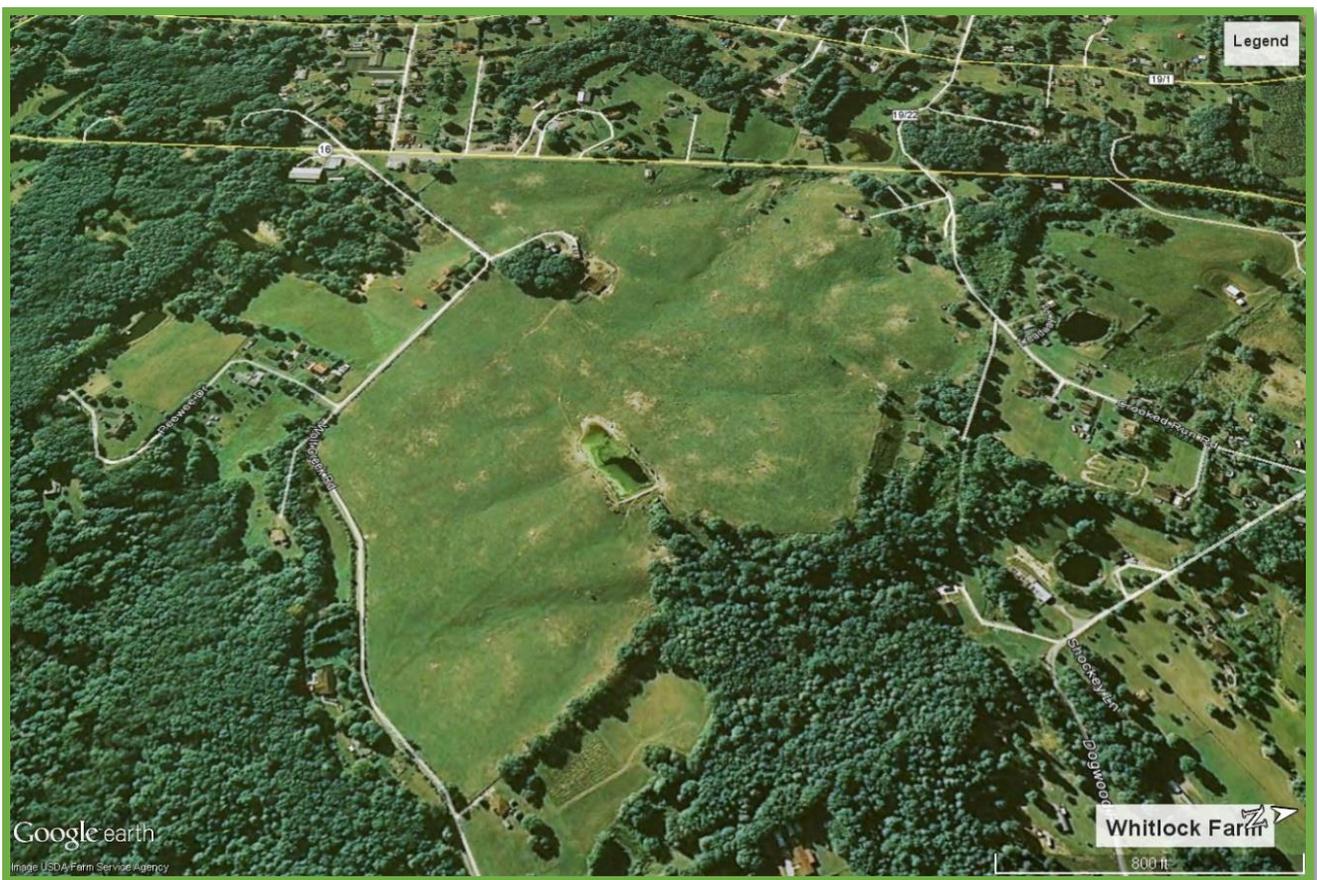


# Whitlock Community Farm

Agriculture and Conservation Resource Center – 2017

*Feasibility assessment and business plan for the Fayette County Commission*



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## Summary

### Background

In 2016, the Fayette County Farmland Protection Board (FCFPB) purchased the historic Whitlock Farm located outside the town of Fayetteville, West Virginia. The Whitlock Farm holds significant value for the region due to its proximity to Fayetteville, historic farm use, significant road frontage, and the scenic qualities of the land itself. The actions of FCFPB to seize a unique opportunity to ensure that the agricultural qualities of the property are preserved in perpetuity are commendable.

In an effort to maximize the benefits of this investment, the Fayette County Resource Coordinator's Office (FCRCO), in partnership with the Fayette County Commission, received funding from the Claude W. Benedum Foundation to explore potential uses for the Whitlock Farm by developing a feasibility assessment and business plan. The goal was to assess the feasibility for developing a project that builds on the assets of the local community, helps to support and sustain the agricultural community, and provides a catalyst for economic development activity in the county and region.

A team of local leaders met several times throughout 2017. The output of these work sessions included a clear vision for the farm project, as well as core program requirements that were developed into a draft plan. The team then engaged area partners and stakeholders over the course of the summer to garner feedback and earn support for the proposed project. A review of existing local food assessments, compilation of regional market data, and development of expense and revenue projections were completed in order to characterize the local and regional agriculture economy, quantify market opportunity, determine feasibility and cash flow projections, refine program structure, and clarify funding needs.

### Outcome

Based on the planning process, FCRCO and its partners believe that developing an Agricultural and Conservation Resource Center on the Whitlock farm would be ideal and supported by the community. This study provides a summary of findings, market assessment, and a detailed plan and cost summary for developing and implementing the Agricultural and Conservation Resource Center on the Whitlock Farm site.

FCRCO will lead the development and implementation of the Whitlock Farm project. They have assembled a project team and identified key project components and necessary partners, developed financial requirements and a funding strategy, and, from this document, now have an implementation plan. FCRCO will lead fundraising and grant writing efforts for project implementation and will manage staffing and supervision for the project.

### About the property

The Whitlock Farm is located on Route 16, a few miles outside of Fayetteville, West Virginia. The farm is approximately 84 acres, with approximately 15-20 acres with soil quality conducive for vegetable and crop production, 40 acres suitable for grazing, a 2 acre house site, and 15- 20 acres that are either rocky, steep, or protected habitat.

The Whitlock Farm house and out buildings are in fair condition. These structures have been

vacant and not maintained for several years and will require repair if they are to be used. Additionally, there are several concrete block outbuildings in various states of disrepair, located adjacent to the house. Historically, the farm has been used for cattle and horse pasture. The fields have been mowed to maintain pasture and the outside boundary is fenced. There is also a collapsed barn on the property that needs to be removed and a second housing structure that could be either demolished or repaired and re-purposed as a storage building. There is water and electric access at the main housing site.



Figure 1: Whitlock Farm aerial imagery



Figure 2: Whitlock Farm pasture



**Figure 3: House site features**

The Fayette County Farmland Protection Board—at public auction—purchased the Whitlock Farm for \$528,830 in 2016. Presently, the Farmland Protection Board maintains ownership of the property and is in the process of placing a conservation easement on the property. The easement will conserve the property for agricultural use and conservation. This type of purchase by a Farmland Protection Board is atypical and presents a new strategy and approach for protecting agricultural property in West Virginia.

### Farmland Protection

This project presents an opportunity to bring together the Farmland Protection Board and a diverse group of stakeholders to develop a vision for the Whitlock Farm, while striving to benefit the community and achieve complementary goals. The West Virginia Voluntary Farmland Protection Act of 2000 declared agriculture as a “life support” industry and that there was need to assist agricultural areas in danger of experiencing irreversible loss of agricultural land<sup>1</sup>. This act created county level farmland protection boards. These boards purchase conservation easements from landowners that limit the land use to agricultural activities, thus protecting and preserving those lands as farms. Landowners in the Farmland Protection Program are required to develop conservation plans for the farms in an effort to preserve and increase the agricultural qualities of the land.

Farmland preservation is an important issue and provides a variety of long-term economic, environmental, and social benefits. It provides protection for and conservation of soils, secures land for production of agricultural products, provides the land base to support farm and agricultural businesses, preserves rural landscapes and cultural resources, protects water resources and wildlife, and enhances tourism and recreational opportunities<sup>2</sup>.

The innovative approach demonstrated by FCFPB in purchasing the Whitlock property is a progressive method and is seen as very forward thinking among stakeholders. The proposed agriculture and conservation resource center for the Whitlock property specifically meets several of the goals of farmland protection. It is located in an area susceptible to development; it includes soils appropriate for crop production as well as livestock production, and is home to wetlands and wildlife habitat in need of protection.

