

Anderson Farm Center

Anderson Farm County Park, Oregon, Wisconsin



Strategic Concept Paper: 2021 – 2025

June 16, 2021

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Background

Overview.

The Anderson Farm Center is a concept connected to the 300-acre Anderson Farm County Park. The Park is located at 914 Union Road, Oregon, WI 53575. The farm center is located at 805 Union Road. Established in 2014, the park's master plan includes an agricultural mission along with other traditional functions of a park. Dane County Parks (DCP) Department operates 26 recreational parks and two other parks (Silverwood and Schumacher) have an agricultural mission.

Anderson Farm County Park is also supported by a local volunteer group-Anderson Park Friends, Inc. (2021 membership: 176 people) that works closely with DCP. The Friends group is active in forest restoration, community/food pantry gardens, prairie building, citizen research projects and other activities. Over 3,300 hours of volunteer effort were completed in 2020 to develop and/or maintain park functions and features.

Approximately 70 acres of farmland is identified in the master plan for a market farm, farm learning, and interpretation. The current concept of a farm center is focused primarily on approximately 35 acres of farmland that is west of Union Road. Additional land on the east side of Union Road is also designated for agricultural activities.

The center concept includes two major components: a farm and a 5-bedroom farmhouse. The community and food pantry gardens are a part of the "farm center" concept.

Most of the agricultural land is leased to a local farmer and is used to raise soybeans, corn, and/or alfalfa. The lease allows, with enough advance notice, for DCP to remove acreage from the lease. Twelve acres were removed in 2019 to start the community and food pantry gardens.

Need for a Farm Center.

This project will address two current needs experienced in Dane County. There is a need by citizens for more, locally produced, fresh produce to improve their diets. In addition, there is a need for a local resource to support people interested in becoming a farmer and/or market grower.

Fresh Produce.

A primary need exists in Dane County for more fresh produce so citizens, restaurants, schools, hospitals, and businesses can improve their respective diets and/or nutrition programs. UW-Extension surveys report "only 23% of Wisconsin adults and 20% of high school students consumed the recommended five or more fruit and vegetables per day." While influences on consumer food choices are complex, it is clear not everyone has the same opportunities to "access and choose healthy foods." In addition, a hard trend exists for an increasing consumer demand for fresh produce certified as organic.

Needs of New Farmers.

A huge transition of farmers is occurring baby boomer farmers are retiring. Corporate farms do not meet the local need for economical, organic, fresh produce. Major barriers exist for agricultural students and others to start a career in agriculture. New farmers have different needs than established farmers. Beginning farmers often lack the land, large agricultural equipment, and capital to create a scale of operation. These resources are required to make a profit with high-cost technologies and production systems that are rely on the focus of many research and education programs. In addition, it is hard to find land for sale or lease at reasonable rates and provides stable, long-term land tenure for growers.

The cost of land, equipment, and infrastructure (wells, irrigation systems, pack sheds, storage space) is steep, and financing/interest drains valuable resources. Large loans are usually needed for these situations.

The Anderson Farm Center, when operational, will partially address some of these challenges. Many young people interested in agriculture compare the challenges to other careers and decide on non-agricultural careers. A collaborative, supportive concept, will mitigate some of the challenges and provide encouragement to new growers. The farm center is designed to “jump-start” a new generation of farmers interested in “small scale” farming. They need access to land, equipment (tractors), buildings (food prep and storage), and technical expertise. This 35-acre farm will help overcome these barriers by creating a farm center on public park land. Small scale farming, based on a collaborative concept like the center offers the potential for excellent incomes and profit. The farm center could support 5-10 new small businesses. This concept aligns with the small business/entrepreneurial strategies currently used by Dane County.

The intent of this document is to guide planning for the future. Situations may change and new considerations may lead to revisions discussed in the document.

Background Master Plan vs. Current Situation

Master Plan.

Within the park’s master plan, approximately 70 acres of land are identified for agriculture. The two primary concepts discussed in the plan are listed below.

1. Market Garden Farm (Small (.25 acre) and large plots (3-8 acres)

Leased market farm plots, available in a range of sizes, to be made available to individuals and groups looking to establish small scale or "start-up" farming operations.

2. Agricultural research, demonstration plots, farm history, and interpretative area

Current Situation.

