DeVere Mautino Park Community Food Campus Report

Submitted by
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Executive Summary

Overview

This report details the comprehensive vision and planning for the Mautino Park Community Food Campus, an initiative spearheaded by Interfaith Food Ministry and Sierra Harvest. This report was produced through funding by the City of Grass Valley. It outlines a plan to transform areas of DeVere Mautino Park into a vibrant community hub focused on food production, education, economic opportunity, and ecological stewardship, drawing insights from successful analogous models nationwide and extensive community engagement.

Key Findings & Strategic Shifts

- Initial research into over 20 community food projects across the country identified key insights for success, including; establishing clear governance, starting with focused pilots, embracing iterative planning, co-creating with the community, diversifying income streams, providing potential job training and workforce development, and aligning with local government.
- Community engagement was central to the planning process, involving over 100 residents and partner organizations through listening sessions and surveys. Key themes emerged:
    - **Protection of Natural Spaces:** Strong concern for tree preservation, maintaining wildlife corridors, and protecting access to existing trails leading to a reevaluation of the proposed garden site.
    - **Traffic, Safety, and Access:** Residents around Alta Street expressed concerns about increased traffic and pedestrian safety, influencing the recommendation to route park access away from this street. It was also recommended that the county consider installing sidewalks to provide safe access. Additional parking would need to be secured through a partnership with the Salvation Army.
    - **Support for the Garden Concept:** Overwhelming enthusiasm for food access, educational opportunities, and job training, particularly for underserved populations.

Based on this feedback, a significant revision to the initial proposal was made:

- Areas 1 and 2 of Mautino Park are now recommended for a community farm, farmstand, and outdoor learning/gathering space while Area 3 is deemed more suitable for a food forest.
- The proposed community compost area has been removed from the project scope.

Final Recommendations

- Mautino Park's Areas 1 and 2 envision a roughly one-acre community farm and farmstand. This includes an orchard with heirloom fruit trees, accessible raised vegetable/herb beds, protected by deer fencing, and a small compost site. An open-air farmstand with gravel parking will offer "pay what you can" produce and limited CSA

shares. A covered gazebo will serve as an outdoor classroom, surrounded by a native plant demonstration garden. Hedgerows along Alta Street will enhance aesthetics, provide a windbreak, and boost biodiversity.

- Area 3 is an ideal location for a food forest, using the guild design method to create mutually beneficial plant relationships. This will provide edible plants and enhance the park's biodiversity and resilience. Integrating native plants within the food forest and along trails will naturalize pathways, provide wildlife habitat, improve soil health, and offer an educational experience for visitors, while promoting a self-sustaining ecosystem.

Conclusion

Based on community feedback, review of the land, budget analysis, and overall assessment of the highest and best use for the land at DeVere Mautino Park that has been identified as Areas 1, 2 & 3 in the Community Food Campus proposal, it is the recommendation of Interfaith Food Ministry and Sierra Harvest that the City of Grass Valley consider a Community Food Campus consisting of a farm, farmstand, native plant demonstration garden, and food forest. This recommendation includes installing sidewalks along Alta Street, securing additional parking, and maintaining the existing forested areas of the park.

This revised plan for the Mautino Park Community Food Campus reflects a strong commitment to community-driven design, sustainable practices, and the creation of a valuable public asset that addresses food security, education, and economic opportunity in Grass Valley.

Analogous Model Research & Review

To support the development of a sustainable and impactful Community Food Campus at Mautino Park, Interfaith Food Ministry conducted a nationwide exploration of analogous models—community-driven spaces that integrate food production, education, economic opportunity, and ecological stewardship. These projects, though grounded in diverse places and populations, offer valuable insight into how other communities are tackling some of the most pressing challenges of our time: food insecurity, economic inequality, social isolation, and climate change.

The goal of this research was to compile models and determine best practices using similar projects across the country. Ultimately, it is to provide examples for the City of Grass Valley to determine what aspects of these community projects would be best for DeVere Mautino Park as a public space and community resource.

Research Goals & Methodology

We focused our research on projects that incorporate one or more of the following five core elements—each critical to the long-term sustainability and community impact of a Food Campus vision:

- **Food Production (Gardens and Food Forests):** Growing healthy, culturally relevant food is central to the vision. Productive landscapes support nutrition, education, and climate resilience, while strengthening relationships between people and land.

- **Community Education, Engagement, and Events:** Thriving campuses are places of connection that foster inclusive programming, build food literacy, and cultivate a sense of belonging through events and shared learning.

- **Job Training, Internships, and Workforce Development:** A resilient local food system must invest in people. We looked for models that create green job pathways—particularly for youth, the unhoused, and formerly incarcerated individuals.

- **Composting and Resource Stewardship:** Sustainable food systems depend on healthy soil and closed-loop thinking. We explored models that use composting and resource recovery as tools for climate resilience, education, and systems thinking.

- **Revenue Generation:** Financial sustainability underpins long-term impact. We investigated creative income streams—such as farm stands, event rentals, educational programs, and value-added products—that both support operations and deepen community ownership.

Methodology

The Interfaith Food Ministry team reviewed 35 potential models, researched 20 in detail, conducted interviews with 10, and engaged on site with two models around community composting. We explored elements of each project including: programming, financial structure, community partnerships, metrics of success, and lessons learned. The Appendix includes additional materials from some of the organizations that could be helpful for program design.

Key Insights

Drawing from over 20 successful, community-focused food projects nationwide, the following insights emerged as a powerful roadmap for any community looking to design a community food campus:

1. **Lay the Foundation: Governance & Values Matter**
   Establish clear governance aligned with core values—food justice, equity, ecological stewardship—early on to guide decisions and build long-term credibility.

2. **Pilot with Purpose: Start Small, Scale Strategically**
   Launch with a focused pilot—perhaps a single garden, farm stand, or training cohort—before expanding. Early successes build momentum, community trust, and attract funding for future phases.

3. **Embrace Iteration: Plan for Adaptation**
   Embed experimentation into your DNA: test, evaluate, and refine programs frequently. Nimble responsiveness ensures what works stays and what doesn't can gracefully pivot without institutional burden.

4. **Co-Create with Community and Partners**
   Integrate local residents, schools, nonprofits, and municipal partners from day one into design and operations. High-touch partnership and co-creation fosters ownership, reduces resistance, and enhances social cohesion.

5. **Grow Economic Opportunity with Workforce Development & Training**
   Include vocational pathways—paid apprenticeships, culinary or farm training, composting crews—for underserved populations (youth, reentry, unhoused). These programs multiply social impact and attract workforce funding.

6. **Diversify Income Streams: Build Financial Resilience**
   Blend earned income (farm stands, café, kitchen incubator, plant nursery) with grants and philanthropic support. A diversified revenue portfolio empowers long-term autonomy.

7. **Safeguard Land Forever: Establish a Land Trust or Co-op**
   Secure your food campus through conservation easements or community land

ownership models to protect against displacement or redevelopment. This ensures the campus remains a public asset in perpetuity.

8. **Align with Local Government**
   Cultivate early alignment with city or county agencies—how partnerships (e.g., food distribution, workforce, land use) can unlock funding, technical assistance, permitting, and visibility.

9. **Center Youth as Stewards & Leaders**
   Prioritize youth programs that integrate garden/workforce training with agency, mentorship, and leadership opportunities. Young people become powerful ambassadors and future stewards.

10. **Design for Multiple Wins**
    A Community Food Campus isn't just about food—it's an opportunity to address interconnected issues: climate change, food insecurity, economic inequality, public health, social isolation, and youth disengagement. The most successful models designed with intersectionality in mind. Designing with this systems-thinking lens made projects more fundable, inclusive, and transformative.

Model Research Summary

The following report summarizes findings from our analogous model research—featuring key takeaways, in-depth profiles, program inspiration, and tools that can guide local planning.

The following projects were researched and/or interviewed. See appendix for additional resources:

Project	Location	Description	Link
Acta Non Verba: Youth Urban Farm Project (merged with City Slicker Farms in 2023)	Oakland, CA	Empowers youth and families to plan, plant, harvest, and sell produce, promoting financial literacy and healthy living.	https://anvfarm.org/
Bayer Farm - LandPaths	Santa Rosa, CA	A community garden fostering community engagement and sustainable agriculture.	https://www.landpaths.org/our-work/bayer-farm/
Beacon Food Forest	Seattle, WA	A community-driven permaculture project aiming to grow an edible urban forest accessible to all.	https://beaconfoodforest.org/
Bishop Community Garden & Compost	Bishop, CA	A community initiative focusing on sustainable gardening and composting practices (rural).	https://www.bishopcommunitygarden.org/
Boston Food Forest Coalition	Boston, MA	A nonprofit community land trust transforming vacant lots into public food forests across Boston.	https://www.bostonfoodforest.org/
Butte Environmental Council - Chico Composting	Chico, CA	An organization promoting environmental stewardship through composting and sustainable practices.	https://www.becnet.org/
California Alliance for Community Composting	Multiple Locations	A coalition supporting community-scale composting initiatives throughout California.	https://www.thecacc.org/

Catalyst BioAmendments	Nevada City, CA	Specializes in producing high-quality biological soil amendments to enhance soil health and fertility (rural).	https://www.catalystbioamendments.com/
Common Ground Garden Project	Palo Alto, CA	A community garden offering educational programs on sustainable gardening.	https://www.commongroundgarden.org/
Crescent Farm at LA Arboretum	Los Angeles, CA	A demonstration garden in Arcadia, California, showcasing sustainable and water-wise gardening practices.	https://www.arboretum.org/gardens/learning-gardens/crescent-farm/
Hard Core Compost	Santa Cruz, CA	Provides composting services and education to promote soil health and waste reduction.	https://www.hardcorecompost.com/
Homeless Garden Project	Santa Cruz, CA	A nonprofit offering job training and transitional employment in organic gardening to individuals experiencing homelessness.	https://homelessgardenproject.org/
New Roots Farm	West Sac., CA	Operated by the International Rescue Committee providing farming opportunities and training for refugees and the local community.	https://newrootsfarm.org/
Occidental Arts and Ecology Center	Occidental , CA	An education center and organic farm focusing on ecological and agricultural sustainability, (rural)	https://oaec.org/
Planting Justice	Oakland, CA	Organization creating green jobs and democratizing access to affordable, nutritious food.	https://plantingjustice.org/
Reunity Resources	Santa Fe, NM	A nonprofit focusing on food waste diversion, composting, and sustainable farming.	https://www.reunityresources.com/

Urban Tilth	Richmond, CA	An organization cultivating urban agriculture to help the community build a more sustainable, healthy, and just food system.	https://urbantilth.org/
Soul Fire Farm	Petersburg, NY	A BIPOC-centered community farm committed to ending racism and injustice in the food system (rural).	https://www.soulfirefarm.org/
The Food Project	MA	Organization engaging young people in personal and social change through sustainable agriculture.	https://thefoodproject.org/
Wasatch Community Gardens	Salt Lake City, UT	A nonprofit empowering people to grow and eat healthy, organic, local food.	https://wasatchgardens.org/

"Despite living in such a state of alienation and individualism, people actually crave to come home to the heart of what it is to be human: to feel gratitude for our ancestors; to cultivate healthy communities; to act with mindfulness for the seven generations to come; to respect and steward the earth for the good of all life. We are evolved to want to tend deep, healthful and reciprocal relationships with the rest of the natural world." - Occidental Arts and Ecology Center

Peer & Aspirant Model Analysis

We selected a subset of the models to better illustrate opportunities and consider these a peer or aspirant project for the Community Food Campus vision at Mautino Park. Each profile focuses on core elements and demonstrate strategies that are particularly aligned with the identified priorities:

A. Boston Food Forest Coalition
B. Landpaths
C. New Roots Farm
D. Reunity Resources
E. Urban Tilth
F. Wasatch Community Gardens
G. Planting Justice

A. Boston Food Forest Coalition (Boston, MA)

Overview

Founded in 2013, the Boston Food Forest Coalition (BFFC) is a grassroots nonprofit transforming vacant urban lots into community-owned, edible public parks. Operating at the intersection of climate resilience, food justice, and racial equity, BFFC reimagines how urban land can be reclaimed and stewarded by local residents for long-term public benefit.

Mission & Model

BFFC's mission is to build inclusive, ecologically regenerative green spaces through a community land trust (CLT) and resident-led stewardship model. These food forests serve as neighborhood hubs for education, ecological restoration, food access, and community connection—co-created and co-stewarded by the people who live nearby.[1]

Organizational Snapshot

- **Year Founded:** 2013
- **Team Size:** 5–10 staff, extensive volunteer network
- **Funding Model:** Grants, donations, earned income from workshops/events
- **Governance:** Community Land Trust ensures permanent protection and equity
- **Programs:** Food forest creation, environmental education, youth leadership, community outreach

[1] Appendix 1.1.3: BFFC Vision, Mission, Values

“These food forests are a real treasure in the neighborhood, for the neighborhood. And they should give us hope.”— June Joseph, Founding Steward, Edgewater Food Forest

Core Element: Safeguard Land

BFFC sites are held in a community land trust—protecting them from privatization, development, or displacement. This legal structure ensures long-term access, equity, and stewardship by the people the land is meant to serve.

Why it matters:

- It safeguards the space against future privatization, development, or displacement.
- It allows the community to invest in long-term improvements with confidence.
- It builds power by shifting land ownership into the hands of neighborhoods, not institutions.