To further highlight support for the Farmland Projection Board, many regional planning and economic development entities intentionally support agricultural as an economic sector, leveraging the

<sup>1</sup> West Virginia Farmland Protection Board, Voluntary Farmland Protection Act, Accessed 8/2017

<sup>2</sup> WV Farmland Protection Board website, accessed 8/2017.

investment of the Farmland Protection Board. For example, the Region 1 Planning and Development Council specifically references agriculture as an economic development priority in their 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).<sup>3</sup> “Both agriculture resources and farm land are abundant in the eastern half of the region. Climate and soil are adequate to assist in area self-sufficiency, thereby facilitating growth potential. This Region’s farms are following a national trend for fewer and larger farms, as well as, prime farmland being lost to urban sprawl and recreation uses, which tends to drive the small family owner farmer out of business. Agriculture is becoming more of a second job. However, the CEDS Committee feels **that agriculture, though small-scale by necessity, has validity as an economic base.**” Region 4 Planning and Development Council defines agricultural as an economic sector in their CEDS; specifically stating economic development objectives to “**Increase the potential for local agricultural growth,**” and a strategy to “promote local food growers by providing products to local residents and other entities.”

Similarly, the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority—following the completion of an extensive strategic planning process in 2014—approved the adoption of a three-year plan (2015-2017) focused on the implementation of seven strategic priorities.<sup>4</sup> Several focus on economic development, specifically relating to workforce preparation, existing business development, and business start-up support. The HIVE program will be the implementation arm of these priorities; **the HIVE strategic plan specifically outlines the need to develop the local food economy** and the Whitlock Farm will partner with the HIVE program to develop the necessary curriculum and programmatic outcomes to achieve these strategic priorities.

Most farmland in Fayette County does not face much development pressure, but this particular farm, due to the proximity to Fayetteville and the highway, faces significantly more development pressure. Additionally, developing this property as an agricultural economic development center presents the opportunity for a higher return on farmland preservation funding than simply placing an easement on the property, and will serve as an economic driver for the agriculture sector in the region.

### Overview of Whitlock Farm Project

The purchase of the Whitlock Farm by the Farmland Protection Board presented a unique and inspiring opportunity for Fayette County. The Farmland Protection Board agreed to postpone taking action on future plans for the property while a committee of local community leaders interested in the future of the Whitlock Farm established an advisory team (see Figure 4). This team was tasked with developing a vision of how the

#### Core Project Advisory Team

- Kelly Jo Drey: Fayette County Resource Coordinator’s Office
- Adam Hodges: Fayette County Farmland Protection Board
- Bill Hauer: Fayette County Farmland Protection Board
- Denise Scalph : Fayette County Commission
- Joe Brouse: New River Gorge Regional Development Authority
- Brian Smith: Fayette County Farmland Protection Board
- Gabe Pena: Fayette County Resource Coordinator’s Office
- Cody Addison: West Virginian Food and Farm Coalition
- Tammy Stein: Fayette County Resource Coordinator’s Office

Figure 4 : Advisory Team

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.reg4wv.org/ceds-2016-update>

<sup>4</sup> [https://issuu.com/nrgrda/docs/strategic\\_plan](https://issuu.com/nrgrda/docs/strategic_plan)

farm could become an asset to the county, enable economic development, and provide a model of sustainable development. The Fayette County Resource Coordinator’s Office received funding from the Claude W. Benedum Foundation to explore the feasibility of potential uses for the Whitlock Farm and to propose a plan for the Farmland Protection Board to consider. The core advisory team endeavored to create a project that builds on the local assets of the community, helps develop the agricultural community, and provides an outlet for economic development activity in the area - and is based on input collected from a variety of stakeholders in the community and potential partners across the region. This type of feedback process was essential in assessing the feasibility of the project and ensuring any proposed activities would not be duplicating services, but instead leveraging existing projects to further the business economy of region.

The core advisory team participated in a visioning workshop to develop a project framework for the Whitlock Farm. **The team envisions a future where farming, outdoor recreation, conservation, education, and other related businesses are growing, with this project acting as a catalyst for the growth of area farms and local businesses, while maintaining community enhancement goals of sustainability.** This framework was then shared with a wide range of stakeholders and potential partners, who helped to refine the goals and objectives of the project. Based on feedback, the core team finalized the key components of the project, which include (1) land access for farmers in the form of grazing, field-crop production, and high tunnel rental, (2) aggregation and distribution resources for farmers, (3) a site for community educational and entrepreneurship opportunities, (4) sensitive habitat conservation, (5) recreation, (6) and financial sustainability.

The components of the project will be implemented in a two-phase process. The first phase will focus on developing the site and providing resources for area farmers, while the second phase will be centered on further integrating the community.

### Local agriculture and market demand

An industry and market analysis was performed to determine the characteristics unique to the proposed Whitlock Farm project. The market analysis considered data about participants, demand, supply, pricing, and other factors that are key to planning a successful project. **The Whitlock Farm project will be entering the market within**

**three industry sectors: 1) farmer support and training programming - also known as farm accelerators or incubators 2) agri-business and agritourism business incubation and 3) land holding and sustainable farmland development.**



Figure 5: Current and potential revenue of West Virginia grown fruits and vegetables. West Virginians consume \$421 million of fruits and vegetables; currently we are only producing \$26 million

## Lack of production

Part of the need for this project is driven by the lack of production of local food in the region. In a 2017 Farm Market Viability study, the WVU Food Justice Lab found that vegetable farms made up only 3% of the total farms in the New River and Greenbrier River Foodshed.<sup>5</sup> Farms included in their study mostly produced vegetables with 91% surveyed producing vegetables, 67% also raised livestock, 60% produced fruit, and 43% produce eggs.

The farm business incubator will target existing and beginning farmers in the region who want to create or expand a farm business or have demonstrated an effort to develop a business. Whitlock Farm will target existing farmers in the region as lease candidates for farm-related resources. Whitlock Farm staff and partners will work with farmers to access markets, develop production plans, provide access to resources and training, develop food safety plans and attain Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification, and lease high tunnels and growing space. A survey by the New Appalachian Farm Research Center indicates that growers in this region want to expand, but a lack of aggregation and distribution resources is creating significant challenge.<sup>6</sup> Full-time farmers of specialty food crops in the region earned average gross revenues of \$41,200 per year and part-time farmers earned an average of \$18,840 in gross revenue per year.<sup>7</sup>

Customers for locally grown goods can range from emerging institutional and wholesale customers to local retail sales. Demand for local product has been identified across the state. Specific to wholesale customers, there is a lack of supply in providing large quantities of GAP certified product to wholesalers, distributors, and institutions. A 2015 distributor survey showed that several distributors were interested in purchasing local products, but only if those sources provided adequate quantities and complied with food safety standards. Locally, wholesale produce can be sold to area distributors—such as Crook Brothers—and wholesalers including the above-mentioned distributors, and area grocery chains such as IGA and Kroger. There are also opportunities to partner with area institutions (such as local prisons and Farm to School programming) to supply specific products in large and consistent quantities across the region. Potential partners identified during the stakeholder outreach process include WVU Institute of Technology, area restaurants, the Mountaineer Food Bank, and the Greenbrier Valley Grown distribution initiative.

Local food in West Virginia remains a growing industry. While still small compared to industrial scale agriculture in other regions, West Virginia local foods already have an important economic impact. A recent small survey of supporting organizations and local food hubs found gross sales of at least \$1,191,678 in 2016. Demand for local food is also growing. A 2015 USDA Economic Research Service report *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: A Report to Congress* found that producer participation in local food systems is on the rise, and that the value of sales of local food appears to be

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<sup>5</sup> Bringing our Foodshed into Focus, Specialty Food Crops, Farm Viability and Market Profitability in the New River and Greenbrier Valley Foodshed, WV Food and Farm Coalition and WVU Food Justice Lab, 2017

<sup>6</sup> West Virginia Food Hub Feasibility Assessment, New Appalachian Farm and Research Center, 2014  
[http://downstreamstrategies.com/documents/reports\\_publication/wv-food-hub-final-report\\_1-23-15.pdf](http://downstreamstrategies.com/documents/reports_publication/wv-food-hub-final-report_1-23-15.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Bringing our Foodshed into Focus, Specialty Food Crops, Farm Viability and Market Profitability in the New River and Greenbrier Valley Foodshed, WV Food and Farm Coalition and WVU Food Justice Lab, 2017

increasing.<sup>8</sup> Prices appear to fluctuate around the growing seasons with prices falling in late summer and rising again in the fall/winter. This holds true on the local level as well since it reflects the effect quantity of products available has during the growing season. US production of all vegetables is projected to increase an average of 0.6 percent a year for the next decade. This would mean an increase from 131.3 billion pounds in 2014 to 139.3 billion pounds in 2024. West Virginia has an opportunity to become part of that increase.