Several components of the farm center were implemented in 2019 and 2020 and consist of the following:

- 1. Community Garden Plots (Medium Size Plots-.25 acres)** Plots are eased to individuals during the growing season. UW-Extension has a contract with Rooted (non-profit organization) to plan and oversee the community gardens to improve land access and create economic opportunity for underserved populations lacking prospects for stable land tenure and integration with the local food system.
- 2. Food Pantry Garden (.5 acre)** Anderson Park Friends, Inc. currently leases about .5 acres of land to grow vegetables for food pantries in Oregon, Belleville, and Verona. Future plans call for expansion of the size and increased varieties of vegetables, including potential fruit like raspberries and blueberries. A hoop house is a future option.
- 3. 805 Farmhouse** The 5-bedroom farmhouse is vacant and has not been used since 2014. APF uses the double car garage and basement for storage of equipment. The house is used in the fall for temporary storage of vegetables before they are distributed to pantries. The 1.5 acres of lawn is maintained by DCP, APF, and the Town of Oregon. DCP will assume the township contracted duties in 2022. The community and food pantry gardens are adjacent to the farmhouse.

Community Orchard.

Current Anderson Farm County Park dog park plans call for developing a “community orchard” across from the farm center, adjacent to the dog park parking area. The dog park is scheduled to open in October 2021. The concept will be explored in 2023.

Farm Assets.

Some agricultural assets are currently available to the farm center and used to support the community and food pantry gardens. Buildings, irrigations, and other equipment will need to be added in the future. Dane County is providing the land for the farm center.

Agricultural Well.

An agricultural well was installed on June 4, 2021, and will support future agricultural activities. The current residential well is separate and is currently used to support the farmhouse as well as the community and food pantry gardens. Upon the installation of the irrigation system, the market growers, community, and food pantry gardens will use the agricultural well.

Strategy Framework

Strategy #1: Formal Planning. Formal plans will be used to plan and expand the agricultural activities. A business plan will integrate a farm employee(s) with the use of farm assets to develop and operate the center. A site plan of plots and infrastructure and a map of assets are key documents needed by this strategy.

Strategy #2: Incremental Approach. The 35-acre farm center will be created using an incremental timeframe and supported by private and public funding. A five-year plan will grow the scope of the farm while focusing on organic and sustainable agriculture. The certification of growers will need to be explored due to strict regulations.

Strategy #3: Leased Market Farm Plots.

Leased market farm plots made available, year-round, to individuals and/or groups via long-term leases looking to establish a small scale or "start-up" farming operation. It is assumed, lessees can grow agricultural products for sale and make a profit. The farm center is not envisioned to be a "point of sale" location.

Strategy #4: Varied Plot Sizes. New market garden plots will be of various sizes to match the interests of multiple types of farmers/growers. The potential distribution of plots will be:

| | | | |
|--------------|-----|----------------|-----|
| ¼ acre plots | 15% | 1-acre plots | 60% |
| ½ acre plots | 15% | 2-3-acre plots | 10% |

The above allocation does not include the community and food pantry gardens.

Farm Center Basic Calendar.

| 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| A. Created 23 community gardens (12 acres) | A. Continue 23 community gardens | A. Install an irrigation system |
| B. Expanded local food pantry garden to .5 acre | B. Continue local food pantry garden; increase output 100% | B. Expand storage for gardens and growers |
| C. Expanded the number of assets | C. Install a new agricultural well | G. Plant food pantry fruits & asparagus |
| D. Expanded the number of manual tools | D. Continue residential water supply to gardens | |
| | E. Prepare small areas for food pantry fruits & asparagus | |
| | F. Increase funding for an irrigation system | |

Note: A one-page summary of 2021 activities, goals, and outcomes is included in the appendix.

Phase 1: Community & Food Pantry Gardens

Critical Areas & 2021-2022 Goals

Develop a five-year farm center plan to implement the vision. This includes a business plan and site map.

GOALS

- A. Write business and fiscal plans in 2021 and 2022
- B. Community gardens: Continue to lease and support 23 gardens
- C. Food pantry garden: In 2021, use .5-acre garden and expand the variety of vegetables. Prepare soil for fruit and asparagus expansion in 2022. In 2022, continue the .5-acre garden and plant fruits and asparagus.
- D. Small grower pilot: In 2022, lease land and support 1-3 market growers, Expand the number of market growers in 2023
- E. In 2021, increase funding for an irrigation system. In 2022, install irrigation system

Challenges (Priority Order)

1. We need adequate fiscal support to build infrastructure and sustain operations
2. We need a source of water to attract growers interested in a 2–5-acre plot
3. Who are the growers? Where in southern Dane County do, they live?
4. We may have a deer problem and growers may want some fencing to keep deer out of the growing areas.
5. We need to be mindful of current and future markets where small growers can sell their produce and/or products.