While Mautino Park is publicly owned, the community land trust model offers an inspiring example of how to formalize community governance, build a sense of local ownership, and guide future land protection strategies in rural contexts.

Core Element: Resident-led Stewardship Teams

Each food forest is cared for by a resident-led Stewardship Team with clearly defined roles—from tree care to community events. A Lead Coordinating Steward provides consistency while responsibilities are shared across the team. This structure encourages distributed

leadership, increases accountability, long-term engagement, reduces burnout, and deepens neighborhood trust

Photos courtesy of BFFC

Analysis

This model is highly transferable to rural settings, where community volunteerism is strong.[2] It provides a clear framework to activate local leadership, structure engagement, and sustain the vision over time. BFFC shows how small, community-rooted projects can evolve into durable institutions when equity, land access, and local leadership are prioritized. Their model offers a strong blueprint for Mautino Park as it becomes a hub for food, learning, and healing in our region.

> *"Start with developing values, guiding principles, and community agreements to level set and have guardrails. Be open and transparent. Find the balance between sharing power and making decisions to move things forward."* - Mark Arujo, Community Engagement Manager, BFFC

[2] Appendix 3.1

B. Land Paths (Santa Rosa, CA)

Overview

LandPaths is a community-rooted environmental education and conservation nonprofit with a bold mission: *to foster a love of the land in Sonoma County*. With deep commitments to equity, ecological stewardship, and cultural belonging, LandPaths blends bilingual education, hands-on stewardship, and nature-based community programming to connect people of all backgrounds to the outdoors. One of its most powerful models of this work is Bayer Farm—a two-acre urban farm and park in Santa Rosa's Roseland neighborhood, born from a collaboration with the City of Santa Rosa and the Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District.

Mission & Model

LandPaths believes that nature belongs to everyone—and that meaningful relationships with the land can be joyful, healing, and transformational. Their approach is rooted in:

- Bilingual, place-based education
- Community-led stewardship of urban and wild spaces
- Environmental justice and access to green space
- Nature as a source of health, connection, and joy
- Emphasis on cultural food practices and intergenerational learning.

Bayer Farm, one of LandPaths' most visible and active sites, exemplifies this model: a thriving community garden, cultural hub, and urban nature preserve where food justice, land stewardship, and community celebration come together. The farm includes: an orchard; 120 shared plots; compost delivery; seed distribution; a teaching garden; and workshops on herbal medicine, cooking, and localized food production.

Photos courtesy of Landpaths

Organizational Snapshot

- **Founded**: LandPaths (1996); Bayer Farm (2007)
- **Farm Size**: 2-acre urban farm within a city park
- **Team Size**: ~30 staff members, with over one-third bilingual (English/Spanish), 1000+ volunteers
- **Revenue Model**: Primarily grant-funded, with supplemental revenue from plot fees, workshops, events, and donations
- **Key Partnerships**: City of Santa Rosa, Sonoma County Ag + Open Space, Local public schools, environmental nonprofits and community health orgs

Core Element: Workforce Development & Youth Engagement
Through paid internships and educational partnerships, LandPaths engages teens and young adults in active land stewardship. Interns learn critical conservation skills—like trail-building, erosion control, biological monitoring, and wildfire resilience practices—while also gaining soft skills in leadership, community organizing, and communication. Many receive course credit and work alongside professionals in forestry, ecology, and education. Programming is bilingual and culturally affirming, but its true strength lies in being *community-responsive*—designed to meet youth where they are, regardless of language, background, or prior experience with nature.

This approach could translate into internship opportunities for rural youth who may feel disconnected from local resources, career pathways, or public lands. Just as Bayer Farm served as a *bridge* between Roseland's underserved families and the outdoors, a stewardship-based farm can serve as a bridge to opportunity, belonging, connection to nature, and pride for rural youth or urban youth.[3]

[3] Appendix 1.1.9 LandPath Impact Report

Why it matters:

- Creates pathways for youth leadership: Stewardship internships give young people a tangible way to connect with land and build careers in conservation, public works, or outdoor education.

- Leverages funding opportunities: Programs that combine youth workforce development, environmental education, and climate resilience align with public and philanthropic funding streams (e.g., Prop 68, youth employment initiatives, climate corps).

- Supports climate resilience at a local level: Training youth in stewardship practices such as native planting, erosion control, and composting creates lasting benefits for the land and the community.

- Strengthens place-based identity: Youth who help build and care for a park are more likely to feel connected to it and become lifelong advocates for it.

"When we tried to convince Spanish-speaking people to come on our hikes initially, we failed miserably. But now we have lots of Spanish-speaking folks on our outings, with more signing up all of the time. Bayer Farm was the bridge. It didn't just allow Roseland to connect to the land. It allowed us to connect to Roseland. The farm made it all possible." - Executive Director Craig Anderson

C. New Roots Farm (Sacramento, CA)

Overview

New Roots Farm in Sacramento is a flagship initiative of the International Rescue Committee, designed to empower refugees through agriculture. By providing access to land, training, and markets, the program enables participants to cultivate culturally significant crops, generate income, and integrate into their new communities. The farm serves as a model for leveraging agriculture as a tool for economic empowerment and community building.

Mission & Model

The mission of New Roots Sacramento is to assist refugees in reestablishing their ties to the land, celebrate their heritage, and nourish themselves and their neighbors by planting strong roots in Sacramento. The program operates through:

- **Farm and Community Gardens** for refugees to farm and learn
- **Training Programs**: Workshops on pest management, food business marketing, food safety, irrigation, soil fertility, financial literacy, and business planning.
- **Market Access**: Opportunities to sell produce at the New Roots Farmstand, local markets, and to institutions like schools and grocery stores.

Organizational Snapshot

- **Founded**: 2016
- **Farm Size**: 5.5 acres with 3 community gardens
- **Participants**: Over 80 refugee families
- **Revenue Model**: Participants keep 85% of farmstand sales; 15% supports farm operations. Additional funding from grants and donations.
- **Key Partners**: Yolo Food Bank, local grocery stores, Spork Food Hub, CalRecycle, CA Alliance for Community Composting

Core Element: Revenue Generation and Workforce Investment for Underserved Populations

New Roots Farm in Sacramento offers a compelling model for how agriculture can create real economic opportunity for under-resourced communities. Through access to land, culturally relevant training, and market infrastructure, refugee farmers at New Roots are not only growing food—they're generating meaningful supplemental income, with some earning as much as $10,000 annually from produce sales. Farmers retain 85% of their sales, while 15% supports farm operations, establishing a self-sustaining financial model that benefits both individuals and the program.

Why it matters:

This model offers a dual-impact approach—meeting food access needs while providing job training and income generation pathways. In a rural context like ours, a local training and farming program—potentially in partnership with organizations like Interfaith Food Ministry or Sierra Harvest—could enroll low-income residents, food-insecure households, or job seekers in a seasonal stewardship program. Participants could gain skills in:

- Small-scale regenerative farming

- Composting and soil management
- Market operations and sales
- Post-harvest handling and value-added processing

This creates a pipeline not only for food security, but for paid agricultural or environmental work, with the opportunity for participants to sell what they grow, reducing their own grocery bills and generating income.

Core Element: Diverse Income Streams

A Farmstand could sell fresh produce grown by participants directly to the local community or through CSA boxes, farmers markets, or institutional buyers (e.g., schools, small grocers). In addition to tapping into grant funding, this strategy helps diversify funding streams for the park's long-term viability while offering low-barrier entrepreneurship opportunities for participants.

"We learn a lot from each other, myself included—discovering new crops, new foods, and how to grow and eat them. There's great benefit to having a diversity of farmers from around the world working side by side on one piece of land. Not only food, but culturally—meeting people from different cultures makes us better farmers and better people." - Ram Khatiwoda, Farm Coordinator

Photos courtesy of New Roots Farm

D. Reunity Resources (Santa Fe, NM)

Overview
Reunity Resources is a nonprofit environmental organization transforming food waste into jobs and community wealth. By integrating waste recycling, regenerative farming, and education on a single site, Reunity has created a closed-loop system that diverts waste, restores soil, grows food, and generates revenue—all while engaging thousands of community members in solutions to climate change and food insecurity.

Mission & Model
Founded in 2011, Reunity Resources was built on the belief that community-scale change is essential for climate resilience. Their model creates practical, participatory systems where waste is a resource, and where environmental sustainability drives economic opportunity. What makes the model stand out is its partnership with the city, the focus on diverse funding and earned revenue, and interconnected programming that supports financial sustainability while serving a broad community mission.

Organizational Snapshot

- **Founded:** 2011 as a nonprofit
- **Staff:** 36, 200 + volunteers
- **Land Base:** 2-acre farm + composting Soil Yard
- **Budget:** $2 million
- **Earned Revenue:** 65% of budget

2024 Impact:

- 1.5 million pounds of food waste diverted from the local landfill

- Over 4 million pounds of organic material diverted in total
- $20,000 worth of Santa Fe grown produce provided to support food access in the community
- Over 6,400 meals featuring farm fresh produce distributed
- 850+ meals a month feeds the local community through a Community Fridge and Pantry
- 35 acres covered with compost to regenerate desert soils
- 14 school gardens receiving our soil amendments and starts
- 23+ Santa Fe Public Schools and 7 Private Schools compost their food scraps with us
- 124 Restaurant and business partners in Santa Fe and Albuquerque working with our BioFuel collective, totaling 49,184+ gallons diverted
- 45 local Restaurants diverting their food waste with Reunity
- 32 Installs of Backyard Worm Compost Systems, in collaboration with Santa Fe County, in 2024!
- Thousands of students attending free public farm field trips, 500 Farm Camp participants
- Free community workshops: gardening demos, bi-lingual cooking classes, storytelling and music events[4]

Photos courtesy of Reunity Resources

Core Element: Diverse Income Streams

1. **Used Cooking Oil Collection (Biodiesel Program)**
   Reunity Resources provides free used cooking oil collection services to 124 restaurants and sells the collected oil to a biodiesel processor. With just one staff member managing the route, the program yields approximately $100,000 in annual net profit. This model showcases how small-scale, low-overhead operations can generate meaningful revenue while supporting renewable energy initiatives. Offering free pickup can open doors to future paid services like food waste collection.

[4] Appendix 1.1.10 2023 Reunity Annual Report

2. **Commercial Food Waste Collection**
   Reunity's food waste collection service operates with 7–8 full-time employees, serving 65 commercial customers including 20 schools. Fees range from $90 to $320 per month, with schools currently paying the same as high-volume clients like restaurants. Total commercial food waste collection revenue is $150,000 annually, with $52,000 from schools. A tiered pricing model enables sustainability across customer types. Pilot programs with schools show potential for broader adoption if cost neutrality is proven—providing a replicable pathway for integrating institutional food waste recovery into city infrastructure.

3. **Residential Food Waste Collection**
   Reunity generates $200,000 annually from home compost collection. This reflects growing public demand for at-home sustainability services. Grass Valley could leverage this model to scale residential composting and reduce landfill dependency, while creating green jobs.

4. **Transforming Recovered Food into Jobs and Community Meals**
   A newer program, Saving Seconds, focuses on transforming unsellable farm produce into value-added products like kimchi and soup, made in a 600 sq. ft. kitchen on the farm. Though not currently profitable (e.g., kimchi would need to sell at $19/jar to break even), the program received a federal grant for the launch. The program operates in partnership with a youth culinary program to make meals for local agencies - demonstrating a model where community impact and education are prioritized over profit.

5. **Soil Sales**
   Compost produced from collected organics is sold at a premium—$100 per yard, driven by local demand and climate-specific soil scarcity.
   a. Gross revenue: $400,000 annually
   b. Net profit: $150,000 annually (with high costs for machinery and staffing)

   Although capital-intensive, compost sales close the loop on organics recycling and offer an agricultural product that directly benefits local growers and landscapers. Certification by the state's Department of Agriculture ensures quality and builds trust.

"Reunity started because we saw firsthand what happens when good programs rely entirely on grant funding—my husband was working on a project that was 100% grant-funded, and when the funding ran out, everyone lost their jobs. We knew we had to build something different. Diverse funding and revenue generation is key to our success, resilience, and impact. Charging for our services has made it possible to expand and provide good jobs."— Juliana, *Co-Founder, Reunity Resources*

E. Urban Tilth (Richmond, CA)

Overview

Urban Tilth is a community-led nonprofit that grows food, cultivates youth leadership, and restores ecosystems in Richmond, California. By anchoring programs in urban farms, school gardens, and restoration sites, Urban Tilth weaves together food justice, environmental sustainability, and youth empowerment. Their model integrates education, job training, and public land partnerships to create a self-sufficient and resilient local food system.