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<sup>8</sup> USDA Economic Research Service. *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: A Report to Congress*. 2015.

Farm to school remains an important part of local food development in West Virginia. Between 2011 and 2012, there were 33 districts and 411 schools participating in the Farm to School program to some degree. Additionally, WV schools spent 2 million dollars on local products, or 9.5% of total expenditures (21 million dollars). Eighty-five percent of these districts indicated that they would purchase more local foods if available.<sup>9</sup> Participation in the Farm to School program is expected to increase and plans to scale-up production to meet demands of consumers and institutional buyers are in the works. Currently, it is challenging for farms to meet wholesale demand from customers. Quantity and packing requirements for larger buyers are often beyond the capacity of one or two farms. There are many factors that create barriers to meeting that demand, including distance to the nearest markets, seasonality, packaging, and production coordination, with the largest barrier being lack of aggregation between producers and larger buyers. This gap is recognized by organizations all over the state; there are over 28 entities focusing on local food aggregation and over 17 food distributors across the state that are actively purchasing or distributing local product. **The infrastructure for increasing the presence of local food in the wholesale market is being created and sustained, however production is still far behind the wholesale consumer demand.**

The region boasts a strong base of support for local food: a survey conducted as part of the West Virginia Food Hub Feasibility Assessment, found that 17 out of 25 producers in the Greenbrier and New River Valley Region indicated that demand for local product in their region was high or good. Opportunities to increase production in order to meet statewide demand include high current and potential production, use of season extension, and significant interest in aggregation. Challenges for the region’s producers include lack of buyers, transportation challenges, lack of resources, and lack of producers. The most important factors for success indicated by producers include access to new customers, consistent markets, cold storage, and better prices. Additionally, the Bringing our Foodsheds into Focus report indicated that there were difficulties around product types, volume needed, quality, delivery requirements and pricing. The stakeholders of the region are active and keenly interested in growing and enabling the local food system. **One of the**



Figure 5: Word cloud based on a beginning farmer listening session in 2016; "What is your ideal farming situation?"

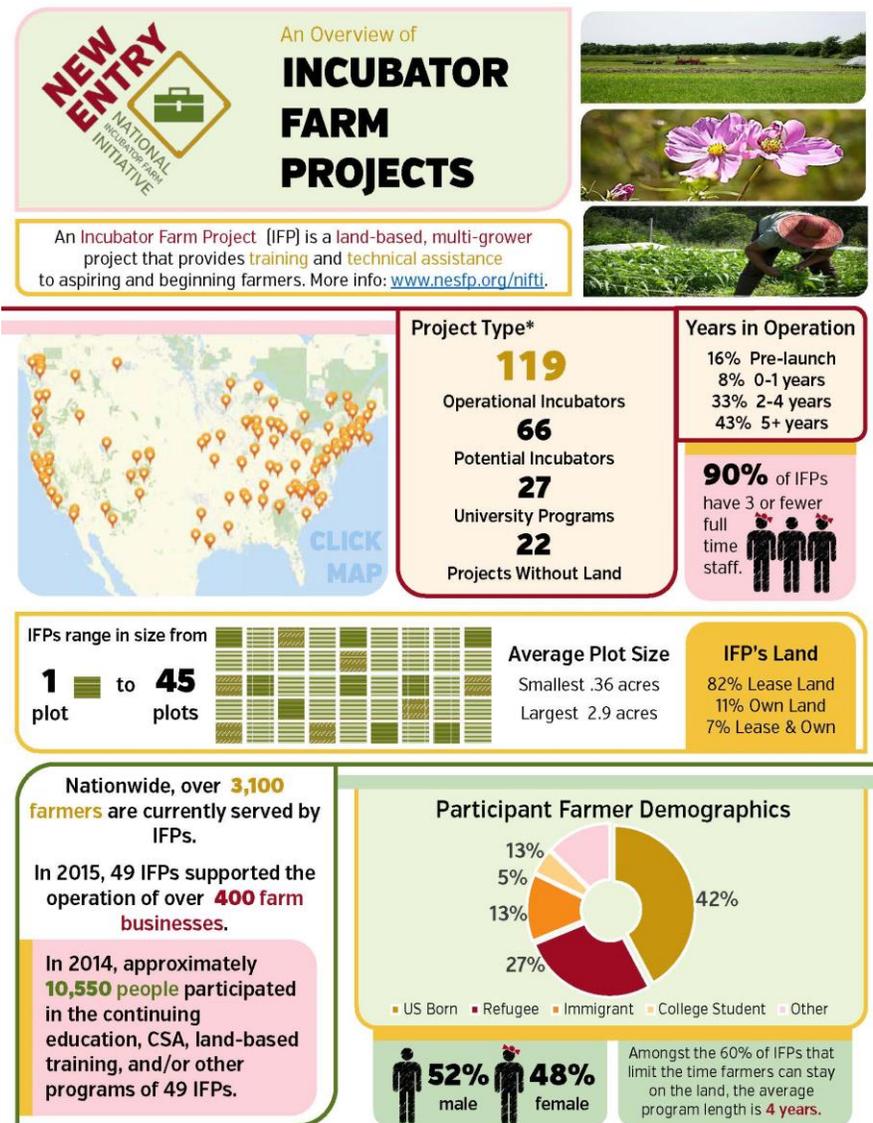
<sup>9</sup> USDA Economic Research Service. *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: A Report to Congress*. 2015.

**largest barriers to the development of a vibrant local food economy is the lack of local food production and lack of food producers in the region. There are limited aggregation and distribution efforts in the region and a lack of aggregation infrastructure available to area farm businesses.**

Expanded production is also challenging for producers because of a lack of consistent marketing options. Buyers indicate that they are unable to consistently procure the needed quantities. These exemplify common challenges associated with “scaling up” local food economies.

**Lack of farmers**

The average age of farmers in the US has grown steadily over the past 30 years. Young farmers are not entering the industry and many younger farmers are leaving. In 2012 there was a slight increase in principal operators in the 25-34 age range, but it is very minor in comparison to the decreases across the remaining ages. Some states are doing a better job of retaining their beginning farmer populations. Rhode Island, Connecticut and Vermont have been successful in growing new farmers over the past 10 years, whereas West Virginia and much of Appalachia saw losses of over 20% in their beginning farmer population.<sup>10</sup> There are very few beginning farmers in West Virginia and numbers are dropping. In West Virginia, the average age of farm operators increased from 55.6 years to 57.2 from 2007 to 2012.



**Figure 6: Incubator farm infographic from National Incubator Farm Training Initiative**

<sup>10</sup> USDA NASS, Agricultural Census Quick Stats, West Virginia.

One method of growing new farmers is to provide support through a farm accelerator or incubator programs, where beginning farmers receive access to education, mentorship, and resources to farm successfully. Farm incubator programs are designed specifically to increase the retention rate of new farmers entering the industry. The National Incubator Farm Training Initiative has been working to collect information about incubator programs across the country. There are 119 known active projects and of those, 85 have land. Participants at these projects range in age of 24-57 years old. Nine hundred fifty-eight farmers were served in the 2013 growing season and the projects reported providing assistance to more than 5,700 beginning and aspiring farmers. Over 50% of these projects had less than three staff members with 18% having less than one. The majority of projects are non-profits (68%). Only 4% were sole proprietorships, 8% are associated with an academic institution, 8% are part of a government agency and 12% were hybrids of multiple organizational types. Existing farm incubator models have been developed across the country, employing similar approaches and objectives. Most incubators are located in regions with higher population and an affluent customer base, allowing young farmers to flourish in a direct to consumer oriented market.

West Virginia presents additional challenges that most incubators do not face such as a low population-base for end customers, high poverty, poor health metrics, and lack of access to healthy fresh foods that necessitate low price points and low demand.

However, West Virginia does present several advantages. Recent history has seen a major shift of focus in state policy towards economic diversification, and agriculture is seen as an element of that move. Second, cost of living is low and land is available for new famers. Third, West Virginia has a rich agricultural heritage and history and pride in farming resonates with local and regional customers. Lastly, West Virginia is surrounded by population centers that purchase local food and have established infrastructure for wholesale purchasing. **Whitlock farm will focus on creating the**

**COME FARM WITH US**

West Virginia's farming community is growing. **Join us!**

**FIND THE PROGRAM FOR YOU**

WV offers a diverse selection of training opportunities for beginning farmers that fit both your needs and interests. You'll find incubator farms, agriculture training centers, on-farm apprenticeships, and university programs located in geographically and culturally diverse regions of the state.

**CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE**

Figure 7: Marketing materials for the West Virginia Incubator Network.

## **infrastructure necessary for new farmers to supply West Virginia grown food to consumers across Appalachia.**

There are at least five new farmer training programs being developed and implemented across the state. The West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition has implemented a West Virginia Incubator Farm Network to help support collaboration and sharing of resources between the existing and new projects being developed.

Beginning farmers also often find land to be prohibitively expensive, complicated to procure, and consider farming to be an uncertain career choice. Many struggle to create and maintain resilient agricultural enterprises amidst a competitive market that demands large upfront spending for land, seed, and specialized equipment, with a limited labor supply.

Current land-linking services across the country offer a network connection for individuals seeking land to farm. This includes farmers wishing to retire but not move from their farms, landowners seeking someone to farm their land, farmers interested in sharing their knowledge for “sweat equity,” or many other circumstances. Currently, there are no active land linking programs in West Virginia, though surrounding states all have programs. However, with more projects of this type being developed, land linking is beginning to become an opportunity.

### **Specific Local Food Market Demands**

There are several exciting projects in West Virginia that are embracing the model of regionally supported local food systems. Sprouting Farms, located in Summers County, has kicked off its initial season as a farm resource and incubator center. This operation is currently funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER initiative, a funding opportunity that the Whitlock Farm project is eligible to pursue. Additionally, a variety of partners are leveraging ARC POWER funds in a regional aggregation and distribution project known as the Appalachian Food Corridor Project. Both of these projects are emergent, but already demonstrating significant results. The goals of the Whitlock Farm project will easily integrate well into a variety of programmatic goals being pursued by these projects.

The Corridor Project is a collaboration between two major local food aggregators in the region, Appalachian Harvest located in southwestern Virginia, and ACENET located in eastern Ohio. Both of these organizations have established distribution networks, selling and shipping over 2 million dollars of local products from Baltimore to Florida per year. Figure 8 illustrates the proposed route connecting the centers, a major distribution route through West Virginia, which lies a mere 15 miles from the Whitlock Farm. The

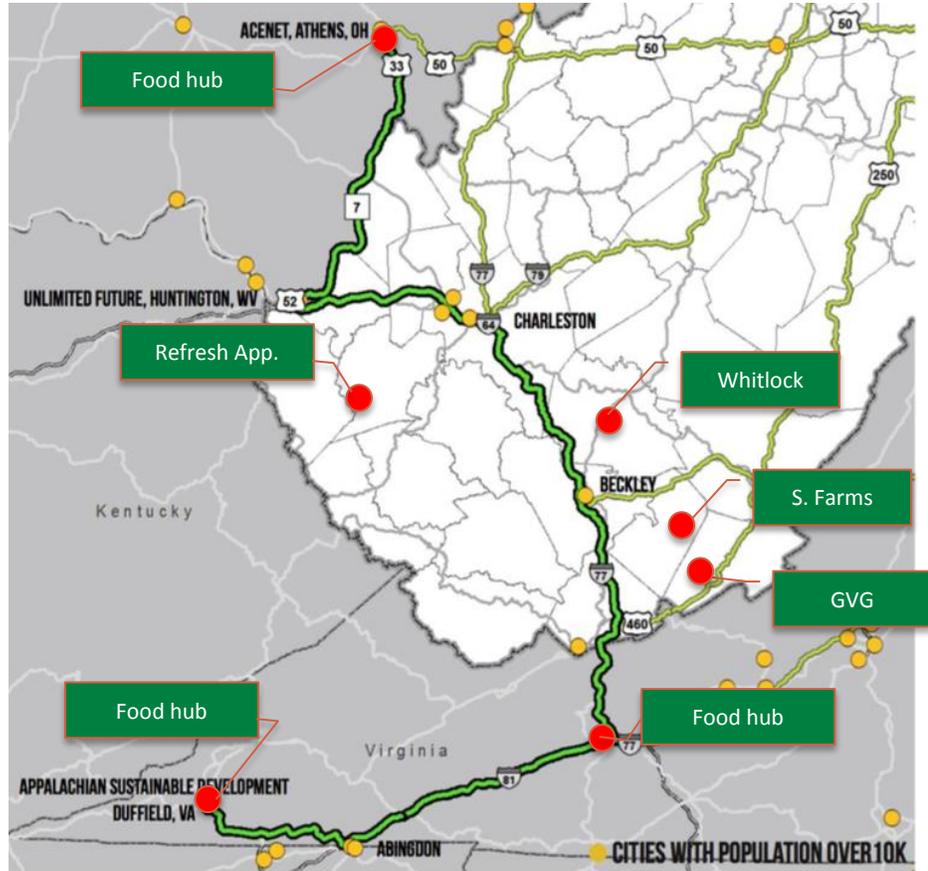


Figure 6: Appalachian Local Food Corridor and network

The Corridor project team is working with local farmers and groups across the region to grow the regional food system by creating market opportunities. Product demand is understood in advance; i.e., producers can plant a crop and already have it sold before harvest - a sustainable, modern, and necessary business practice. For example, there exists a demand for over 300 cases of winter squash per week, with pricing around \$32 for a 35-pound box of organic squash and \$18 per box for conventional. Over 300 cases of squash can be grown on a single acre, potentially producing more than \$9,000 dollars per acre—organic—for one crop. As a second example, in 2016 one farmer grossed just under \$80,000 on 2 acres selling certified organic bell peppers. **Proximity to an established distribution corridor provides an opportunity for distribution outside of the county and region, allowing more markets to be available to local farmers and businesses.**

The Greenbrier Valley Grown (GVG) Collaborative is a local food aggregation and distribution company (also supported by ARC POWER funding) located in southeast West Virginia. The GVG is a collaborative operation that includes six partners: the Monroe Farm Market (MFM), Sprouting Farms (SF), Alderson Community Food Hub (AFCH) and Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Corporation (GVEDC), Swift Level Meats, and the Monroe County Council on Aging (MCCOA). These partners work together to ensure locally grown products flow from producers to a variety of wholesale and retail buyers, both locally and regionally. This partnership model provides GVG the tools and connections it needs to be

successful from production to consumption on an unbroken value chain. GVG began operations in the spring of 2017 and is currently delivering wholesale produce from local farms to markets stretching from Huntington, West Virginia to Blacksburg, Virginia, with a total of 21 wholesale customers established over a period less than two months long. While sales are small—grossing over \$80,000 in 2017—the market is very promising. GVG will be expanding distribution across the region and working with partners to distribute food across the east coast. In addition, GVG is partnering with MFM and MCOA to implement a major farm to school program in the region, aggregating and distributing locally grown produce to Monroe, Greenbrier, and Summers County school systems. Finally, as of September 2017, GVG has taken on a 50 share Community Supported Agriculture CSA program.



Figure 9: Greenbrier Valley Grown refrigerator truck

MFM offers a weekly retail online market, adding an additional 60 customers from the region. Leveraging all the resources of the region, GVG can be West Virginia’s largest distributor of locally grown products. **Of importance to Whitlock Farm, GVG is currently delivering to Fayetteville and could begin coordination with more area farmers and buyers, offering a larger market for Fayette County producers. Additionally, GVG could expand its aggregation network to include Whitlock Farm, through development of a cold and cool storage facility.**

Fayetteville is home to several restaurants that advertise a “farm to table” menu; Whitlock Farm could offer growers a year around growing opportunity to meet the demand for local food.

Table 1: Top 7 products from 5 restaurants profiled at the 2016 Fayetteville Meet, Greet, Grow Local meeting.

Name	Unit	Totals/week
Potatoes	Pounds/week	200 lbs.
Cucumbers (lbs/wk)	Pounds/week	199 lbs.
Red onion	Pounds/week	125 lbs.
Mixed greens	Pounds/week	110 lbs.
Red tomato A	Pounds/week	108 lbs.
Romaine	Pounds/week	105 lbs.
Eggs	Dozen/week	100 dozen

GVG can coordinate with local farmers to reach new markets in the region, providing production planning, aggregation and distribution, and sales support. The Fayette County school system operates 17 schools, all of which could be integrated into the GVG farm to school program.

Table 2: Potential sales based on 15 products purchased by 5 local restaurants in Fayetteville. Prices are based on current wholesale pricing from August/September 2017. Product selection based on products with publically available wholesale pricing from Greenbrier Valley Grown.