Critical Area #1 – Pack Shed & Storage

GOALS

- A. Develop a temporary pack shed for use during 2022 or 2023. Develop specifications for a permanent pack shed.
- B. Develop a written document for a facility vision and site plan. Site plan should also attempt to identify potential locations/layout for future permanent infrastructure including buildings, parking, circulation of traffic and access to plots (i.e., access roads, lanes, pathways, etc.) and stormwater facilities (if needed).
- C. Conduct planning activities to explore the establishment of a deer fence, temporary food packing building/storage for growers, and winter storage for community gardens.
- D. Determine partner capacities and budgets to operate and maintain facilities. An agreement will need to be reached among all parties before additional facilities or infrastructure is added to the site.

Critical Area #2 – Irrigation System

GOALS

- A. Develop an underground irrigation system in two phases. Phase 1 is to supply water to the current community gardens and food pantry garden-area north and west of the house; Phase 2 is to supply water to the 25 acres south of the house.
- B. Determine partner capacities and budgets to operate and maintain the irrigation system. An agreement will need to be reached among all parties before an irrigation system is installed.

Critical Area #3 – FISCAL STABILITY

GOALS

- A. Develop a fiscal plan to include potential public and private sources of revenue. The plan will outline fiscal requirements (leases) of all growers and additional fees (i.e., plots, water usage, tilling, cover crop support). The fiscal strategy will explore the support a part-time farm manager/coordinator for the entire farm center.
- B. Secure an increased, minimum, level of future support from Dane County.
- C. Develop a “coordinated” grant proposal strategy among the partners for Wisconsin foundations and corporations. All partners will contribute staff time to this effort.
- D. There is a potential opportunity to use donated labor and supplies to reduce costs. This includes the construction of buildings and/or assets from Operation Fresh Start, private contractors, unions, Madison College, Habitat for Humanity, and/or a combination of the above.

Critical Area #4 – 805 HOUSE LONG-TERM PLAN

Goals

- Develop a house vision and plan that explores the upgrading and modernizing it to support a farm manager (as a resident and a small office).

Agricultural Input Committee.

Interested stakeholders will be invited in fall/winter 2021 from various community groups from the Oregon-Brooklyn area and southern Dane County to comment on future strategies and goals. The intent is to bring together farmers, business leaders, elected officials, and representatives of various community nonprofit organizations to provide input into the transition from the Master plan to an operational farm center. Staff from the Dane County Parks department will support and co-facilitate the committee.

Phase 2: Long-term Perspective-2023 and Beyond

GOAL

- Develop two permanent farm buildings (pack shed and tool shed) to support the farm center. (These buildings will be a key part of a long-term viability of the center.)

Building #1. A pack shed will need to have:

- Potential Size of Building: 1) 30 by 40 feet, 2) 24 by 36 feet
- Concrete foundation
- Commercial plumbing service and connections to the agricultural well and mound system (Separate from the residential service)
- Commercial standard electrical service to the building
- Bathroom with sink and shower; change clothing area
- Storage space (store equipment over winter) for equipment and supplies
- Food prep space (2 stations) including an overhead water supply for sprayers and stainless-steel sinks, counters, and grid tables
- Space for extra food prep equipment (i.e., lettuce spinner)
- Walk-in coolers for storing vegetables. Access to a cooler is important; shared (private or public) cooler space are potential options.
- Industrial shelving for support and operations of growers, leasees, and APF.
- Need an outdoor patio area (with a concrete floor and roof) for a food prep area and a gathering area during inclement weather
- High garage door for tractors and other farm equipment

Note: The building will be used by growers and the community and APF food pantry gardens.

Building #2. A tool shed will need to have:

- Space for farm equipment during the growing season
- Storage of internal plot irrigation equipment
- Storage of equipment through the winter
- Storage of AFP assets and equipment

Fiscal Plan.

- Develop a fiscal plan that will include start-up and continuing operational costs, including a farm manager
- Develop a plan that will be mutually supported by the Dane County, partners and the leasees.

Potential Equipment Needs. The center will need additional equipment:

- 2-Wheel Tractor
- Accessories for 2-Wheel Tractor
- Food prep equipment (shared)
- Additional cooler and/or freezer space

Hoop House or High Tunnel. The questions about using a hoop house or high tunnel at the center include:

- How many are appropriate for the site?
- Should they be privately or publicly owned?
- What happens after the lease has expired, who (DCP or the grower) owns it?
- Where should they be located? Two options include: Option 1) Locate next to their land, Option 2) Locate in a centralized area.
- Should growers be required to take off plastic each year?