Mission & Model

Urban Tilth's mission is to inspire, hire, and train local residents to cultivate agriculture, feed their community, and restore relationships with land to build a more sustainable, just, and healthy food system.[5]

Their holistic model blends:

- Community food production (urban farms, free food stands, CSA)
- Youth-centered training and employment programs
- Public land stewardship and native plant restoration
- Partnerships with schools, city departments, and environmental coalitions

Organizational Snapshot

- **Founded:** 2005 (Nonprofit status since 2007)
- **Core Sites:** 1 Urban Farm, 2 Community Gardens, 2 School Gardens
- **Programs:** Youth job training, paid watershed restoration crew, educational workshops
- **2023 Food Distribution:** 164,090 lbs distributed; 12,555 lbs grown

[5] Appendix 1.1.11 2022 Urban Tilth Annual Report

- **Volunteers & Event Participants:** Over 9,300 in 2023
- **Public Events:** 96 in 2023
- **Native Plant Species Cultivated:** 1,280 in 2023
- **Key Revenue Sources:** CSA sales, native plant nursery, grants, partnerships
- **Government Grants & Contracts Revenue:** $516,700

Core Element: Center Youth as Stewards & Leaders of Public Lands

Urban Tilth maintains formal partnerships with: The City of Richmond; Contra Costa County Flood Control District; East Bay Regional Parks; and the Trust for Public Land. These partnerships allow Urban Tilth's trained field crews to manage restoration and food access projects on public land, combining workforce development with ecological restoration. These youth programs build leadership and job skills through hands-on land work:

- **Summer Youth Apprenticeship** (ages 15–18): Combines environmental justice education with farm labor and project-based learning.
- **Rudy Lozito Fellowship:** Supports young adults transitioning into environmental careers through guided mentorship and land-based training.
- **Watershed Restoration Crew:** A paid 15-week training program followed by job placement on long-term restoration projects.

Urban Tilth's approach demonstrates the power of combining youth job training in emerging ecological fields with hands-on experience in public land stewardship and green infrastructure. Their focus on equity ensures that young people receive meaningful, well-compensated work that supports both their development and community health.

Why it Matters:

Grass Valley can draw inspiration from this model by fostering partnerships with municipal and county land agencies to co-manage creek corridors, community gardens, and surplus public lands. Establishing a dedicated farm or garden site, supported by a land trust or conservation easement, could become a vital hub for food sovereignty, education, and ecological restoration.

By layering job training, youth engagement, and land stewardship in this way, communities have an opportunity to cultivate local talent while enhancing environmental resilience.

"If we really want people to be able to be resilient, we have to help them improve. If we're going to do green infrastructure as a way to disrupt heat islands, then let's make sure that that's a well-paid job… Equity and social and economic justice need to be baked into every initiative." - Doria Robinson, Executive Director, Urban Tilth

Photos courtesy of Urban Tilth

F. Wasatch Community Gardens – Green Phoenix Farm (Salt Lake City, UT)

Overview
Green Phoenix Farm, a 1.4-acre organic urban farm on Redevelopment Agency land, revitalizes a formerly blighted lot into a solar-powered demonstration site for regenerative agriculture, community education, and permaculture. A key feature of success is their city-sponsored job training program for unhoused women.

Mission & Model
WCG's mission is to empower people of all ages and incomes to grow and eat healthy, organic, local food, thereby nurturing stronger communities and equitable access to nutritious produce. Founded in 1989, WCG pursues this mission through:

- **Urban Agriculture & Job Training**: Solar-powered Green Phoenix Farm provides paid farm employment, permaculture demonstration, and multi-modal training.
- **Educational Programming**: Youth garden clubs, school garden partnerships, summer camps, and community workshops engage thousands each year.
- **Community Gardens & Public Engagement**: WCG stewards over seven acres of public garden sites, fosters volunteer involvement, and hosts vibrant food-centered events.[6]
- **Food Distribution & Regenerative Practices**: Produce and seedling for distribution, sale, and donation.

[6] Appendix 1.1.12 Wasatch Gardens Utah Yard Share

- **Land Protection & Partnerships**: WCG holds fee title and conservation easements on farm and campus properties. They collaborate with Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, the School District, and the Public Lands Department to expand access and impact

Organizational Snapshot

- **Established:** 2016 (on 1.4-acre site)
- **Community Gardens:** 19
- **Employees:** 30
- **Certification/Infrastructure:** USDA-certified organic, 100% solar-powered
- **Donated Food:** $60k of produce donated annually to 2,100+ individuals
- **Seedlings**: 40,000+ certified organic seedlings grown for plant sale & nonprofit partners
- **Volunteer Engagement:** Over 200 volunteers annually
- **Job Training**: 60 program graduates, 2 cohorts per season, each with ≈10 women
- **Housing:** 75–80% secure stable housing and employment post-program
- **Employment**: 78% obtained jobs within one month of their farm employment.

Photos courtesy of Wasatch Gardens

Core Element: Grow Economic Opportunity with Workforce Development & Training

The Green Team program at Green Phoenix Farm provides women facing homelessness with paid, hands-on job training in regenerative agriculture. Over the course of 10 months, participants build essential workforce skills through structured farm work, production tracking, and team-based responsibilities. The cohort-based model emphasizes accountability, reliability, and routine—qualities transferable to future employment.[7]

This training not only equips participants with practical skills in sustainable food production but also strengthens their readiness for the job market by integrating soft skill development, mentoring, and real-world experience in a supportive environment.

The program's use of a therapeutic farm environment, complete with daily physical activity, mindfulness practices, and organic food access, highlights the powerful role somatic well-being can play in trauma recovery and personal empowerment. For communities in Grass Valley and beyond, this model demonstrates how integrating economic opportunity with land stewardship and care-based systems can transform not only lives, but also underutilized public land into spaces of healing and resilience.

Why It Works:

- Addresses root causes, not just symptoms, of homelessness.
- Fosters community, accountability, and healing in a safe, nature-based setting.

[7] Appendix 1.1.7 WSG Job Training Program In-depth Description

- Combines economic opportunity with care-based support systems.

Key Insights:

- Ideal Program Length: 10 months balances depth and transition
- Recruitment Pipeline: ~25–30 women needed to yield 6–8 active participants
- Crucial Roles: Program Director (recruitment + soft skills), Farm Manager (daily operations), Advocate (housing + crisis support)
- Critical Partnerships: A strong, collaborative social service partner is essential—many struggles were resolved when this became a staffed role
- Effective Engagement: “Taste of Farm” lunch event builds trust with prospective participants and exposes them to light farm-work to assess program fit
- City Support: Initial wages funded by city pilot—important early buy-in
- Start with Focus: Begin with a clearly defined underserved population
- Stable Structure: create consistency and stability to support participants

“...these women are providing food and plants for thousands of people, and it rewrites the story so they’re the ones giving.” - James Loomis, Farm Director

“Equity and food justice are linked. We all need stable housing - it's directly linked to poverty and food insecurity.” - Jackie Rodabaugh, Job Training Program Director

G. Planting Justice (East Oakland & El Sobrante, CA)

Overview
Founded in 2009, Planting Justice is a nationally recognized, Oakland-based nonprofit that exemplifies how deep community values, strategic partnerships, and long-term vision can grow into a transformative, place-based food justice model. What began as a grassroots urban agriculture initiative has evolved into a thriving ecosystem of projects: the largest organic fruit tree nursery in North America, a regenerative farm and food forest, a commercial kitchen and "pay-what-you-can" café, and a reentry employment pipeline for formerly incarcerated individuals. Planting Justice continues to innovate, demonstrating how land stewardship, local ownership, and community empowerment can regenerate both ecosystems and lives.

Mission & Model
Planting Justice builds food sovereignty, economic resilience, and healing in communities most impacted by systemic oppression—particularly mass incarceration and food apartheid. Their mission is rooted in creating dignified, living-wage green jobs and holistic reentry pathways for formerly incarcerated individuals, who make up over 50% of their 55 person staff.

The organization's model integrates:

- **Job training and employment** through a 2-acre urban nursery and 4-acre farm/food forest, where staff propagate and sell over 30,000 trees annually while also planting hundreds of free fruit trees in underserved neighborhoods.
- **Educational programming**, including paid youth internships each year, community-led workshops, and school partnerships that foster ecological literacy and food system skills. Impact: 2,000 young adults reached through school gardens, field trips, and 60 paid youth internships per year at $17.50/hour.

- **Community access** through a cooperative-run food campus that includes a commercial kitchen, market garden, and “pay-what-you-can” café—preserving a key gathering space from commercial redevelopment through an innovative LLC model co-owned by a local church.

El Sobrante Site – A Community Food Campus

When a beloved local business in El Sobrante shut its doors, the site—destined to become a gas station—faced a future that did little to serve the surrounding community. In response, local residents organized, voiced opposition, and catalyzed a powerful alternative. Through a pioneering partnership between Planting Justice and a neighborhood church, a cooperative LLC was formed to acquire and transform the space into a vibrant community food campus.

Today, this formerly threatened parcel hosts a weekly farmers market, a regenerative food forest, a commercial kitchen, and a dynamic community gathering hub. It is being reborn as a place where people grow, prepare, share, and celebrate food together.

Innovative Ownership & Shared Stewardship

The site is co-owned through a cooperative LLC by Planting Justice and the church, both tax-exempt organizations. This shared governance structure ensures that mission alignment, long-term stewardship, and community benefit remain central. It’s an inspiring model of how land and resources can be protected from extractive development and redirected toward public good.

Commercial Kitchen as Economic Engine & Cultural Hub

At the heart of this campus is a commercial kitchen, designed not just for food preparation, but for opportunity creation. Entrepreneurs, local producers, urban farmers, and community chefs can access the space to develop food businesses, host events, and preserve culinary traditions. This infrastructure allows for job training, income generation, and the celebration of diverse food cultures—while directly addressing food insecurity and economic exclusion.

The Good Table: Pay What You Can Cafe

The Good Table will become the nation’s first combined pay-what-you-can café, commercial kitchen incubator, retail nursery, community event venue, and arts space—all operating under a cooperative model. This facility will provide space for local makers, farmers, artists, and organizers in a neighborhood that currently lacks even a coffee shop or centralized gathering space.[8]

The Good Table model offers a powerful blueprint for communities. Imagine a commercial kitchen and food campus—where people gain job training, food is grown, preserved, and sold locally, and community is strengthened through shared meals and creative events. With the

[8] Appendix 1.1.13 Planting Justice Good Table Cafe Website

right investment and partnerships, Grass Valley could anchor a similar space—one that combines food production, culinary innovation, and economic resilience under one roof. By transforming neglected properties into vibrant hubs of culture, care, and commerce, this model proves that local action can shape a more just and regenerative future.

“This work takes a lot of patience: it's hard work, but we expect it to be hard. We want to create a model that is scalable and replicable. If our model can be adopted in part or in whole by other organizations around the country, that’s our long-term goal.” -Gavin Raders, Planting Justice Executive Director

Community-Centered Visioning & Survey Results

Background & Overview

At the heart of the proposed Community Food Campus at Mautino Park is a simple but powerful principle: design begins with people. From the outset, the project team, led by Sierra Harvest and Interfaith Food Ministry, prioritized human-centered design, placing the values, concerns, and aspirations of local residents at the core of the planning process.

The initial phase of community engagement began in 2022 when Sierra Harvest and Interfaith Food Ministry (IFM) received a grant to participate in the Human-Centered Design Training through the Care for Innovation Catalyst Program. As part of this process, both organizations conducted in-depth interviews with local residents, while IFM also distributed a client survey that yielded 367 responses. These early efforts served as a critical foundation, grounding the project in the lived experiences, needs, and hopes of those most directly impacted.

To ensure the garden reflects the community it serves, the team developed and distributed a public survey and organized a series of intentional listening sessions. These were not just outreach events, they were foundational components of a collaborative ideation process.

This yielded feedback, shaped the vision, and began the process of developing community trust. We engaged local expertise, uncovered shared values and pain points, and laid the foundation for a community resource that reflects the interconnected priorities of community, justice, ecological care, and opportunity.

Strategic Outreach and Community Input

To ensure meaningful participation in the community garden visioning process, Sierra Harvest and Interfaith Food Ministry carried out a broad and intentional outreach campaign designed to reach residents through multiple channels and in diverse formats.

Key outreach efforts included:

- Feature in Interfaith Food Ministry and Sierra Harvest newsletter, reaching over 7,000 subscribers
- Posts on social media, engaging a network of 6,000+ followers
- 132 postcards distributed to nearby residents to encourage local awareness and input
- Flyers posted throughout Mautino Park and surrounding neighborhoods
- Personalized emails sent directly to local community leaders and representatives of partner organizations
- On-air radio promotion via IFM's regular public updates and Sierra Harvest guest appearances on KNCO
- Press releases featured on YubaNet.com and The Union newspaper
- Website developed for updates and links: IFM & SH - Community Food Campus

These efforts were designed not only to inform, but to invite residents into a process of shared ownership and creative contribution.

Community Listening Session Summary

More than 100 community members took part in three listening sessions designed to invite open dialogue, build trust, and guide the vision for the proposed garden at Mautino Park. Two sessions were open to the general public, while the third brought together partner organizations for deeper collaboration.

The first session revealed passionate concerns, particularly around environmental preservation, maintaining the character of the neighborhood, and ensuring continued access to the park. Importantly, the pushback centered not on the idea of a community garden, but on the where and how, underscoring a shared investment in protecting and enhancing this public space.

By the second session, after a transparent and thorough introduction from city and county staff about the project's goals and background, the atmosphere shifted. Participants expressed a growing sense of clarity and trust. Many began to offer forward-thinking ideas, envisioning how the garden could enhance food access, youth education, cultural connection, and ecological stewardship.