Product	Restaurant Demand Per Week (peak season)	Restaurant Demand Per Month ( peak season)	Potential sales per week	Potential sales per month
<b>Apples</b>	80 lbs.	320 lbs.	\$ 64.00	\$ 256.00
<b>Kale</b>	7.5 lbs.	30 lbs.	\$ 49.50	\$ 198.00
<b>Basil</b>	11.5 lbs.	46 lbs.	\$ 116.04	\$ 464.14
<b>Chives</b>	2 lbs.	8 lbs.	\$ 10.98	\$ 43.92
<b>Tarragon</b>	1 lbs.	4 lbs.	\$ 10.59	\$ 42.36
<b>Bell Peppers</b>	32.5 lbs.	130 lbs.	\$ 26.90	\$ 107.59
<b>Corn</b>	1 bushel	4 bushels	\$ 24.00	\$ 96.00
<b>Onion - Red</b>	125 lbs.	500 lbs.	\$ 281.25	\$ 1,125.00
<b>Onion - Yellow</b>	70 lbs.	280 lbs.	\$ 77.00	\$ 308.00
<b>Onion- White</b>	50 lbs.	200 lbs.	\$ 55.00	\$ 220.00
<b>Tomato - A</b>	108 lbs.	432 lbs.	\$ 108.00	\$ 432.00
<b>Tomato - B</b>	20 lbs.	80 lbs.	\$ 10.40	\$ 41.60
<b>Tomato - Grape/Cherry</b>	53.25 lbs.	213 lbs.	\$ 111.83	\$ 447.30
<b>Tomato - Green</b>	25 lbs.	100 lbs.	\$ 35.00	\$ 140.00
Total potential sales			<b>\$ 980.48</b>	<b>\$ 3,921.91</b>

In summary, a nexus of regional food activities are developing in and around the Whitlock Farm. Whitlock Farm has the opportunity to integrate easily into existing distribution networks, access a broad range of customers, and begin developing demand within the county. Investment in the local food system is a popular avenue for foundations and government funding, and this project is positioned well to garner support and funding for development and operations.

### Tourism and economic development

Fayette County is home to the New River Gorge whose natural beauty and outdoor activities drive local tourism and economic activity. These activities bring in visitors looking for quality outdoor recreation, food and beverages, hospitality, and places to visit. A 2015 study by Dean Runyan Associates indicates

that direct spending in tourism in Fayette County in 2014 was over \$74 million dollars.<sup>11</sup> The area also has high tourism traffic which leads to seasonality for not only agriculture, but the overall economy, as well. While there are many challenges, there are also many opportunities unique to the area that provides a solid base for community based economic development.

Agritourism can be a successful piece of farm viability with farm to table events, workshops, learning opportunities, and other farm activities providing additional revenue for farm operations. Due to the proximity to Fayetteville and based on the demographics of the current visitors, the region does have an opportunity to engage and market products and activities to these markets. Fayette County had at least six farms participating in agritourism activities in 2012 USDA agricultural census.<sup>12</sup>

With growing trends towards buying local in the food industry, there is also a market opportunity for value-added and place-based products for the visiting consumer markets. There are already several area projects focused on tourism including a new ARC POWER initiative project called the New River Gorge Trail Alliance, which is focused on developing and improving bike trail networks throughout Fayette, Nicholas, Summers, Raleigh, and Webster counties. Projects like these offer an opportunity to link Fayetteville and this property to larger recreational tourism initiatives in the region.

Both Tourism and Agribusiness and Food Systems are Target Industries identified in the New River Gorge Economic Development Strategic Plan.<sup>13</sup> This project assists those target industries through several support systems identified in that plan including Start-up Support, Existing business development, and Prospect recruitment by bringing and supporting new businesses in the region. This project also fulfills the goals of Community Development by supporting the quality of place in the region, building capacity of the local community, and by helping maintain and improve the visual impression of the community through maintaining a beautiful and functional farm space.

### Initial stakeholder feedback

The project team collected stakeholder feedback from partners and community members in the spring and summer of 2017. This feedback was gathered to assess interest in the project and refine the scope of potential activities. This type of feedback is vital to ensure that new initiatives are not duplicating services, but rather are crafted to leverage existing projects and funding to support the entire community and business economy of the region.

The team created a general model (Figure 11, pg. 19) that is made up of priority components determined during the initial visioning meeting. This model encompasses a wide range of potential activities. The core



**Survey Highlights:**  
Excited about **agritourism**  
**Cool storage facilities** would be useful  
**Education and event center** is an exciting idea

Figure 10: Survey Highlights, full data below.

<sup>11</sup> West Virginia Travel Impacts, Dean Runyan Associates, Prepared for the West Virginia Division of Tourism, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> USDA NASS Quick Stats, Fayette County, Farm related Ag-tourism and recreational services.

<sup>13</sup> New River Gorge Regional Development Authority Strategic Plan, 2015-2017  
[https://issuu.com/nrgrda/docs/strategic\\_plan](https://issuu.com/nrgrda/docs/strategic_plan).

project team used this model during the outreach process, seeking to understand if the identified needs and programs overlapped with any existing projects or organizations, and then determine if this model could leverage existing programming and impact. The proposed model focused on the existing assets of the area and was developed with the idea of starting small and growing the project in an intentional fashion. The four main sectors of the project will focus on education, land access, aggregation and storage, and tourism. For each sector, infrastructure, programming, partners, and potential activities were identified. These components overlap and build on each other, creating a range of possible activities and outcomes.

The core project team met individually with 34 individuals representing a wide range of stakeholders including farmers, educators, local non-profits, economic development, university officials, and state and federal support partners. Many partners and individuals were generally excited about the project and had positive feedback, offering points of clarification, and additional partners and resources to pursue. The key concerns of many of the partners centered on the available markets for expanded agricultural production, organizational structure, and the financial sustainability of this project.

The project model assumes that one organization would be operating on the site and implementing the educational and production based programming. Based on feedback this model has been amended to better fit the current resources and capacity of the county as well as some of the partnerships and individuals identified in the outreach process.



Figure 11 : Project model

Described below is the interviewee feedback, providing positive responses and concerns that will help guide project development.

**Table 3: Stakeholder survey responses**

<b>Positive Feedback</b> <i>*Parentheses indicate number of responses</i>	<b>Concerns</b> <i>*Parentheses indicate number of responses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like the idea of a holistic approach.</li> <li>• Good opportunity to encourage consumer interaction/education around agriculture.</li> <li>• Excited about idea of agri-tourism on-farm. (4)</li> <li>• Like the idea of shared facilities to help encourage cooperation. (2)</li> <li>• Opportunity for hands-on learning through several local educational partner.</li> <li>• Cool storage facilities would be useful/helpful to local farms. (4)</li> <li>• Excited about teaching apprentices/mentoring new farmers. (2)</li> <li>• Excited about the project idea and how to incorporate food access. (2)</li> <li>• Likes idea of education and event center for existing and new farms. (5)</li> <li>• Likes idea of an organization helping aging farms lease land to new farms. (2)</li> <li>• Interested/excited about integrating health education.</li> <li>• Love the idea of place-based activities focused on Appalachian heritage.</li> <li>• Like the idea of adding value to the land.</li> <li>• Like idea of developing further relationships with Wolf Creek Park.</li> <li>• Likes idea of county partnership to ensure public access to farm resources.</li> <li>• Care about preservation of the farm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to make sure there is a market for the products produced. (3)</li> <li>• What about off-farm work and healthcare for new farmers.</li> <li>• Focus resources on existing farms not just new and beginning.</li> <li>• Worry about competition from the farm – products flooding market.</li> <li>• Worry about lack of funding and financial stability for project. (4)</li> <li>• Soil quality on the farm – questions about fertility. (2)</li> <li>• Communication strategy and how to implement project that is helpful and that the community will support. (2)</li> <li>• Worry about the organizational structure. (5)</li> <li>• Concerned about Farmland Protection Board owning or running project.</li> <li>• Make sure major educational partners are involved.</li> <li>• Not enough farm labor in the area already, need workforce development. (2)</li> </ul>
<b>Questions:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will this project benefit producers in the county?</li> <li>• What makes this property significant?</li> <li>• How would storage and aggregation rates be determined?</li> </ul>	

## Partnership Opportunities

One of the most valuable outcomes from the stakeholder feedback process has been the identification of area partners who would be interested in participating and supporting this project. These individuals and organizations expressed interest in working with the project in a variety of ways, such as direct partnership and shared programming, acting as liaisons, and using site resources in the future.

Below (Table 4) is a snapshot of some key partners that have expressed interest or willingness to be a part of this project.

