wet weather. The City should plan for more covered space than anticipated to optimize year-round outdoor programming.



Jonathan Kemper, Unsplash

Next Steps and Findings

Feasibility Conditions

- Consider and plan for a lot of storage for tools and supplies along with event infrastructure like tables and chairs.
 - Consider the future technology direction and how to integrate it into the Urban Farm Park.
 - Consider the maintenance of borders, including ongoing needs for noxious weed abatement. Such projects are ripe for volunteer efforts but could provide work for community members with City support.
 - Include site security needs in initial planning and estimates, especially for areas where food is grown. An on-site farm keeper can help ensure the site is overseen even when programs are inactive.
 - If the City is considering LEED or Living Building certification, ensure that the operating model accounts for the maintenance of sophisticated systems. Consider maintenance costs when selecting green features/ systems.
- Size and Shape:
- Seek at a site in the 9-12 acre size range.
 - Seek a site with utilities nearby, in the adjacent street, is ideal.



Heyday Farm, Paul Dunn

Condition 5: Funding for the construction of the Urban Farm Park

Key Findings

Depending on the ultimate site program and phasing costs, these costs could exceed what the City can provide on its own. Funding for the construction of the urban farm park could include local contributions, state grants, foundation grants, and individual donations. Pursuing external funding will take significant staff time, which the City must plan for to be successful.

Recommendations

- Look for creative ways to fund various park elements while ensuring the funding requirements align with the Urban Farm Park’s mission.

Next Steps and Findings

Feasibility Conditions

Condition 6: Ongoing subsidies to support the nonprofit operating the Urban Farm Park

Key Findings

The Urban Farm Park will only be feasible if the City and its operating partner can cover operating and maintenance expenses. We found that comparable urban farm parks with an educational focus require upwards of \$1 to 2 million to operate annually. Scaling of existing organizations may ensure continued stable operations, while creation of a new entity would allow for the Urban Farm Park to operate with its own mission and values.

Recommendations

- Vetting for potential operators should include close accounting of their financial capacity and alignment of their mission



Cloud Mountain Farm

Next Steps and Findings

Feasibility Conditions

Condition 7: Ongoing funding to support the maintenance and capital of operations the recreational elements of the Urban Farm Park

Key Findings

This study did not include a detailed accounting of ongoing operating costs for recreational elements, but we assumed that the City would be able to incorporate the Urban Farm Park into its existing operating structure. However, depending on the maintenance demand, the City would require additional operating funds to support a developed park with the same level of service as other parks of similar size and amenities.

Recommendations

- If the City pursues a model in which a partner operates just the “farm elements” of the park, the City will need to ensure that it has adequate staffing to support ongoing maintenance of play equipment, parking lots, and other non-farm elements of the park.



Cloud Mountain Farm

Next Steps and Findings

Conclusion

This study highlights how an Urban Farm Park would serve as a community asset that strengthens residents’ connection to food. While challenges lie ahead and substantial funding will be necessary from both public and philanthropic sources, there is reason for optimism. Initial community support is evident for this project. The City should work to incorporate this concept among its many initiatives and explore further public feedback during the next Parks Plan update.

By fostering partnerships, focusing on practical next steps, and seeking innovative funding avenues, the City can lay the groundwork for a valuable community asset that promotes agriculture and education while meeting the needs of its diverse population.



Unsplash, Kamala Bright

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“This could be a force for supporting **community, the environment, individuals and families.**”

- Anonymous Response from the
Urban Farm Park Pubic Survey Results

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Appendix

*Case Studies Precedents
Discovery Workshop Summary
Stakeholder Interview Summary
Operation Costs
Pubic Survey Results
Kit of Parts
Art Vision Guidelines
Key Findings*

Endnotes

Document References

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