Community Listening Session Conclusions:

Community input directly influenced key project pivots, including:

- Reevaluating the proposed site to better preserve natural features
- Committing to protecting tree canopy

- Designing inclusive programming for diverse community participation

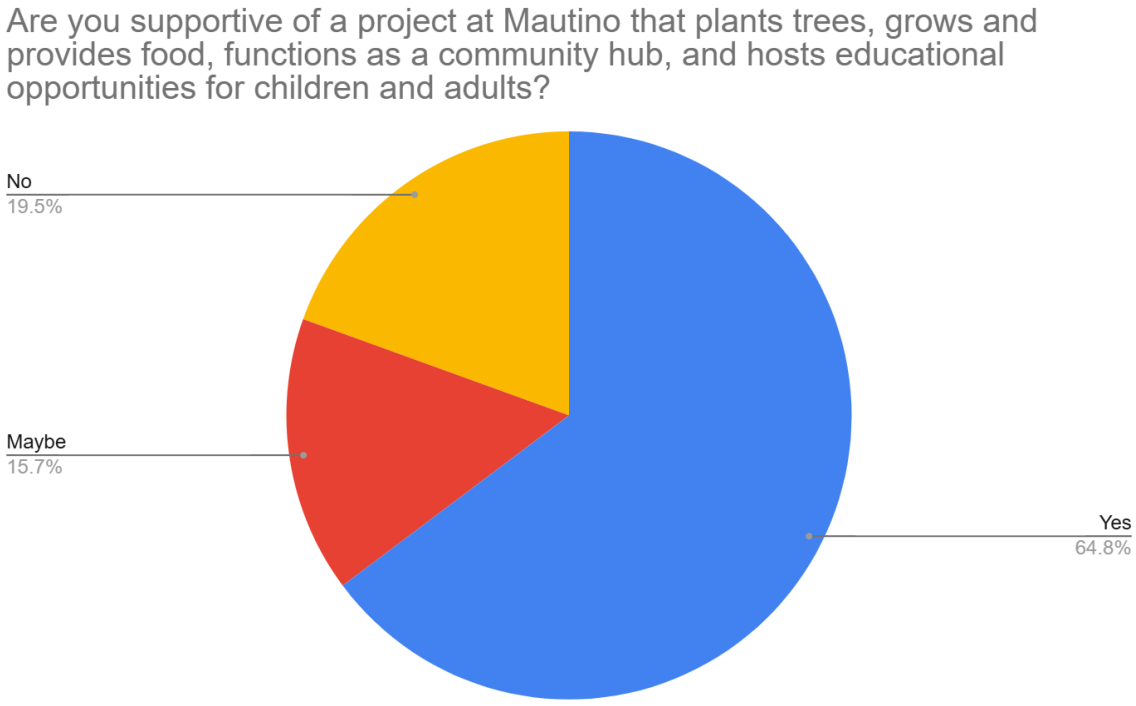
These sessions were not just feedback loops, they were catalysts for co-creation, helping transform concerns into collaboration and building a shared foundation for a garden rooted in community values.

Community Survey Participation & Results

As a cornerstone of the engagement effort, a community-wide survey was conducted to gather in-depth feedback. A total of 162 surveys were completed between December 2024 and April 2025, providing valuable insight into resident priorities, concerns, and aspirations for the proposed garden.

Survey responses revealed strong themes around food access, environmental preservation, cultural inclusivity, and opportunities for youth and education.[9] Additional survey results from prior surveys by IFM are included in this analysis.[10] Three common themes emerged from both the listening sessions and surveys: Protecting natural spaces, traffic and safety, support for community food.

Note: Survey deadline was extended from February to April due to comments by community members that not enough time was allotted for the survey.



[9] Appendix 3.1.2 2025 Community Member Responses
[10] Appendix 3.3.2 IFM Client Survey Insights

Most Common Themes Raised by Community (Survey and Meetings)

1. Location and Tree Preservation - Protecting Natural Spaces

- Widespread concern about tree removal—especially in the back of the park where mature trees provide shade, habitat, and serve as a wildlife corridor.
- Repeated suggestion to place the garden at the front of the park where there is already open land and fewer ecological concerns.
- Desire to preserve existing walking trails and forested areas, which are cherished for recreation, wildlife, and community gathering.
- Water-streams – protect stream/ditch under the park (ecologically sensitive).
- Enhancing native habitat – add, not subtract, from current biodiversity.

2. Traffic, Safety, and Access - Protecting Residential Character and Access

Residents of Alta Street expressed strong concerns about:

- Multiple questions about access points and parking availability for the garden.
- Increased traffic on a narrow, sidewalk-less county road.
- Safety of pedestrians, bikes, children, and pets (7 nearby schools)
- Request that park access not be routed through this street or that sidewalks be installed.
- Inquired about need for additional parking during peak use times

3. Support for the Garden Concept - Food Access, Education, and Justice

Many community members mentioned their support of this vision and enthusiasm for:

- Community Garden – small plots for personal/community use.
- Garden tool library – practical resource for gardeners and community.
- Classes in the park – youth, education, seniors, and wellness activities valued.
- Food Access – central community need and opportunity.
- Healthy soil – emphasize regenerative practices.
- Cooking and food prep education – full-cycle food knowledge.
- Job training opportunities – help housing-insecure or underserved people.
- Pollinators, native plants, biodiversity – e.g., monarchs, native bees, owl habitats.
- Programming for special needs community members

Key Community Questions & Concerns for Further Consideration and Clarification:

- Will bus service or regular transportation be available to improve equitable access?
- What are the projected yields and benefits (e.g., food production stats, beneficiaries, tie-ins with IFM or other food security efforts)?
- How will community oversight and administration be handled?
- What access will neighbors/community have to the garden?

Partner Listening Session Summary

As part of the human-centered design process for the Mautino Park community garden, we engaged directly with local organizational partners to gather input on priorities, concerns, and possibilities. These partners, representing food security, education, health, indigenous rights, environmental advocacy, and local businesses, offered rich, practical feedback rooted in community experience.

Six key themes emerged from these conversations, guiding both the vision and the practical design of the garden:

1. Community Impact & Inclusion
Partners voiced strong enthusiasm for the garden's potential to feed families, reduce social isolation, and serve as a gathering space for education, connection, and healing.

Key equity-focused recommendations included:

- Offering scholarships for low-income residents to access garden plots
- Ensuring full ADA accessibility throughout the site
- Creating inclusive programming that supports seniors, youth, and children with special needs
- Engaging with the Nisenan Tribe through CHIRP to explore native foodways, land recognition, and cultural programming
- Exploring childcare support and afterschool programs, with some families willing to contribute financially

2. Garden Design & Use
Partners raised important design questions around the intended use of the garden:

- Should it follow a community plot model, or focus on food production for distribution (e.g., to IFM)?
- Most partners leaned toward production beds, noting that many Nevada County residents already garden at home
- A hybrid model—combining production with a few community plots—was suggested to reflect diverse needs

Additional design ideas:

- A tool library and clear signage promoting organic practices
- Emphasis on long-term maintenance planning to prevent abandonment
- Calls for transparency around soil treatment, water sources, and organic certification

3. Infrastructure, Water & Soil

Water access and soil quality were recurring concerns:

- Interest in reusing the existing well, accessing Nevada Irrigation District ditch water, and having potable city water as a backup
- Partners requested clarity on:
    - Soil health and contamination history
    - Plans for organic practices and soil regeneration
    - Long-term water use planning
- Park hours (dawn to dusk) were clarified—open access supports flexible community use

4. Education & Youth Engagement
There was wide enthusiasm for the garden as a living classroom:

- Ideas included field trips, afterschool programs, internships, and summer camps
- Alignment with organizations like: high school Ag programs; College of Ayurveda for herbal and health workshops; Bright Futures for Youth cooking clubs and other youth-oriented groups
- Suggested topics for hands-on learning: Native plants, permaculture, composting, cooking demos, gopher control, soil health, and mental wellness practices
- Interest in a therapeutic garden area to support mental health, possibly involving local social workers

5. Business Support & Collaboration
Local businesses and organizations saw exciting opportunities for:

- Partnerships with BriarPatch for produce sales, classroom programming, and marketing
- Leasing small plots to businesses like Fat and the Moon, College of Ayurveda, or others for specialty crop/herb production
- Hosting pop-up events, classes, and wellness workshops, creating a multi-use space that blends food, learning, and celebration

6. Volunteer Engagement & Long-Term Sustainability
Many partners expressed eagerness to contribute labor, resources, and organizational support, but also voiced concerns about sustainability. Key recommendations included:

- Develop a robust volunteer coordination plan for consistent engagement
- Consider partnerships with service groups (e.g., United Way, Cal Solar, Rotary Clubs, churches) for team-based volunteer days
- Build stewardship into the design, modeled on successful community-managed spaces like Haven’s dog park

Collaborative Opportunities with Key Partners

Community partners have highlighted unique, high-impact opportunities that could significantly enhance the proposed garden/farm project's vision, sustainability, and reach. These ideas go beyond innovative programming, underscoring powerful avenues for collaboration with local organizations, businesses, and cultural leaders. They also align directly with key themes often prioritized by grantmakers and philanthropic funders: community health, equity, education, environmental sustainability, and economic development.

Leveraging these partnerships can unlock new funding streams, support long-term stewardship, and deepen community engagement. For instance, integrating culturally rooted programming (e.g., Nisenan foodways or local orchard history), mental health initiatives, youth workforce pathways, or "food as medicine" education could attract targeted support from regional health networks, education grants, tribal partnerships, and foundations focused on social justice and environmental impact.

Identified Potential Collaborations

- Job training, internships, and entrepreneurial learning pathways (e.g., through Ghidotti High School or Connecting Point)
- Peaceful Valley: Deep knowledge hub—offers instructors, native plants, vendor access, discounts, and storytelling opportunities tied to local history (e.g., Felix Gillette).
- History of the Park as an Orchard: Integrating this story can strengthen local pride and educational impact.
- Blue Zones & Food as Medicine: Strategic alignment with regional public health efforts.
- Mutual Aid, Healing Modalities, and “Community Good” Events: Incorporate mental health, movement, and mutual care as part of the space’s holistic offering.

Community Feedback Conclusion

The community engagement process for the proposed Mautino Park garden has made one thing abundantly clear: this project matters, not just as a garden or farm, but as a shared vision for equity, connection, and nourishment.

Across surveys, listening sessions, and partner conversations, residents and organizations alike expressed strong support for the garden’s potential to improve food access, create inclusive educational opportunities, and foster a space of healing and community-building. Just as importantly, they voiced their hopes, concerns, and lived experiences, offering concrete ideas that have already reshaped the project’s direction.

REPORT & RECOMMENDATION - AREAS 1 & 2

OVERVIEW & SUMMARY

After the feedback from the community sessions and partner organizations, Sierra Harvest has revised their initial proposal to recommend a roughly one-acre community farm and farmstand at Devere Mautino Park. This initiative will promote food access, community engagement, and environmental stewardship through the creation of shared agricultural infrastructure, public education spaces, and sustainable landscaping.

PROPOSAL UPDATE & REASONING

When evaluating the prospect of moving or duplicating the Food Love Educational Farm from its current location to Mautino Park Area 3, it became clear that the cost to move existing structures and amend the soil to the same quality that has been achieved in 15 years would outweigh the outlined benefits. Further, the community raised concerns about the effectiveness of moving a program primarily focused on children to a centralized park and the impact on residents. Other proposal updates and considerations as a result of the community listening sessions included:

- Public Access
    - Sidewalks along Alta Street would need to be installed for safe access for all community members to the park.
    - Public parking would need to be negotiated with the Salvation Army during high traffic events.
    - The community wants, and IFM/SH agreed, that there should be full access to public trails in Area 3
- Area Use
    - IFM & SH agreed with public opinion that a better use for Areas 1 & 2 would be the community garden/farm concept and Area 3 made for a more suitable location for a food forest.
    - IFM is no longer pursuing a community compost area as part of project

While this report and recommended project still meets the proposed purpose and outcomes outlined in the initial proposal presented to the City of Grass Valley titled “Community Food Campus,” it has been adjusted to address community feedback and related needs.

SIERRA HARVEST RECOMMENDATION & SUMMARY

Food Love Farm has and will continue to provide key educational programming for children and the community at its current location. Sierra Harvest recommends the City of Grass Valley consider installing a community farm and farmstand at DeVere Mautino Park, specifically in Areas 1 & 2, to address benefits listed later in this report. Further, Sierra Harvest is proud to deliver excellent food and agriculture programming for individuals of all ages and would consider applying for the implementation of this project should the City of Grass Valley deem it an appropriate use for DeVere Mautino Park.

RECOMMENDED PROJECT COMPONENTS

A. **Community Farm & Orchard**
The one-acre parcel will be divided into two main growing areas (Area 1 & 2):
   a. **Orchard Area:** Located on Area 1 of the park, this section will feature a variety of fruit trees including apples, plums, peaches, and pears. This would include Felix Gillette heirloom trees from Nevada County. The orchard will be open to the public for harvesting during peak season and will serve as a demonstration site for home-scale agroforestry.
   b. **Raised Bed Garden Area:** Area 2 of the site will include a series of accessible raised beds for vegetable and herb production. These beds will be available to community members and partner organizations for collaborative growing under the supervision of Sierra Harvest.
   c. Both the orchard and raised bed areas will be enclosed with deer fencing to protect crops while remaining visibly welcoming and inviting. Further, the fencing will provide protection for children and young visitors to the garden. Gates will be placed along current sidewalks in the designated areas.
   d. A small compost site will be included in Area 2 to process garden waste and develop compost for the raised beds.