**Table 4: Potential partners**

Potential partner	Key area	Opportunities
<b>WVFFC King Harvest CSA</b>	Aggregation	The Farm Site could be CSA pick up location, also storage site for area farms. Opportunity to provide storage/pickup facilities and facilitate consumer education.
<b>BridgeValley Community and Technical College</b>	Education	Interested in being an educational partner both through implementing current curriculum and through potentially developing new. Also interested in sites for growing hops/barley.
<b>Fayetteville CVB</b>	Agritourism	The farm would provide an opportunity to promote agritourism in Fayetteville. Could provide another venue for events and workshops in the area.
<b>WVU Tech</b>	Education and buyer	Interested in incorporating agriculture and recreation management into their curriculum. Farm could be hands-on site. Opportunity for service learning for students. Engineers and/or Business Students could be innovators in small farm technology. They could develop new technologies that could enable Appalachian small scale intensive farming, perhaps a capstone course. Coordinate with the start-up farm to table culinary program, provide product and teaching space at Whitlock Farm. Could also be a partner with aggregation and sales as a local buyer, area farms and Whitlock site could grow for WVU tech.
<b>New River Gorge RDA and the WV HIVE</b>	Education and farm support	Business coaches can provide support and training for area farms and new and beginning farmers.

<b>New River Gorge Learning Cooperative</b>	Education	Opportunity to use the farm as part of holistic conservation and agricultural education.
<b>Value Chain Cluster Initiative</b>	Education and farm support	Interested in helping organize trainings and events for existing and new farmers, could provide Technical Assistance and education to farms and participants.
<b>WVU Extension Service</b>	Education and farm support	Can help coordinate and organize trainings, can bring in WVU Extension specialists for events and workshops.
<b>Fayette County Schools</b>	Education and purchasing	Interested in sourcing more local food in schools, interested in purchasing. Could be a good opportunity to expand agriculture and hands on learning for CTE students. Also interested in hands-on elementary education opportunities.
<b>West Virginia Department of Agriculture</b>	Several	Happy to be part of the planning process. Interested in helping facilitate the project and offered to help with data collection and to make sure program does not overlap with other training programs.
<b>Mountaineer Foodbank</b>	Aggregation	Aggregation and staff who were able to work with partners to deliver/transport local food would be very helpful. Opportunity to purchase locally via new Farm to Foodbank Bill.
<b>KVC Behavioral Healthcare</b>	Education	Would like to include having an agriculture center as part of their programming, potential to offer classes on the farm site, have students complete apprenticeships on farm.
<b>Southern Appalachian Labor School</b>	Education	Could offer classes, interested in developing niche crops. Very interested in education not just for farms but for consumers as well.
<b>National Coal Heritage Area Authority</b>	Tourism	Interested in cross promotion, opportunities for shared tours/itineraries.
<b>New River Health Association</b>	Health and education	Interested in consumer education around food and health, opportunity to work with farms through “healthy prescription project.”
<b>Sprouting Farms</b>	Education	Interested in partnering with Whitlock either in a more connected way through shared management of crop

		production and/or educational programs, or as a partner site to place new graduating farmers from their program.
<b>Area Farms</b>	Aggregation and resources	Several farms indicated interest in using aggregation and storage facilities if they were available. Some indicated interest in renting land/space on the farm for their operations.
<b>Greenbrier Valley Grown</b>	Aggregation and Distribution	Integrating Fayette County Farmers—including those at Whitlock—into the southern West Virginia food distribution system
<b>WVU Tech</b>	Education and buyer	

**Other potential partners**

As the project moves forward, these relationships will be further explored and developed.

- WV State University Extension Service
- Minutemen Farmer’s Cooperative
- Greenbrier Valley Grown / Monroe Farm Market
- Refresh Appalachia
- West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition
- West Virginia Farmers Market Coalition
- Appalachian Sustainable Development
- City of Fayetteville
- Solar Holler
- New River Gorge Trail Alliance
- Fayette County Chamber of Commerce
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- WV Conservation Service
- New River Gorge Learning Cooperative
- Montgomery General Hospital
- Active Southern WV
- 30 Mile Meal – Fayette County
- Fayette County Family Resource Network
- Fayette County Farmers Market
- Area food buyers including but not limited to The Station, Secret Sandwich Society, The Depot, Cathedral Café and Pies and Pints.

## Proposed model

Currently, the Fayette County Farmland Protection Board owns the property. This situation presents a huge opportunity to craft a project that will focus on the public good and be a catalyst for increased investment in the region, while maintaining agricultural land. By maintaining ownership for the farm site, the team can ensure that the activities on the site align and address the needs and goals outlined by the community. The property is 84 acres situated adjacent to Route 16. Based on a site assessment and soil maps, around 10-15 acres are appropriate for crop production, 17-20 acres are well suited for grazing, 15-24 acres are best suited for habitat conservation, with 4-5 acres protected as a wetland, approximately 5-7 acres are appropriate for solar installations, approximately 2-2.5 acres surround the house and outbuildings, and another 2 acres front Route 16.

The property will be placed under conservation easement, which dictates the areas of the farm to be protected and included in a conservation plan designed to protect and preserve the property. When the project moves forward, a five year plan will be created for the Farmland Protection Board to fulfill the mandate of protecting the farmland and to also fulfil the goals of the Voluntary Farmland Protection Act; by supporting the farming community, providing increased access to agricultural products produced within the state, enhancing tourism, protecting worthwhile community values and landscapes, and fulfilling the desire of the County Commission to improve the economic, social and health landscapes in Fayette County.

The proposed model for the Whitlock Farm is based on the needs and input of a multi-stakeholder group, guided by the core project team. The Fayette County Resource Coordinator's Office will lead all aspects of project development. The Farmland Protection Board will maintain ownership of the property and lease the farm to the Fayette County Urban Renewal Authority (FCURA) for one dollar per-year for five-years. FCURA will manage all aspects of the property and assume all liability of property management. FCRCO will lead the fundraising and project implementation over a five-year period. After the first five years, FCRCO and Farmland Protection Board will negotiate a new lease and terms.

Figure 12 diagrams the key components of the project model, refer to the map in Figure 13 for details:

1. **Leased grazing land:** Intense rotational grazing will be implemented on the farm, with multiple-fenced pastures. Herds graze one portion of pasture, or a paddock, while allowing the others to recover. Resting grazed lands allows the vegetation to renew energy reserves, rebuild shoot systems, and deepen root systems, with the result being long-term maximum biomass production. Leasing will be made available for a variety of animals, including ruminants and non-ruminant herds.
2. **Education center:** Renovate main house to accommodate an educational center. Several entities have already expressed interest in utilizing the space for programming and education workshops. This space can also be rented out and used as an income stream to sustain the management of the farm.
3. **Leased crop and high tunnel space:** Open cropland will be rented on a quarter acre basis per year, allowing growers to rent as little or as much land needed for their respective operations.

High tunnels (greenhouses) will be rented on a 6-month basis to growers. High Tunnels will include nutrient rich soils, end walls, ventilation, electric, and water.

4. **Aggregation and storage facilities:** Several of the existing utility buildings will be converted into aggregation and cold storage facilities. This will include a cold storage area with shelving, warehouse-like storage and curing space, and easy access for deliveries and pick-ups. Space could be rented to users on a per-shelf basis as an income stream.
5. **Renewable energy project:** A solar development project is currently being assessed for development on the property. At a minimum, all energy use will be offset by the project.
6. **Conservation and recreations areas:** Certain locations on the property have been identified as key points of conservation. These areas include location of wetlands and areas not suitable for farming or development. These areas will be managed to create native plant habitat, which will have a positive impact on the farming operations. A trail route has been proposed to offer recreation and interpretive possibilities on the Whitlock Farm Property and there are opportunities to partner with existing bike trail projects in the region to connect the property to a larger recreational trail network.