Sustainability

The topic of sustainability has been discussed throughout 2019 and 2020. Limited activities have occurred because of limited resources and other priorities by DCP. More discussion is needed about the following:

- A. Farm manager
- B. Operational costs of the farm center
- C. Start-up costs for the farm center and market growers
- D. Future role of DCP
- E. Future role of APF
- F. Future role of a contracted organization: Rooted WI is the current 2022-2023 contractor.

Future Considerations

Although referenced in the 2013 master plan, the planning group felt that the farm education activities and agricultural demonstration plots referenced on page four are not feasible at this time due to staff and fiscal constraints. Some farm history information will be included in park information signs scheduled to be installed in the fall of 2021.

Anderson Farm Center – Basic Planner *(Draft-01-05-21)*

Note: In 2021, the “farm” consists of community gardens and food pantry gardens.

| RESOURCES → | 2021 ACTIVITIES → | 2021 OUTPUTS → | Short-Term Outcomes (2021)→ | Medium Term Outcomes → (2022) Tentative | Long Term Outcomes (2023) Tentative |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dane County (Whole) 2. Dane Co. Parks Staff 3. Dane Co. Ext. Staff 4. APF Board & Members (139) 5. Rooted Staff 6. Town of Oregon 7. Land (40 acres) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Community Plots b. Food P. Gardens (2) c. Other acreage 8. Well (Old) 9. Well (New) 10. 805 House & Garage 11. Oregon Area Food Pantry 12. Kopke’s Greenhouse 13. Oregon High School 14. Fitchburg Farms 15. Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens 16. Dane Co. Grants <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Friends b. Foundation for DCP c. Other grants 17. Grants- Foundations & Corporations 18. Public Budgets 19. Private Donor(s) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Gardens <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Planning b. Leases c. Soil prep d. Maintain plots (23) e. Grass/weed control f. Planting g. On-going maintenance 2. Food Pantry Gardens (2) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Planning b. Soil prep c. Planting d. Weeding e. Harvesting f. Delivery of produce g. Recruit volunteers h. Manage volunteers 3. Maintain 805 house <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cut grass b. Trim around trees c. Remove weeds d. Security 4. Install a new Ag Well 5. Install a new Irrigation System (full or partial)-? 6. Water tanks 7. Local fundraising 8. Apply for grants | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of community gardens maintained 2. Pounds of food from community and pantry gardens 3. # of fresh produce items from Pantry Garden 4. Completed Ag well 5. Completed Irrigation System-? 6. # of volunteer hours <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Comm. gardens b. Food P. gardens 7. Number of times to cut grass & weeds 8. Number of pantries served by pantry gardens 9. Number of Hmong families served 10. Number of hours of contracted services 11. Number of hours of Rooted staff time 12. Completion of 4-6 pages of a written plan-2022-2023 13. Pounds of alfalfa-hay for Aaron Shottliss | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustain number of 2020 gardens used - completed 2. Increased pounds of food delivered to food pantries (3) 3. Increased amount of fresh produce for pantries (3) 4. Improved diet of pantry participants. 5. Increased access to water for gardeners 6. Completed AG site map & plan 7. Increased \$ in 2022 Dane County Budget 8. Increased number of volunteer hours 9. Increased amount of money raised by local fundraising 10. Increased amount of money raised via grants 11. Obtain approval of 2022-2023 plan and funding by DCP & Dane Co. Extension | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the number of larger (2-5 acres) growers 2. Increase the amount of interior food preparation space for medium & large growers. 3. Increase the amount of space for “extended season growing” (High tunnels or hoop houses) 4. Increase the amount of interior storage space for small growers (0.25 acres) 5. Increase the amount of food prep equipment available for growers. 6. Increase amount of space for perennials-asparagus, berries, etc. 7. Increase pounds of food delivered to food pantries (3) 8. Increase overall budget for both community and pantry gardens 9. Increase the knowledge of K-12 students about agriculture careers. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain the number of larger (2-5 acres) growers 2. Maintain the amount of interior food preparation space for medium & large growers. 3. Maintain the amount of space for “extended season growing” (High tunnels or hoop houses) 4. Maintain the amount of interior storage space for small growers (0.25 acres) 5. Maintain the amount of food prep equipment available for growers. 6. Maintain amount of space for perennials-asparagus, berries, etc. 7. Maintain pounds of food delivered to food pantries (3) 8. Maintain overall budget for both community and pantry gardens 9. Increase the knowledge of K-12 students about agriculture careers. |

Community & Food Gardens Site Map (March 2021)



Star: New agricultural well, installed.

Anderson Farm Center, 805 Union Road, Oregon, WI 53575