B. **Farmstand & Parking Area**
A small, open-air farmstand will be constructed onsite in Area 2 to provide fresh, seasonal produce grown at the farm. This farmstand will be surrounded by a gravel parking lot for ease of access and turnaround space for school buses. Produce will be available to the public with a “pay what you can” model, and limited CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares will be available for one-time purchase to provide a small revenue stream for the farm. A membership model will allow active members free u-picks throughout the growing season.

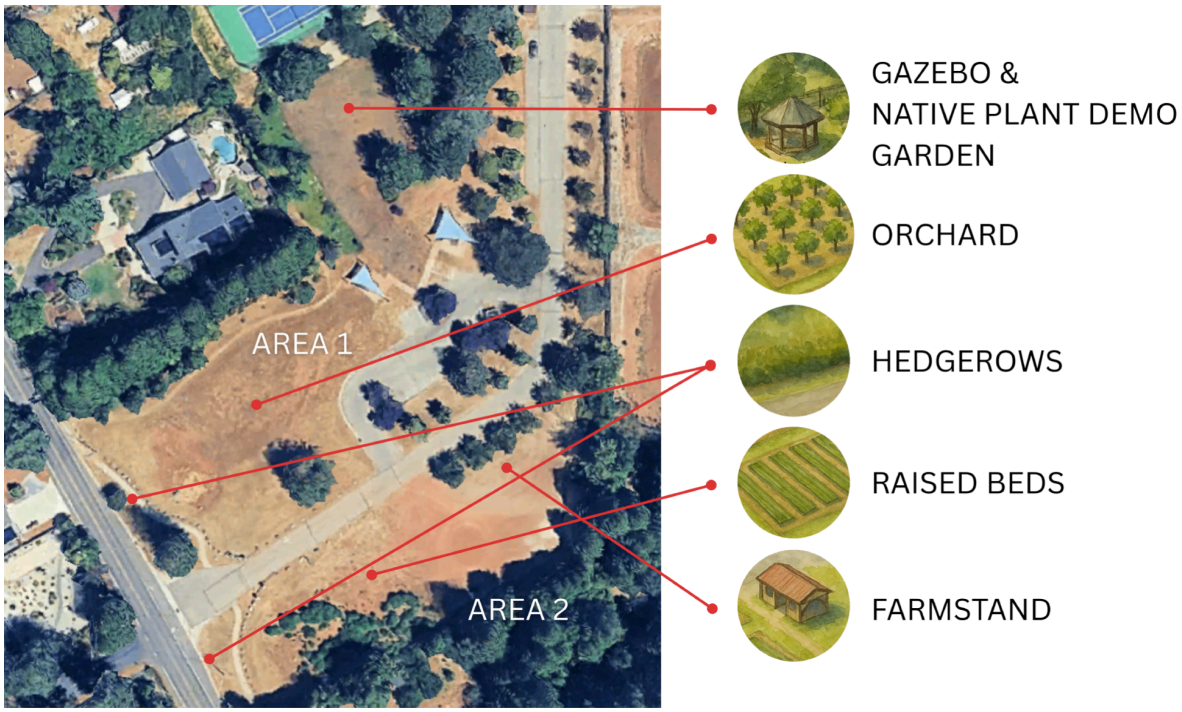
C. **Gazebo and Outdoor Classroom**
Included in Area 1, is a covered gazebo to be built adjacent to the orchard area to serve as an outdoor classroom. This space will include park benches for seating and host gardening classes, nutrition workshops, and environmental education programs for all ages.

D. **Native Plant Demonstration Garden**
Surrounding the gazebo, we will plant a demonstration garden of native, deer-resistant, and drought-tolerant species. This area will showcase ecological landscaping techniques and provide habitat for pollinators and beneficial insects.

E. **Hedgerow Installation**
Along the Alta Street frontage road leading into the park, a series of hedgerows will be planted using native shrubs, perennials, and pollinator-friendly plants. These hedgerows

will improve aesthetics, act as a windbreak, provide wildlife habitat, and enhance biodiversity at the site.

PROJECT MAP



COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- **Food Security:** Provides low-cost CSA shares and public access to fresh produce.
- **Education:** Offers hands-on learning about gardening, soil health, climate resilience, and healthy eating.
- **Community Engagement:** Builds a sense of shared purpose and connection through collaborative work and events.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Demonstrates sustainable agriculture and native landscaping practices.
- **Accessibility:** Designed for people of all ages and abilities

SWOT ANALYSIS OF DEVERE MAUTINO PARK COMMUNITY FARM & FARMSTAND

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Public Accessibility: Located in a public park with high visibility and community access. **Multifunctional Design:** Combines food production, education, and ecological demonstration in one space. **Community Demand:** Strong local interest in fresh food access, gardening, and outdoor learning. **Equity-Oriented:** Sliding scale CSA shares and farmstand access for underserved residents. **Sustainability Focused:** Uses native plants, drip irrigation, composting, and regenerative methods. **Strategic Alignment:** Supports Nevada County and Grass Valley goals for resilience, equity, and health. **Volunteer & Partner Network:** Taps into Sierra Harvest, garden clubs, Master Gardeners, and local schools.	**High Upfront Cost:** ~$152K+ in capital investment and ~$100K+/year in ongoing operating expenses. **Labor Dependence:** Relies heavily on volunteers and seasonal workers for maintenance. **Limited Immediate Revenue:** Modest income from CSA, events, and farmstand in early years; fundraising and grant-dependent. **Weather Vulnerability:** Drought, extreme heat/cold, or smoke events may affect crops, impact power usage, or delay events. **Infrastructure Constraints:** May face permitting, water access, or ADA compliance challenges; limited parking.
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
Grant Funding Availability: USDA, CDFA, NRCS, and local health/environmental foundations support similar projects. **Education & Outreach:** Potential to serve hundreds of students and community members through classes and events. **Replication Potential:** Serves as a model for other park-based farms in rural towns and small cities. **Public Health Integration:** Can partner with health providers and food banks for nutrition access. **Tourism & Civic Pride:** Adds unique value to Grass Valley's community identity and beautification efforts and incentivizes ag tourism. **Workforce Development:** Creates jobs, internships, and training in ag, land care, etc.	**Sustained Funding Gaps:** Risk of revenue shortfalls if grant cycles change or donor interest declines. **Vandalism or Theft:** As a public, unfenced area (in portions of the design), the site may be exposed to damage or misuse. **Political Shifts:** Changes in city or county priorities could affect permitting, support, or resource allocation. **Volunteer Fatigue:** Over-reliance on community labor may lead to burnout or inconsistent maintenance. **Pest/Disease Issues:** Without chemical controls, crops may be more vulnerable to localized outbreaks.

BUDGET ANALYSIS
PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION & OPERATING BUDGET

COMPONENT DESCRIPTION

A. Community Farm & Orchard

- **Orchard Area:** Public fruit tree grove with apples, plums, peaches, pears.
- **Raised Bed Garden Area:** Accessible raised beds for seasonal vegetable and herb production.
- **Fencing:** 8 ft deer fencing around both growing areas for protection.

B. Farmstand & Parking Area

- Small wooden open-air farmstand with produce display area and signage.
- Surrounding gravel parking lot for 6–8 cars or temporary parking for visiting buses.
- The gravel lot will allow the park to maintain access ways to roads and related sites.

C. Gazebo & Outdoor Classroom

- Covered wooden gazebo (20x20 ft) with 6-8 benches for seating.
- Instructional space for gardening classes and community events.

D. Native Plant Demonstration Garden

- Drought-tolerant, pollinator-friendly native plants surrounding the gazebo.
- Mulch and drip irrigation installation.

E. Hedgerows Along Frontage Road

- Mixed native shrubs and perennials to create windbreak and habitat corridors.

MATERIALS LIST

A. SITE PREPARATION

- Weed barrier fabric (biodegradable preferred) – ~1 acre coverage
- Organic compost and soil amendments – ~20 cubic yards
- Mulch (wood chips or straw) – ~40 cubic yards
- Topsoil for raised beds – ~30 cubic yards
- Soil testing kits – 2–3 kits
- Landscape stakes and string – for layout

B. ORCHARD INSTALLATION (25 FRUIT TREES)

- 25 fruit trees (15-gallon size, mixed varieties)
- Tree stakes (50) and ties
- Gopher baskets (25)
- Mulch rings or weed mats (25)
- Slow-release fertilizer
- Irrigation emitters and tubing

C. RAISED BED GARDEN (40 BEDS)

- Cedar lumber (2x10 or 2x12, untreated) – ~3,200 linear feet
- Galvanized screws and corner brackets
- Weed barrier fabric for pathways
- Pathway mulch or decomposed granite
- Drip irrigation tubing and emitters
- Garden soil mix – ~30 cubic yards
- Compost bins (2–3 units)
- Row covers, hoops, or shade cloth (seasonal)

D. FENCING

- 8’ welded wire deer fencing – ~600 linear feet
- Redwood posts – ~60 units
- Fence gate(s) – 2 double-swing or sliding gates
- Zip ties, fasteners
- Auger rental

E. FARMSTAND & GRAVEL PARKING AREA

- Lumber for farmstand frame and counter (treated or redwood)
- Roofing materials (corrugated metal or shingles)
- Farmstand signage and chalkboards
- Produce crates and baskets
- Scale and cash box or POS system
- Gravel (3/4" crushed rock) – ~2,500 sq ft
- Landscape edging and compaction tools

F. GAZEBO & OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

- 20x20 ft prefabricated wooden gazebo kit
- Concrete footings or ground anchors
- Weatherproof benches (6) or picnic tables
- Chalkboard or whiteboard
- Electrical conduit

G. NATIVE PLANT DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

- Native plants and pollinator-friendly perennials (50–75 plants)
- Mulch and compost – ~5 cubic yards
- Drip irrigation tubing and micro-sprayers
- Interpretive signage
- Landscape boulders or small path stones (optional)

H. HEDGEROW PLANTINGS

- Native shrubs (toyon, white sage, milkweed, etc.) – 60–80 plants
- Grasses and perennials for understory
- Mulch – ~10 cubic yards
- Irrigation line and emitters

I. TOOLS & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Tool shed (8x10 prefabricated)
- Garden tools: shovels, rakes, hoes, trowels (10–15 each)
- Wheelbarrows (4)
- Compost thermometer, soil moisture meters
- Hose reels and nozzles
- Garden cart or utility wagon
- Shade tents (for events)
- First aid kit and handwashing station

J. SIGNAGE & EDUCATION

- Welcome sign and project overview sign
- CSA and farmstand hours sign
- Plant labels and row markers
- QR codes linked to educational content
- Workshop/event chalkboard or notice board

ESTIMATED START UP COSTS

ITEM	QUANTITY/SIZE	UNIT COST	TOTAL COST
Site Preparation Soil grading, weed barrier, leveling	~1.2 acre	$5,175	$5,175
Orchard Trees (15 gal)	25 trees	$103/tree	$2,575
Raised Beds (4x12 cedar)	40 beds	$402/bed	$16,080
Fencing (8' deer fence)	1,400 linear feet	$13.80/ft	$19,320
Farmstand Construction	10x12 ft structure	$6,900	$6,900
Gravel Parking Lot	2,500 sq ft	$2.88/sq ft	$7,200
Gazebo with Benches	20x20 ft + 6 benches	$13,800	$13,800
Native Plant Garden Plants, mulch, drip irrigation	1,000 sq ft	$10/sq ft	$10,000
Hedgerows Installation	300 linear feet	$23/ft	$6,900
Drip Irrigation System	Full site	$6,900	$6,900
Tool Shed & Basic Tools	8x10 shed + starter tools	$4,600	$4,600
Signage & Educational Materials	Interpretive signs, labels	$2,300	$2,300
Labor (general contracting)	Estimated 600 hrs	$52/hr	$31,200

SUBTOTAL $132,950
CONTINGENCY(15%) $19,942

TOTAL ESTIMATED START UP COST | $152,892

ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET

CATEGORY	DETAILS	ANNUAL COST
Site Manager (Full-Time)	40 hrs/week @ $30/hr	$62,400
Seasonal Staff / Interns*	2 part-time assistants during peak season (May–Sept)	$10,000
Water Utility	Irrigation for orchard, beds, hedgerows, and demo garden	$4,000
Seeds, Starts, Amendments*	Organic compost, fertilizer, soil, cover crop seed, mulch	$3,500
Tools & Equipment Replacement*	Small tools, wheelbarrows, hand tools, drip parts	$2,000
Orchard & Bed Maintenance	Pruning, tree health, staking, soil building	$10,000
Insurance	Liability and property insurance for public space	$2,000
Farmstand Operations	Supplies, signage, containers, sanitation, CSA boxes	$1,500
Outreach & Events	Workshop materials, signage, printing, community events	$2,000
Gazebo & Landscape Upkeep	Native plant pruning, bench maintenance, gravel raking	$1,200
Pest & Weed Management	Organic deterrents, fencing repair, weed suppression	$1,500
Accounting/Admin	Bookkeeping, reporting, CSA tracking, registration fees	$1,500

TOTAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST | $101,600*

*Reduced if supplemented with volunteer labor and donated products

BUILDOUT TIMELINE

Phase 1: Planning & Permitting ● Final site design & layout ● Soil testing, water access planning ● Permitting with City of Grass Valley & Nevada County ● Community input meetings ● Order long-lead materials (gazebo, fencing, shed) ● Hire project/site manager & engage fiscal sponsor	Months 1-3
Phase 2: Site Preparation ● Weed abatement, site grading ● Install pathways, weed barrier ● Deliver topsoil, mulch, compost ● Lay water lines, main irrigation infrastructure	Months 3-4
Phase 3: Infrastructure Installation ● Build & install raised beds ● Install deer fencing around orchard and garden zones ● Construct tool shed ● Pour gazebo footings or install prefab base ● Begin hedgerow planting along frontage road	Months 4-6
Phase 4: Orchard & Garden Planting ● Plant 25+ fruit trees with gopher baskets & mulch ● Fill raised beds with soil mix ● Set up bed irrigation lines ● Begin seasonal planting in garden beds (pending weather/timing) ● Plant native species around gazebo & install signage	Months 6-7
Phase 5: Farmstand & Parking Area ● Construct farmstand & install roof	Months 7-8

● Create gravel parking area (~2,500 sq ft) ● Set up signage, produce crates, cash box or POS ● Ensure ADA access from parking to beds & stand	
Phase 6: Community Activation & Education Setup ● Install benches, blackboard/whiteboard in gazebo ● Schedule first workshops, school visits, garden tours ● Build volunteer calendar & membership system ● Launch CSA recruitment & donation drive ● Host soft-launch events and previews	Months 8-10
Phase 7: Public Launch ● Host a Community Grand Opening Event ● Begin limited CSA distribution ● Open farmstand on regular weekly schedule ● Launch regular class series (gardening, compost, etc.) ● Collect feedback, measure engagement, and adjust plans	Month 11 or 12
Phase 8: Evaluation & Scaling ● Monitor plant growth, yields, and soil health ● Evaluate outreach and food access impacts ● Apply for sustainability and operational grants ● Consider expansion of classes	Month 13+

FUNDING & SUSTAINABILITY

In addition to grant funding, we recommend seeking in-kind donations, volunteer labor, and potential sponsorships from local businesses and service clubs. Ongoing operations will be sustained by CSA memberships, farmstand donations, educational programming revenue, event rentals, and community partnerships.

While initial funding would require support from government contracts or grants, breakeven analysis suggests that with an increase in earned revenue DeVere Mautino Community Farm could breakeven by years 4-5. Start up costs could be significantly reduced with gift-in-kind and

sponsorships from local builders, contractors, and building supply companies along with volunteer labor.

POTENTIAL OFFSETS & REVENUE SOURCES

- **CSA Shares or Annual Memberships**: 40 shares at $400/season = *$16,000* (optional: low cost or sliding scale for members with grant support)
- **Farmstand Donations/Sales**: Est. *$5,000–$10,000/year*
- **Grants & Sponsorships**: City or County funds, local businesses, private donors (naming opportunities)
- **Workshops/Classes**: Modest ticket prices *Est. $2,000-5,000/year*
- **In-Kind Contributions**: Volunteer labor, donated tools/materials
- **Event Rentals:** Gazebo and garden could be rented for small weddings, third-party classes, and private family gatherings *Est. $2,000-5,000/year*

PROPOSED FUNDRAISING STRATEGY
START UP + ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENSES (YEARS 1-3): $457,692.50

SOURCE	TARGET AMOUNT	STRATEGY
County/City Contracts	$202,692.50	Implementation + Year 1 Partial Operating Budget
Government Grants	$85,000	USDA, CDFA, NRCS, CalFire, Prop 68
Private Foundations	$45,000	Health, food access, environmental grants
Individual Donors & Local Organizations	$55,000	Community campaign, recurring donors, Rotary Clubs, NCRCD
Corporate Sponsors	$25,000	Naming opportunities, signage (Gazebo, Farmstand, Raised Beds, etc.)
Earned Revenue (Year 1–3)	$45,000	CSA shares, farmstand, workshops, rentals

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

FOOD ACCESS & PRODUCTION

- Pounds of food produced per season
- # of CSA shares distributed, including free/low-income shares
- # of farmstand visitors and transactions
- % of produce donated or subsidized
- # of crops grown annually and seasonal diversity

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION

- # of volunteers engaged per year (and total hours contributed)
- # of school or youth group visits
- # of public classes/workshops hosted
- Participant satisfaction ratings from classes/events
- # of repeat visitors or community members enrolled in programs

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- % of annual operating budget funded by earned income
- # and size of grants secured per year
- # of individual donors or sponsors retained annually
- CSA retention rate year over year
- Farmstand sales volume (weekly/monthly)

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- # of native plants and trees established
- Gallons of water used per growing area (via drip irrigation tracking)
- Volume of compost created and reused on-site
- # of pollinator species observed (qualitative or partner-led survey)
- Soil health improvements (e.g. organic matter %, tested annually)

PARK & PUBLIC VALUE

- # of park visitors engaging with the site (manual counts or QR code scans)
- # of community events held at the gazebo/outdoor classroom
- Surveyed perception of safety, beauty, or usefulness of the space
- # of media mentions, social shares, or press features

AREA 1 & 2 CONCLUSION & SUMMARY

The proposed Devere Mautino Park Community Farm and Farmstand represents a bold and forward-thinking investment in the future of Grass Valley and Nevada County. By transforming roughly one acre of underutilized public land into a productive, inclusive, and educational green space, this project will address urgent local needs in food security, climate resilience, community health, and environmental education.

At a time when rising food costs, social isolation, and ecological uncertainty are affecting residents across our region, this project offers a grounded, hopeful response rooted in community empowerment. Through its public orchard, raised-bed garden, accessible farmstand, and outdoor classroom, the site will nourish bodies, minds, and ecosystems alike—while modeling replicable solutions for other rural communities in California and beyond.

This project directly aligns with the strategic goals of the City of Grass Valley and Nevada County by activating public space, strengthening local food systems, fostering civic engagement, providing job training and workforce development, and building climate-resilient infrastructure. The integration of native plant landscaping, regenerative agriculture, and accessible public education programming ensures that this farm will serve not just as a source of nourishment, but as a living demonstration of what is possible when a community comes together to steward its land. In addition, this project will provide a potential agricultural tourism destination and a way to draw in residents that live outside the county.

With strong support from local partners, a clear financial sustainability plan, and deep-rooted community enthusiasm, the Devere Mautino Park Community Farm and Farmstand is ready to take root.

REPORT & RECOMMENDATION - AREA 3

Through this city-sponsored research and planning phase, Interfaith Food Ministry (IFM) set out to explore the creation of a community food forest at Mautino Park in Grass Valley—a regenerative, place-based solution to the intertwined challenges of food insecurity, economic instability, and climate change. Rooted in the principles of sustainability, equity, and resilience, this vision is grounded in a simple but powerful idea: that nourishing both people and the land can happen together, in community.

Food insecurity is a growing issue in Western Nevada County. IFM serves over 10,000 individuals annually, many of whom struggle to access fresh, healthy food on a consistent basis. As food prices rise and climate disruptions continue to strain global food systems, reliable, local, and ecologically sound food sources are increasingly vital. A food forest represents a long-term investment in that future.

Unlike conventional gardens or farms, food forests are perennial, multi-layered ecosystems designed to mimic natural forests while producing food and medicinal plants. Once established,

they require minimal maintenance and can offer year-round harvests of fruits, nuts, herbs, and vegetables. IFM's original vision included designing this forest with layered "guilds" of plants that support one another—resulting in both biodiversity and productivity. The harvest would directly benefit IFM clients, nearby neighbors, and anyone in the community who may be in need.

Importantly, this idea was shaped not just by ecological goals, but by community voice. As reflected in IFM's 2022 client survey,[11] many clients expressed a strong interest in growing food but face barriers such as lack of time, space, or experience. A shared food forest removes these barriers, offering access without requiring individual ownership or resources. It transforms food production from a private burden into a collective and public opportunity. Further, a food forest can become a gathering space—hosting educational workshops, volunteer days, and celebrations that foster a sense of belonging. This section of the report presents:

A. **Rationale for a Food Forest Investment**
   Outlining the long-term ecological, nutritional, and community benefits of establishing a perennial food-producing system.

B. **Native Plant Integration**
   Considerations for incorporating native species to support biodiversity, pollinators, and long-term ecosystem health.

C. **Companion Planting & Sample Guilds**
   An overview of plant relationships, example guild structures, and curated lists of edible and beneficial species suited to the region.

D. **Design Recommendations & Layout Concepts**
   Strategies for spatial planning, accessibility, and seasonal resilience, including pathways, irrigation, and community-use areas.

E. **Budget Framework & Implementation Guide**
   A practical, phased cost estimate with recommendations for infrastructure, labor, and maintenance—with volunteer engagement as a key asset.

Together, these elements offer a roadmap for how the food forest at Mautino Park can take root and thrive—nourishing bodies, restoring ecosystems, and growing something enduring for the community.

A. Rationale for Food Forest Investment

A **food forest**, sometimes referred to as a *forest garden*, is a diverse, multi-layered planting system that mimics natural forest ecosystems while producing food. Designed for resilience and minimal maintenance, food forests combine trees, shrubs, perennials, ground covers, and

[11] (see Appendix)

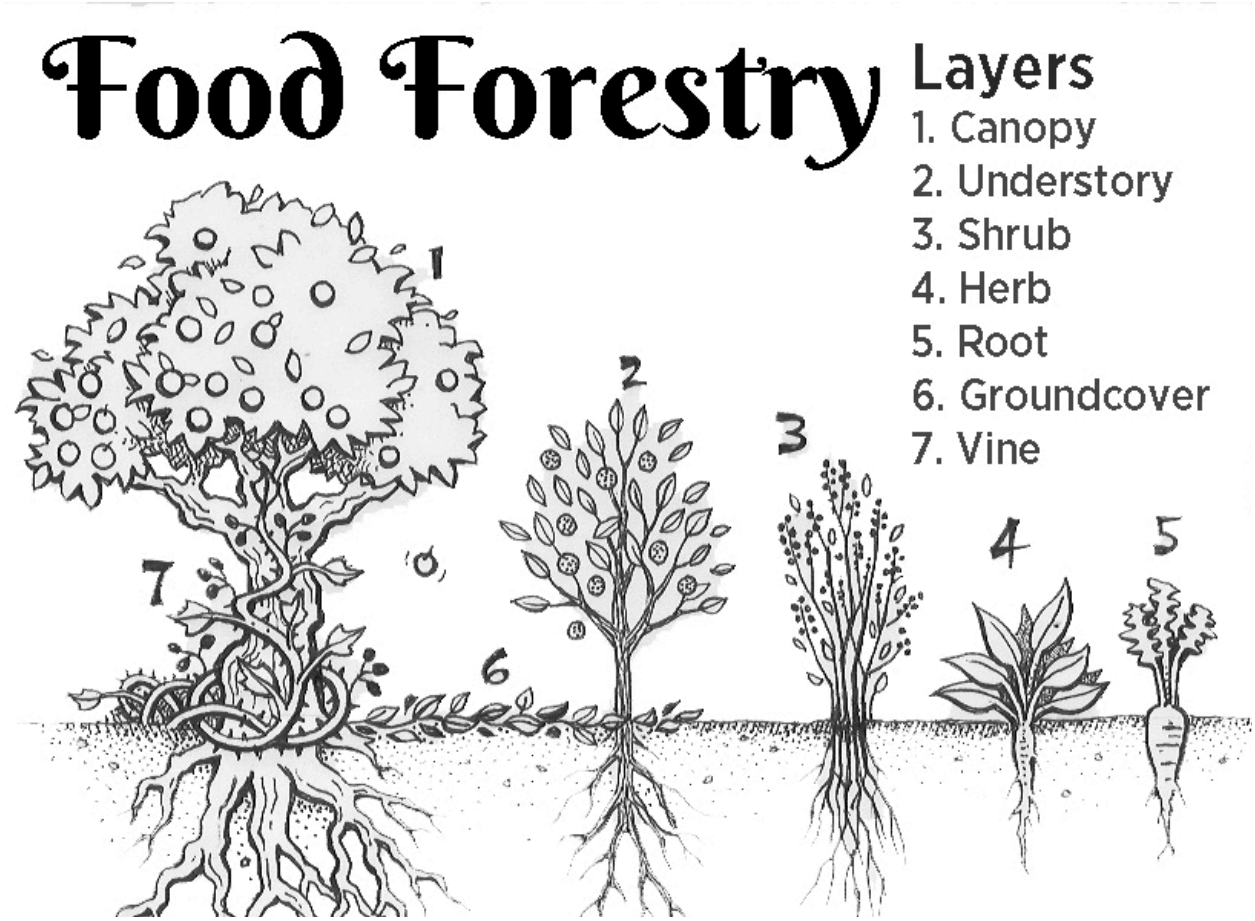
beneficial fungi in a way that each plant supports the others—creating a self-sustaining, edible ecosystem.

Food forests typically follow a seven-layer model, with each layer playing a distinct role in ecosystem function and food production:

1. **Canopy Layer (Overstory Trees):** Tall, sun-loving trees such as nut or fruit trees.
2. **Understory Trees:** Smaller trees that thrive in partial sun, such as dwarf fruit varieties.
3. **Shrub Layer:** Mid-height plants like berry bushes that may tolerate shade.
4. **Herbaceous Layer:** Edible herbs and perennials like mint, chives, and asparagus.
5. **Root Layer (Rhizosphere):** Root vegetables such as carrots, beets, and potatoes.
6. **Ground Cover Layer:** Low-spreading plants like strawberries or creeping thyme that protect the soil and suppress weeds.
7. **Vine Layer:** Climbing plants like grapes, beans, or kiwi that grow vertically.