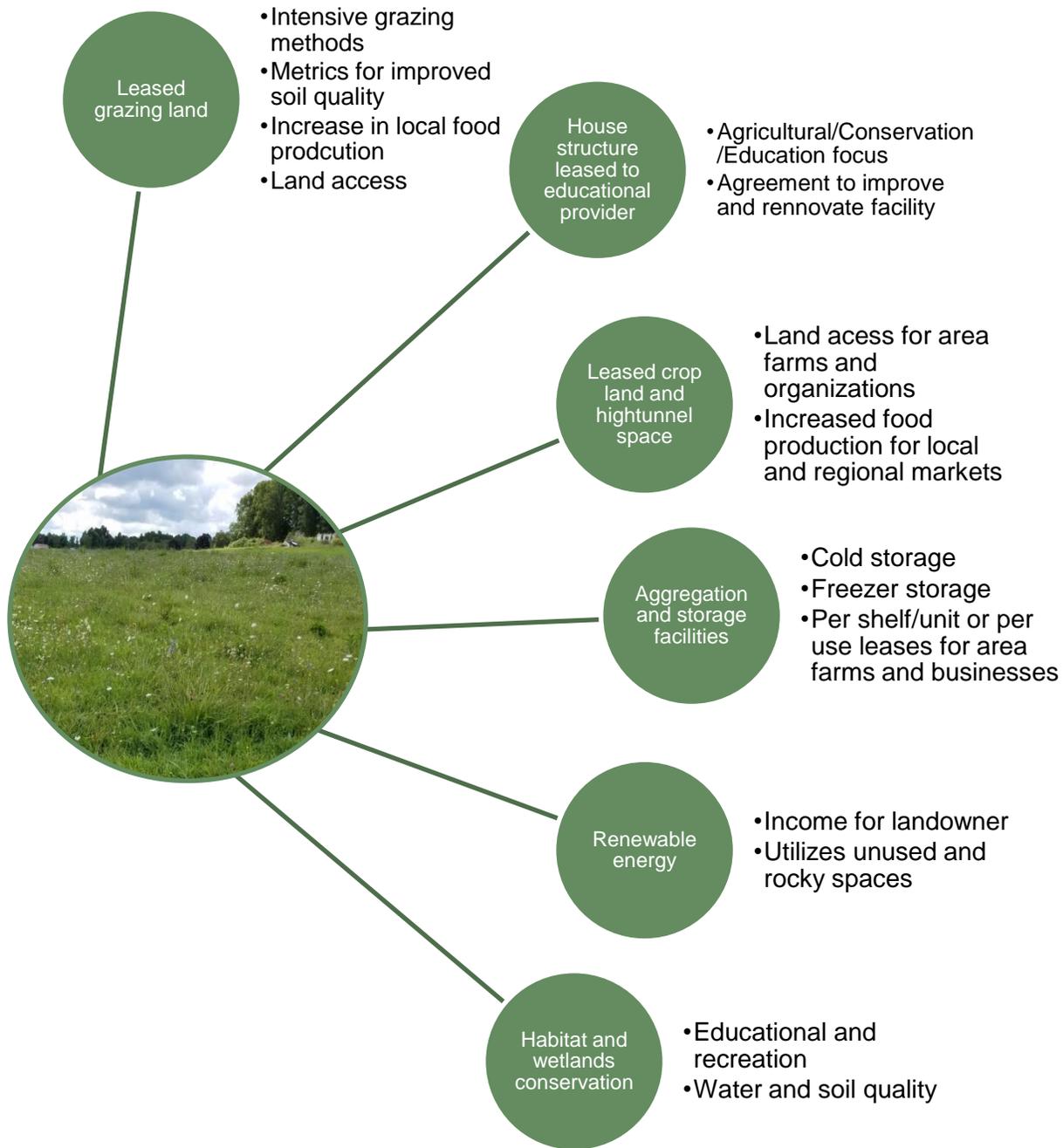


Figure 12: Whitlock project model

Project Map



Figure 13: Whitlock Farm development map

## Organizational structure

The Fayette County Urban Renewal Authority (FCURA) will play a key role in the project. FCURA would like to partner with the Farmland Protection Board (FCFPB) in developing the Whitlock Farm Project presented in this report. FCURA acknowledges that the Farmland Protection Board has limited capacity for property or program management. FCURA proposes to lease the Whitlock property from FCFPB for five years, at a rate of one-dollar per year. In exchange for this financial benefit to FCURA, FCURA will manage the maintenance of the property, oversee any contracts or leases required for program implementation, and will assume all legal liability during the lease term. Assuming the project is successful and grows over time, FCURA would look to extend the lease agreement after the initial five years. This partnership will significantly reduce the start-up costs for the project and allow the true value of a market lease to be used as a match in funding opportunities. In a time when matching dollars for farmland preservation have become extremely limited, this is an opportunity to leverage the maximum benefit of FCFPB's investment in the property. The programs described in this report will result in investments in the property that will increase its value, which represents long-term benefit to FCFPB. This innovative model could be replicated across the state, with Fayette County leading the way.

The start-up and implementation of any project takes a significant amount of time and effort. The team proposes a hybrid organizational model where the Farmland Protection Board retains ownership and leases the property to FCURA for one dollar per year for a lease term of five years. The Fayette County Resource Coordinator's office will implement and manage all facets of the Whitlock Farm project.

Keeping ownership and decision making authority within the County will allow local control and encourage local input in a way that selling the property or leasing it to an outside organization would likely discourage. Additionally, this will allow the team and county to begin lease arrangements for next year and potentially bring livestock or other lessees onto the farm this fall to recoup some costs already expended since the purchase of the property. This ownership and operating structure will be an important demonstration model for other county Farmland Protection Boards across the state, providing the leadership so desperately needed in our economy.

## Farm plan

A key component to the success of this project is the development, up front, of a plan that outlines the target goals for each component of this project. This will allow the landowner to review progress not only of physical aspects of the farm (fence built, renovations, soil quality, habitat protected, etc.) but also social and economic impacts of activity on the farm site. When the project moves forward, Fayette County Resource Coordinator's office will develop a farm and conservation management plan in collaboration with FCFPB and other project partners.

## Lease and partnership agreements

The team recommends that FCURA develop leases for all of the project components. These leases would adhere to the farm plan. These leases could either be awarded to entities based on their qualifications/mission (in the case of nonprofit organizations), or based on a competitive request for proposals that would weigh applicants on their interest and capacity to fulfil project requirements. This is a standard practice and has been used by public-private partnerships across the country. By using a model more often used in urban settings (publically owned buildings leased to private businesses i.e. public markets, historical buildings, restaurants, etc.) and modifying it to apply to the needs of a rural area, this team will be able to leverage and preserve the farmland resources available here and boost the social and economic impact of the project.

## Market for leases

As part of the outreach and partnership development process, the team has already identified several potential lessees for the Whitlock Farm project. Private businesses are not identified here for reasons of confidentiality.

**Grazing land:** The team has identified a business person that is interested in potentially leasing the property specifically for the purposes of managing it intensely to improve soil and pasture quality.

**Crop land:** The team has identified several potential lessees for the cropland. One candidate is the Sprouting Farms Production program currently based out of Summers County. They have an established system in place for leasing growing space and producing wholesale products in the excess space. As indicated in the market information section, they are working closely with regional distributors to increase volume of local wholesale product and would be interested in growing closer to some of the additional markets identified in the region. Additionally, several private businesses are interested in leasing additional growing space.

**House:** This structure could be leased either as a whole to an entity wishing to use the entire facility, or leased out in sections to interested parties. There are several educational providers that have expressed interest in the space along with the opportunities to lease the space for events. In the short term, even if a nonprofit or other entity was unable to commit, the landowner could renovate the house and use it for temporary event and vacation rental until an appropriate tenant was identified.

**Outbuildings:** The King Harvest Aggregated CSA in Fayette County has already expressed interest in using a cool storage and packing facility if it were available. The landowner could determine a per-use or per-season fee for weekly use. Additionally, several private businesses have expressed interest in renting space in cool storage locations if those facilities were available. There may also be an opportunity for partnership with the Food Bank. GVG would also be interested in expanding its operation and utilizing the site as a network aggregation point in the region.

## Other partnerships

**Wetlands/Habitat:** The Leadership Fayette County program that already operates out of the bird sanctuary in nearby Wolf Creek Park (also a county-owned property) could be a partner in using the wetlands areas. Natural Resource Conservation Service, West Virginia Conservation Agency, and others could be interested in restoring the wetland function onsite and providing buffer areas and planting.

**Recreation:** The farm site, trails and center could be connected to both Wolf Creek Park and upcoming bike trail development in the region.

## Finances and Impact

### Start-up costs

Start-up costs will be funded by grants and various philanthropic investments. These costs would cover all site development activity, programmatic implementation, equipment, supplies and staff support for three years.

Table 5: Start-up cost

Category	Cost	Description/Unit
<b>Site development</b>	\$45,000	Land clearing, well, road upgrades, and water lines
<b>Aggregation/storage/cooler</b>	\$55,000	Cold storage and aggregation space
<b>Fencing</b>	\$55,000	Deer fencing for crop area and standard fencing for grazing fields, portable electric fencing and charger(s)
<b>Education/office center</b>	\$75,000	Renovation to house for classroom and office
<b>Office/admin/events</b>	\$10,000	Supplies, utilities, equipment, and soil testing equipment
<b>Farm &amp; project manager</b>	\$112,815	Three-Year, \$30,000 full-time salary with fringe
<b>High Tunnels</b>	\$360,000	18 high tunnels installed over three years
<b>Part-time maintenance</b>	\$31,680	Three-year, \$11 per hour, 20 hours a week
<b>Grant administration (FCURA)</b>	\$40,000	5% of grant total, over three years
<b>Tractor/truck/equipment/compost</b>	\$65,000	Truck, tractor, walk-behind tractor, irrigation, and hand tools
<b>Insurance, utilities, etc.</b>	\$5,000	Year one utility and insurance costs
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$854,495</b>	

## Five year Proforma

Assuming a structure based on the start-up costs covered by grant and philanthropic investment detailed above, this project would be able to sustain itself after three years from site generated revenue. The proforma provides an estimate of profit and loss over a five-year period. These estimates are based on an optimistic scenario of project impact.