Many food forests also include an **eighth layer**:

8. **Mycelial Layer (Fungi):** Mushrooms and beneficial fungi that decompose organic matter, cycle nutrients, and foster underground communication between plants.



The food forest at Mautino Park would focus on planting design to support biodiversity, require minimal inputs over time, and **center on community benefit and ecological health**. All while maintaining the existing trails and tree canopy.

Local and Climate-Resilient Solution

Food forests are a regenerative solution to climate change, economic instability, and food insecurity, particularly in rural areas like Grass Valley. They mimic natural ecosystems, creating resilient plant communities that protect against extreme weather, pests, and disease. Food forests reduce reliance on external inputs, requiring less watering, no chemical fertilizers, and minimal pest management once established. They also restore ecosystems, improving soil health, providing habitats, and demonstrating sustainable living. At Mautino Park, a food forest would serve as a living classroom, food source, and symbol of local resilience, showcasing how public spaces can promote restoration and regeneration.

Beacon Food Forest harvest

B. Integrating Native Plants: Community Input & Recommendations

During community listening sessions, residents voiced a strong interest in seeing native plants integrated into the design of the food forest at Mautino Park. Some community members expressed a desire to focus exclusively on California native and regional species—highlighting their ecological importance, cultural value, and deep connection to the place.

In response to this input, Interfaith Food Ministry (IFM) supports a balanced approach: integrating a thoughtful selection of native edible and medicinal plants alongside familiar cultivars. This strategy honors the community's ecological values while ensuring the food forest remains accessible, abundant, and engaging for all users—especially those experiencing food insecurity.

Here's why we recommend a blend of native species and cultivars to meet the goals of food security, education, and community engagement:

1. Food Access and Cultural Familiarity

Many native edible plants—such as gooseberries, manzanita berries, and miner's lettuce—are nutritious but less familiar to modern palates. In contrast, cultivars like apples, plums, and kale are widely recognized and more likely to be harvested, cooked, and consumed. Including cultivars ensures that the food grown is not only available, but also utilized—a key concern for food-insecure individuals and families.

2. Nutritional and Culinary Variety

While native plants offer unique nutrients and deep cultural significance, they represent a narrower spectrum of edible options than more common garden cultivars. A combined planting palette enhances seasonal variety, provides a wider range of culinary uses, and makes the food forest more inviting to a diverse community.

3. Education & Cultural Restoration

Native plants are not simply alternatives to cultivated crops—they are carriers of Indigenous knowledge, ecological wisdom, and cultural memory. Their inclusion offers a powerful opportunity for intergenerational learning and cultural restoration. However, a native-only food forest would require significant investment in education, culinary skill-building, and interpretive signage to ensure these plants are recognized, understood, and valued.

By integrating native plants as part of the broader food forest ecosystem, the site becomes a living classroom—where children and adults can learn about traditional uses, ecosystem functions, and the cultural histories tied to these plants. This is also a critical opportunity to partner with local Tribes, native plant experts, and educators to co-create this vision and restore relationships with plants and knowledge systems that have been historically displaced.

Native Plant Design Recommendations & Next Steps

To ensure native plants are meaningfully and respectfully integrated, we propose the following steps:

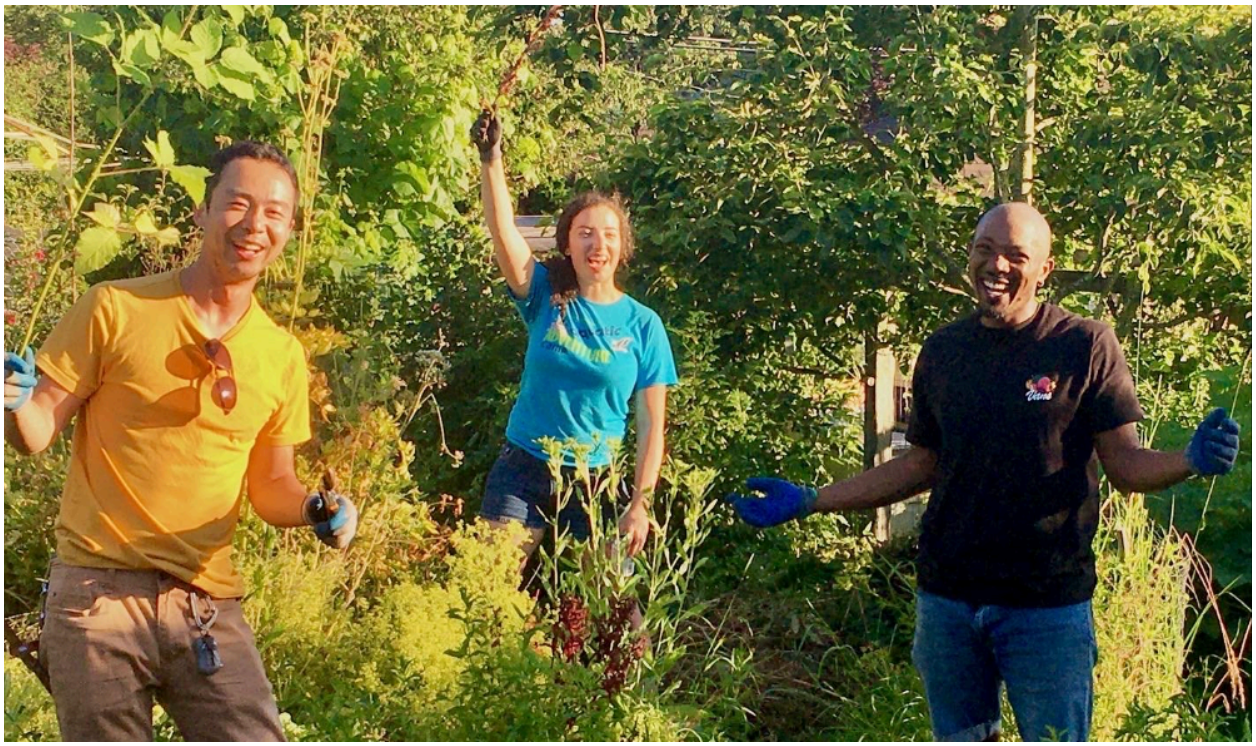
- **Curate a list of locally appropriate native edible and medicinal species** in consultation with Indigenous knowledge holders, native plant specialists, and

ethnobotanists.

- **Develop signage, curriculum, and community workshops** that highlight traditional uses, ecological benefits, and harvesting practices.

- **Partner with local Tribes and organizations** such as the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe and native plant advocacy groups to embed cultural context and foster long-term collaboration.

- **Design the food forest in zones**, allowing native plant guilds to thrive in specific areas while also incorporating productive, community-friendly cultivars.



Courtesy of Beacon Food Forest

C. Companion Planting & Sample Guild Design

Edible Food Forest Guide Design Background

The primary intent is to create a resilient, regenerative system that produces fresh food while enhancing biodiversity, soil health, and community well-being. Rooted in permaculture principles, the design emphasizes plant partnerships, layered ecosystems, and species that are edible, medicinal, or ecologically beneficial.

The designated site is approximately 1–1.5 acres of relatively flat land with partial sun exposure, established tree cover, and access to seasonal water. The area is bordered by well-used walking trails and neighborhood streets—offering both visibility and accessibility. Some selective tree removal may be considered to improve sun access for fruiting species, but the overall approach will prioritize adding canopy, diversity, and ecological value through the planting of new trees and perennial understory layers.

This guide is intended to serve both as a record of research and as a practical framework for any organization or entity interested in bringing the food forest vision to life.

Core Guild Design Elements

Area 3's food forest will use a core guild design, fostering beneficial plant relationships for edibles, biodiversity, and resilience. It will integrate anchor trees, companion planting, and consider water access and reasonable infrastructure.

1. Anchor Trees (Primary Producers)

The core of the food forest will include a diverse range of fruit and nut trees adapted to Grass Valley's climate and chill hours:

- **Fruit trees**: Apple, Pear, Peach, Plum, Cherry
- **Nut trees**: Chestnut, Pistachio (with male/female pairing), Walnut (optional)
- Varieties are chosen for cross-pollination compatibility, staggered ripening, and local climate resilience.

Trees will be spaced at 15–25 feet based on mature canopy size, with appropriate species-to-species distance to maximize yield and health.

2. Guild-Based Companion Planting

Each anchor tree will be surrounded by a **guild** — a curated group of companion species performing key ecological functions:

- **Nitrogen fixers**: Goumi, clover, lupine
- **Dynamic accumulators**: Comfrey, dandelion
- **Mulch producers**: Rhubarb, horseradish
- **Pollinator/insectary plants**: Yarrow, calendula, bee balm
- **Groundcovers**: Strawberries, creeping thyme, sweet potato
- **Fungal allies (optional)**: King Stropharia mushrooms

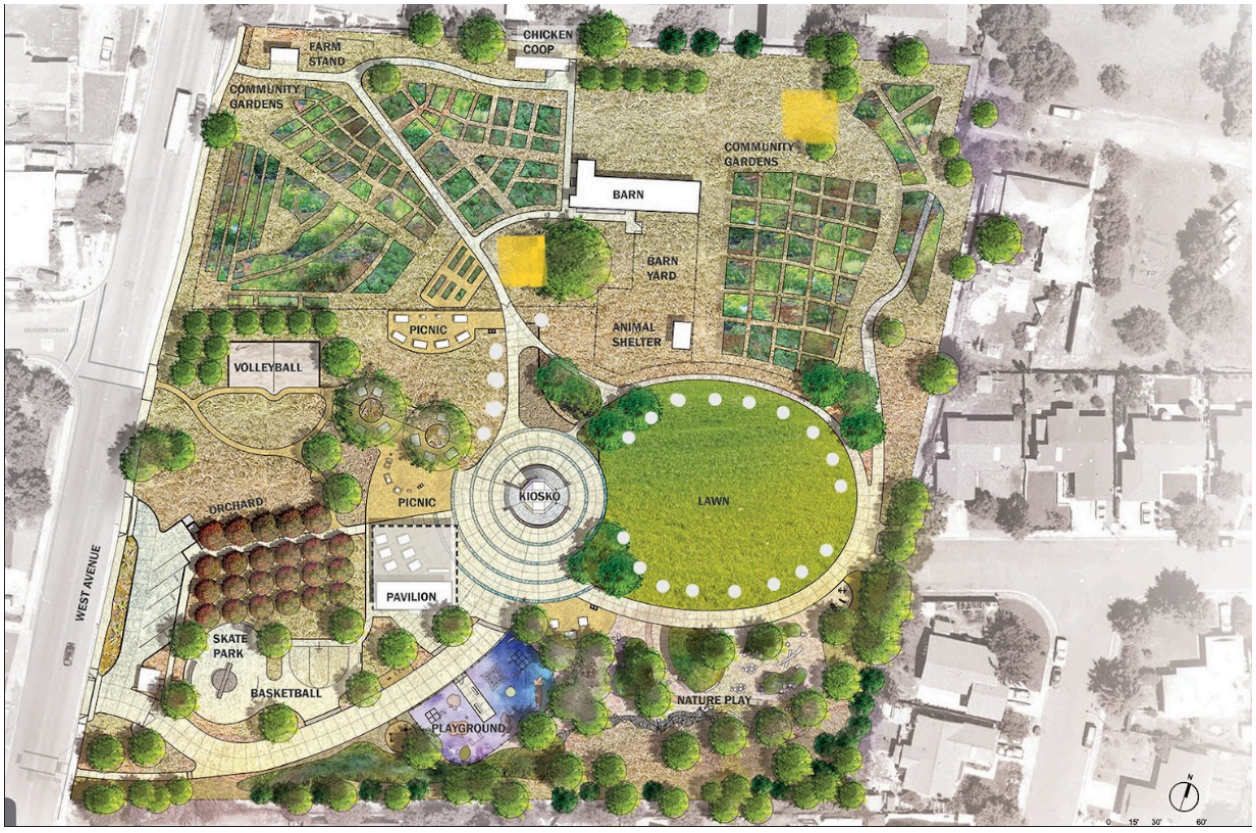
All plants are chosen for low-maintenance, perennial productivity and ecological synergy. Most are edible, medicinal, or habitat-enhancing.

3. Infrastructure & Layout Features

- **Tree spacing** accommodates future canopy growth and sunlight access

- **Pathways** maintain walkability and ADA considerations based on community input
- **Water access** planned via drip irrigation, olla pots, or potential greywater integration
- **Swales or rainwater harvesting** may be incorporated depending on soil infiltration patterns
- **Mulching** strategies to support moisture retention, soil fertility, and weed suppression

SAMPLE DESIGN FOR FOOD FOREST AT MAUTINO PARK



Map courtesy of Lanpaths, CA - example of a successful community food forest/farm design.

D. Recommended Community Infrastructure & Gathering Features

To ensure the space remains welcoming, educational, and accessible, several community-focused elements are woven into the design:

- Picnic areas with shaded seating and natural materials
- A small educational gazebo or outdoor classroom for workshops, field trips, and events
- Interpretive signage to educate visitors about plant guilds, native species, food forest

layers, and climate adaptation
- ADA-friendly walking paths that respect existing community trail use while expanding access
- Opportunities for community art, storytelling, and cultural heritage signage, especially in collaboration with Indigenous educators and local artists

E. Implementation Plan & Budget

Area 3 Map at Mautino Park, Grass Valley, CA - proposed food forest- Size: 1.57 Acres

Implementation Plan: Food Forest at Mautino Park

Overview

The proposed site for the food forest is Area 3 (as shown in the map above), a cherished part of Mautino Park known for its mature trees, nearby homes, and well-used walking trails. This space offers shade, wildlife habitat, and a natural gathering point for the community.

Shaped by community input, the priorities for Area 3 as a food forest include:

- Preserve and enhance walking trails, with attention to accessibility and connectivity
- Protect the beauty and ecological value of existing trees
- Honor the current use and feel of the space, while inviting more community benefit

The food forest plan aims to increase the number and diversity of trees, adding edible and medicinal species that support pollinators, soil health, and community nutrition. The proposed food forest would layer in food-producing, climate-resilient plants that work in harmony with the

natural environment. Every decision related to vegetation will be made with careful ecological consideration, informed by both community values and the long-term health of the park.[12]

The implementation plan presented here reflects an integrated approach that balances:

- Community input and continued use of the space
- Ecological restoration and biodiversity
- The goal of growing fresh, nutritious food for local residents

The selected site is approximately 1–1.5 acres of mostly flat, partial-sun land bordered by mature trees, well-loved walking trails, and nearby neighborhoods. City water is accessible, and the area already functions as a shared public space.

Sample food forest design in a neighborhood - walking trails, benches, and accessible plants

[12] Sample Mautino Park Food Forest Design

Buildout Timeline

This timeline outlines the development of a 1.5-acre edible food forest, designed around permaculture principles. It emphasizes guild-based planting to create a resilient, regenerative ecosystem that produces food, supports biodiversity, improves soil, and strengthens community. The food forest will serve as a living classroom, gathering place, and climate-smart land stewardship demonstration site, aiming to advance food justice, climate resilience, and public education. The plan provides a flexible framework for planning, learning, and collaboration.

Phase 1: Site Assessment ● Map sun exposure ● Test the soil ● Study the slope ● Observe existing trees and water access to create a strong ecological foundation.	Months 1
Phase 2: Goals & Planting Design ● Conduct soil testing and necessary amendments ● Mark planting zones and install water infrastructure ● Define key pathways and access zones ● Cultivate community buy-in, shared vision, and values	Months 2-3
Phase 3: Installation ● Plant primary trees and core guild species ● Apply mulch and establish irrigation schedule ● Guild & Signage Installation	Months 4-6
Phase 4: Maintenance & Understory Development ● Create seasonal calendar ● Secure volunteers ● Introduce additional guild plants and fungal allies ● Begin light pruning and ongoing care protocols	Ongoing

Apple orchard - one option for the food forest design.

Carrying the Vision Forward

This food forest vision presents an ideal opportunity for a local nonprofit, school, tribal organization, city department, or permaculture group to lead a project with lasting community, ecological, and educational value. If you are considering stewarding this space, you are invited to build on this vision—rooted in food justice, climate resilience, and community care.

Budget Overview

The City of Grass Valley supported the completion of a one-year planning phase for the Community Food Campus and this food forest project, laying the groundwork for long-term implementation. The following budget is a flexible template, designed to guide future investment while recognizing that many items—such as trees, tools, mulch, and labor—can be offset through donations, partnerships, or volunteer efforts.

This budget estimates the costs of establishing and maintaining a 1.5-acre food forest without assuming any in-kind contributions. It is intended for planning purposes and may vary based on final design decisions, local pricing, and available resources. For example, temporary fencing is only required around active planting zones, not the entire site perimeter. Similarly, irrigation approaches can be scaled or phased. We recommend a resourceful and collaborative approach, leveraging donations, local expertise, nonprofit partnerships, and community work days to significantly reduce costs while enhancing public engagement.

Estimated Materials Budget

Category	Estimated Startup Cost	Annual Maintenance Cost
Temporary Deer Fencing	$1,250 – $2,000	$150 – $300
Irrigation System (1.5 ac)	$2,700 – $9,000	$600 – $1,200
Trees, Plants & Seeds	~$7,080	–
Pruning & Maintenance Tools	$332 – $2,462	Minimal
Soil Amendments & Mulch	–	$750 – $1,200
Total	**$11,362 – $20,542**	**$1,500 – $2,700/year**

Materials List by Category

Temporary Deer Fencing
Purpose: Protect young guilds while establishing. Full perimeter fencing is not required—use movable fencing around active zones.

Fencing Type	Estimated Cost	Notes
Plastic mesh (7–8 ft)	$1,250 – $1,500	4 rolls + posts/stakes
Electric netting	$1,680 – $1,820	Lightweight, reusable
Welded wire (metal)	$1,625 – $3,750	Durable, higher cost

Recommendation: Begin with lightweight or temporary fencing (mesh or electric), especially if deer pressure is moderate.

Irrigation System (1.5 Acres)
Purpose: Ensure adequate water supply during establishment and drought years. System may be phased.

System Type	Cost Estimate	Details
Drip Irrigation	$2,250 – $6,000	Efficient for trees/shrubs

Subsurface Drip	$4,500 – $6,000	Low evaporation, long-term option
Micro-Sprinklers	$2,700 – $4,500	Best for herbs/ground layer
Pump, Filters, Timers	$600 – $1,200	Required infrastructure
Total Estimate	**$2,700 – $9,000**	Based on system mix

Recommendation: Mix drip irrigation for guilds and micro-sprinklers for open areas for water efficiency and coverage.

Tree, Shrub & Perennial Plantings

Plant Type	Unit Price	Quantity	Estimated Cost
Fruit & Nut Trees	$50 – $130	60–75	$3,000 – $6,000
Native Shrubs & Support	$15 – $30	40–60	$900 – $1,200
Herb & Perennial Starts	~$6 each	160–200	$960 – $1,200
Total Estimate			**~$7,080**

Note: Seed starting, plant donations, and nursery partnerships can significantly reduce this cost.

Tools & Maintenance Equipment

Item	Cost Estimate
Hand Pruners (Felco F2)	$72
Pole Pruner (Fiskars)	$60
Loppers, Gloves, Wheelbarrow	$200 – $300
Optional: Electric Pruning Shears (INFACO)	$2,170
Total Estimate	**$332 – $2,462**

Note: Quality tools are a long-term investment. Donations or tool shares are common in community-led projects.

Annual Maintenance Estimates

Maintenance Task	Estimated Annual Cost
Irrigation System Upkeep	$600 – $1,200
Mulch, Compost, Soil Building	$750 – $1,200
Fence Repair/Staking	$150 – $300
Optional Seasonal Labor (volunteer or paid)	Variable ($30–$50/hr)

Optional Labor Add-On (If Not Volunteer-Based)

Task	Estimated Hours	Hourly Rate	Estimated Cost
Site prep, fencing, layout	60–80 hrs	$30–$50/hr	$1,800 – $4,000
Irrigation install	30–50 hrs	$30–$50/hr	$900 – $2,500
Tree and guild planting	80–100 hrs	$30–$50/hr	$2,400 – $5,000
Initial mulching and soil building	40–60 hrs	$30–$50/hr	$1,200 – $3,000

Total Optional Labor Estimate:
$6,300 – $14,500 (depending on contractor rate, site conditions, and crew size)

Estimated Startup Budget (Including Labor)

This startup budget includes essential infrastructure, plants, tools, and optional labor for the first year of implementation. It is intended as a template and planning guide for any group considering project stewardship. This estimate assumes no donations or in-kind contributions—though we strongly encourage leveraging community support to reduce actual costs.

Category	Estimated Cost Range
Temporary Deer Fencing	$1,250 – $2,000
Irrigation System (1.5 acres)	$2,700 – $9,000
Trees, Plants & Seeds	~$7,080
Tools & Equipment	$332 – $2,462
Labor (site prep, install, planting)	$6,300 – $14,500
Total Estimated Startup Cost	**$17,662 – $34,042**

Note: These estimates do not include permanent infrastructure (e.g., gazebos, benches), ongoing maintenance, or future expansion.

Implementation Recommendations:

- Donations, partnerships, and grant funding can offset many of the startup and recurring costs.
- A phased approach (e.g., ½ acre at a time) can help with scaling and reduce upfront expenses.
- Incorporating community stewardship days, youth involvement, or school partnerships can lower labor costs and strengthen community ownership.

Community as the Engine: The Power of Volunteer Support
Inspired by Beacon Food Forest, Seattle WA

One of the most effective ways to reduce costs while building long-term stewardship and resilience in a food forest is through volunteer participation. Labor represents a major portion of any implementation budget—and yet, with the support of dedicated community members, these hours can be transformed into something far more valuable than dollars: a sense of ownership, purpose, and connection.

Beacon Food Forest (BFF), a flagship urban food forest in Seattle, has demonstrated this model powerfully. In 2023 alone, BFF held monthly work parties, welcoming people of all ages and skill levels—rain or shine—to help grow and maintain the forest. These gatherings served as entry points into deeper involvement while also advancing real on-the-ground progress.

How Volunteer Hours Translate to Impact

Based on standard rates of $30–$50/hour for landscape labor, even 100 hours of volunteer work (one full community workday) offsets $3,000–$5,000 in professional service costs. Over the course of a season, volunteer-led installations, maintenance, and education efforts can save tens of thousands of dollars—while also growing a strong community network.

Example Volunteer Roles (as seen at Beacon Food Forest):

- **Planting**: Shrubs, trees, seeds, and companion plants
- **Weeding**: Including invasive/noxious species (e.g., morning glory, thistle)
- **Soil Building**: Sheet mulching, composting, and biochar making

- **Guild Maintenance**: Pruning, chop-and-drop, and fruit tree care
- **Infrastructure Support**: Building raised beds, installing gravel for paths
- **Harvesting & Propagation**: Collecting seeds, rooting cuttings, crop harvests
- **Specialty Work**: Medicinal plant care, wetland maintenance, ADA path improvements
- **Creative Projects**: Sign-making, educational art installations
- **Community Hosting**: Greeting new volunteers, sharing food, coordinating tools

Why It Matters
Volunteering does more than reduce expenses—it builds shared purpose, strengthens community ownership, and ensures long-term sustainability. From children learning to plant their first fruit tree to elders sharing propagation knowledge, the food forest becomes more than a project—it becomes a place of belonging.

> *"The most meaningful aspect of the food forest is the community. There's a very peaceful way of dealing with each other. The community supports you in working on whatever you're excited about. Everyone is there for each other."*
>
> *— Jessica, volunteer at Beacon Food Forest*

Recommendation:
We strongly encourage future stewards of this project—whether a nonprofit, school, city department, or grassroots group—to establish regular volunteer days modeled on BFF's monthly work parties. This not only offsets startup and maintenance costs, but also cultivates the very spirit that makes food forests thrive: collective care. Volunteer coordination and the building of a stewardship team and program is essential and should be prioritized as part of any paid staff role for this project.

Conclusion

Rooted in sustainability and shaped by community input, this initiative envisions a transformative public asset for Grass Valley—one that actively addresses urgent issues such as climate change, food insecurity, and social fragmentation. The Mautino Park Community Food Campus includes a community farm for a wide range of hands-on agricultural education, the Mautino Market offering fresh produce and serving as a community hub, a demonstration garden showcasing native plants, a learning gazebo to provide a community gathering and event space, and a flourishing food forest exemplifying permaculture principles.

As community awareness of climate disruption grows, so does the desire for tangible, hopeful action. The Food Campus creates space for that action to take root—through food production, job training, and neighborhood gathering. It meets residents where they are, while inviting them to imagine where we can go—together.

Beyond these foundational elements, the recommendation incorporates vital infrastructure enhancements such as new sidewalks on Alta Street for safe access, ample parking provided through partnership, and the preservation of existing forested areas for their ecological and recreational value. This recommended plan is a product of community-driven design, incorporating local feedback to ensure it meets the needs and aspirations of Grass Valley residents. It is deeply rooted in sustainable practices, striving for environmental responsibility, economic viability, and social equity.

Ultimately, the Mautino Park Community Food Campus is proposed as a vital public asset addressing critical community challenges. It will enhance food security by providing direct access to affordable, healthy food, and offer extensive educational opportunities in sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship. Furthermore, it is expected to generate economic opportunities through farm operations and community programming, fostering a more resilient local economy. This proposal represents an investment in Grass Valley's future, envisioning a space where food, education, and nature converge to create a truly enriching experience for all.

Interfaith Food Ministry and Sierra Harvest would like to thank the City of Grass Valley for investing in these public access projects and for exploring new ways to utilize its parks. Additional acknowledgements include the community members, partners, city staff and officials, county officials, and Peace Lutheran Church for their roles in the creation of this report.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge this project is on the ancestral, unceded homelands of the Nisenan people, who have cared for this region for generations. Despite historical injustices, the Nisenan are resilient. We honor their ongoing presence, leadership, and knowledge. This project aligns with Indigenous values of stewardship, reciprocity, sustainability, and respect. We are committed to uplifting Indigenous voices, supporting Native sovereignty, and promoting just land care. We encourage supporting the California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project (CHIRP) to preserve Nisenan culture, rights, and visibility.