Listed below are the revenue generating source rates:

- Grazing: \$15 per acre/per month
- Cropland lease: \$10 per acre/per month
- High tunnel lease: \$35 per high tunnel/per month
- Aggregation and storage
  - Cold storage: \$5 per shelf per month
  - Freezer storage: \$5 per shelf per month
  - Processing and aggregation space: \$5 per shelf per pallet
- House rental: \$850 per month

Table 6: Pro forma summary

Proforma summary	Year 1 (2017)	Year 2 (2018)	Year 3 (2019)	Year 4 (2020)	Year 5 (2021)
<b>Income</b>					
Grazing lease	\$1,200	\$1,980	\$2,475	\$3,300	\$3,300
Crop land lease	\$200	\$960	\$1,200	\$1,800	\$6,300
High tunnel lease	\$840	\$1,680	\$6,300	\$5,670	\$6,480
Aggregation and storage	\$890	\$1,155	\$3,580	\$3,580	\$3,580
House rental	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$10,200	\$10,200	\$10,200
Program surplus*				\$37,360	\$32,030
<b>Total Income</b>	\$13,620	\$16,530	\$27,335	\$65,490	\$65,470
<b>Expense</b>					
Rental property management supplies	-	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,800	\$1,000

<b>Aggregation facility management</b>	-	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,200	\$1,200
<b>Utilities (water/electric)</b>	-	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
<b>Misc. supplies</b>	-	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
<b>Land maintenance</b>	-	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$2,880	\$2,880
<b>Part time land/farm manager 20 hours a week @ \$11 per hour</b>	-	-	-	\$18,000	\$18,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	-	<b>\$7,000.00</b>	<b>\$7,500.00</b>	<b>\$29,880.00</b>	<b>\$29,080.00</b>
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>\$12,730.00</b>	<b>\$8,375.00</b>	<b>\$16,255.00</b>	<b>\$32,030.00</b>	<b>\$32,810.00</b>

\*Surplus is based on the revenue generated during a three-year grant period. Saving the revenue generated for each grant year, which will fund subsequent years of operations on site.

While the profits to the county for operating a program like that would not be large, by leveraging the initial investment to build a trust to subsidize operating expenses after year three the program can be made sustainable. Additionally, the benefits of a project like this would reach far beyond the profits generated. Shown in Table 7 are the estimated revenue generated from farming operations if the site was leased as projected.

**Table 7 : Economic production impacts - lessees**

<b>Economic production impacts of lessees</b>	<b>Year 1 (2017)</b>	<b>Year 2 (2018)</b>	<b>Year 3 (2019)</b>	<b>Year 4 (2020)</b>	<b>Year 5 (2021)</b>
<b>High tunnel estimated revenue*</b>	\$28,000	\$105,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$28,000
<b>Cropland estimated Farmer revenue**</b>	\$88,000	\$110,000	\$165,000	\$165,000	\$88,000
<b>Pasture estimated Farmer revenue***</b>	\$30,480	\$38,100	\$50,800	\$50,800	\$30,480

\*Production impacts estimated by amount of land/pasture rented X the average production income per acre by production type.

Impacts related to project goals not included above:

**Table 8: Additional impacts**

<b>Indicator</b>	
<b>Quality of soils on the farm</b>	Measured through soil tests
<b>Quality of forage on the farm</b>	Forage tests
<b>Amount of \$ saved by renewable installation</b>	Savings to county buildings on energy costs
<b>Number of producers utilizing aggregation facilities</b>	Producers able to provide better quality product, and/or expand
<b>Number of producers expanding their business due to the available resources</b>	Producers expanding production
<b>Number of animals produced on the farm</b>	Quality of the pasture and farmer technique
<b>Number of new producers in the region</b>	Farm and educational resources effective
<b>Pounds of local produce in local schools/institutions</b>	Healthy/local food going to children
<b>Amount of produce sales originating from the farm</b>	Amount of revenue and taxes generated by farm activity
<b>Number of workshops/events on the farm</b>	Producers and community learning
<b>Increased diversity of flora and fauna</b>	

If the county retains ownership, some of the initial start-up costs for the programming can be passed onto entities utilizing the individual spaces. This model also allows for efficiencies: a lessee may already have equipment, skill, and business structures established, and would have a lower cost to complete the same task than if the landowner started a new organization.

## Potential impact

The breakdown of the farm site allows each individual component to be addressed either by the project itself or through lease and/or partnership agreements.

Component	Description	Potential Impact & Goals
<b>Land access</b>	Acres available for crops and livestock	Increase in food production and new farmers.
<b>Education – Work with partners to develop a program that addresses:</b>	<b>Farm businesses:</b> Work with service providers and area partners to provide educational workshops to area farms.  <b>New and beginning farms:</b> Continue exploring partnerships with WVU Tech/ BridgeValley for developing accredited programming on site.	Support area farms and businesses through assistance with business plans, farm business and good management skills.
	<b>Community nutrition and conservation:</b> Community food preparation, potential garden education site. Potential for environmental and conservation education for farms.	Community participation and education. Increases in human and environmental health.
<b>Aggregation, storage, and potential facility</b>	Cooler space for produce storage, aggregation site for CSA, potential preparation facility.	Support and enhance existing aggregation efforts, create the potential for accessing wholesale markets. Pickup site for regional food aggregation.
<b>Agritourism and ecotourism</b>	Connect to existing trails and activities, become a gathering place and/or refreshment location. Become local pick up site for CSA baskets.	Tourists and community have a local location and environment to interact with food.
	Pair programming with cultural, outdoor, and heritage programming. Farm is example of innovative conservation practices.	Tourists and community learning about regional heritage, food and conservation.
	Potential facility for community events, educational events, workshops, etc.	Tourists and community have location for events, also potential income recovery for project.

## Timeline and Phases

Based on partner interest, the team has narrowed the project scope to two key focus areas: existing farmer support and integrating the farm into the community. The phases below provide an example of the activities that a new organization could complete to meet the stated goals.

### **Phase 1: Focus on existing farmer support (years 1-2)**

- Develop Farm Plan
- Formalize partnerships
- Public outreach; open house
- Fence cropland and grazing areas
- Build 10 high tunnels and access infrastructure
- Lease cropland and high tunnels
- Lease grazing areas
- Build fence around sensitive areas and crops
- Explore solar installation potential
- Construct cold storage in one of the outbuildings
- Renovate house for education center, begin leasing
- Annual soil and forage testing
- Hold community education events
- Integrate site into existing aggregation and distribution network with GVG
- Develop a strategic plan

### **Phase 2: Integrate the community (years 3-5)**

- Update strategic plan
- Lease additional cropland
- Lease grazing areas
- Solar installation potential
- Renovate remaining outbuildings into freezer, cold storage, and packing space
- Annual soil and forage testing
- Build up to 15 additional tunnels if needed
- Integration into existing educational programming
- Events at the space
- Annual assessments of each lessee
- Evaluation

A phased approach will allow the project to develop holistically based on the community needs and demand. The project hopes to have a vision for the future but remain flexible to changing needs and environments. This approach also allows for the development of new partnerships and business opportunities that may arise in the future.

## Next steps

The project team is currently exploring funding options for this project and continuing to work with partners to develop the relationships and partnerships needed to launch a project like this. Specific tasks include:

1. Form partnership with Farmland Protection Board and finalize 5-year lease agreement with FCURA
2. Develop foundational support and funding
3. Solidify partnerships and roles
4. Outreach to producers interested in utilizing farm resources
5. Develop and submit ARC POWER application
6. Develop the Farm Management Plan
7. Develop lease agreements

More stakeholder feedback will be conducted in the near future. If you are interested in learning more about the project, have comments or concerns about the proposed model, or would like to get involved please be in touch!

### **More info:**

The project team is made up of representatives from the Fayette County Resource Coordinator's Office, Fayette County Urban Renewal Authority, Fayette County Farmland Protection, Fayette County Commission, West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition, New River Gorge Regional Development Authority, hired consultants Downstream Strategies, and concerned community members and farmers.

### **Questions?**

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