

Stakeholder Discovery Report:

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In this Report:

- Summary of the workshop's premise
- Participant feedback synthesized and visualized
- Consultant analysis
 - Recommendations for current development project(s)
 - Recommendations for improving communication of programming
 - Recommendations for future stakeholder discovery and input sessions

About the Discovery Workshop | Summary

Goals:

The workshop was attended by roughly 30 people in August of 2024. These attendees were grassroots leaders from communities across Michigan, including Mundy Township, Marshall, Big Rapids, and Detroiters for Tax Justice representatives. The goal of hosting the workshop was to:

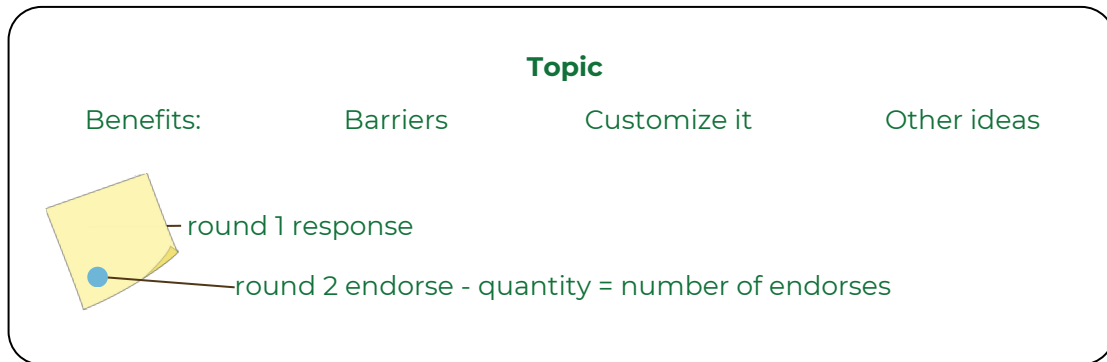
- Educate grassroots stakeholders on EDRA of MI's programming
- Elicit specific feedback about EDRA of MI's development proposals.

Format:

- Presentation of EDRA of MI's proposed development alternatives, specifically:
 - Regenerative Agriculture Montessori Schools
 - Food & Fiber Hubs
 - Local Folk Festivals
 - Community Farm Stores
- Workshop round 1:
 - Attendees presented with eight boards - two boards dedicated to each of the four development alternatives - attendees responded with sticky-notes
 - What benefits and opportunities are presented with this development?
 - What barriers exist with this development?
 - How might you customize this development it for your community?
 - What other ideas can you provide to enhance this development?
 - ***Responses were color coated by community (Marshall & Big Rapids = yellow, Mundy Township & Swartz Creek = pink, Detroit = gray)
- Workshop round 2:
 - During the second round, attendees were given stickers to place on others' post-it notes they wished to endorse.

See next page for images of workshop boards

Workshop | Images



Color-coated Key: which community provided original response



Marshall & Big Rapids

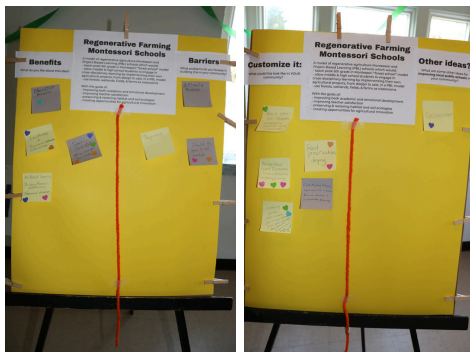


Mundy Township & Swartz Creek

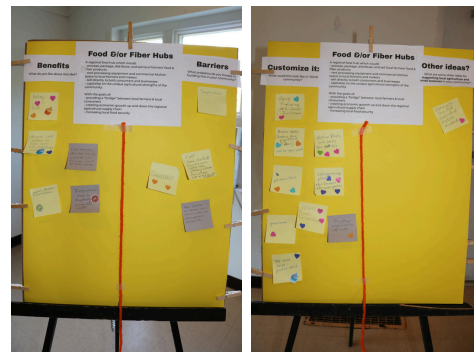


Detroit

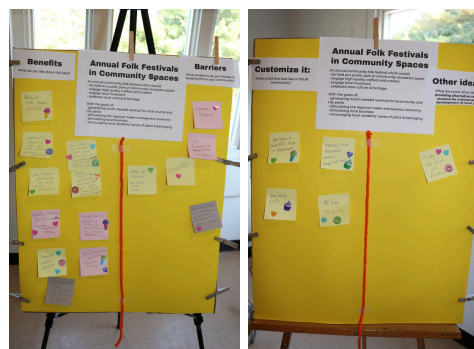
Regenerative Farming Montessori Schools



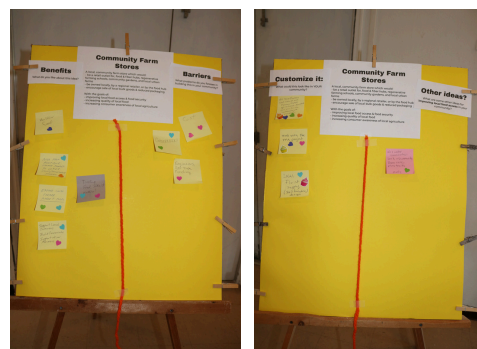
Food & Fiber Hubs



Annual Folk Festivals in Community Spaces



Community Farm Stores



A model of regenerative agriculture Montessori and Project-Based Learning (PBL) schools that would:

- teach preK-5th grade in Montessori “forest school” model
- allow middle & high school students to engage in
- cross-disciplinary learning by implementing their own agricultural projects, from design to sale, in a PBL model
- use forests, wetlands, fields, & farms as classrooms

With the goals of:

- improving both academic and emotional development
- improving teacher satisfaction
- preserving & restoring habitat and soil ecologies
- creating opportunities for agricultural innovation

Benefits:

- Strong education process
- Leadership and business-related edu
- Teaches youth that edu can positively effect your life
- On-hand learning
- Building personal relationships
- Teamwork mindset

Barriers

- Will be a long process to launch
- Transportation for students
- Should be open to all models

Customize it

- Build upon the 4H programming to deeper curriculum
- Implement home econ, gardening, and farming classes
- Food preservation drying classes
- Expand curriculum to sustainable economy themes
- Community gardens to grow own food and foster pride

Other ideas

- Government included in model/creation of programming

Participant Feedback | Food & Fiber Hubs

A regional food hub which would:

- process, package, distribute, and sell local farmers' food & fiber products
- rent processing equipment and commercial kitchen space to local farmers and makers
- sell directly to both consumers and businesses
- capitalize on the unique agricultural strengths of the community

With the goals of:

- providing a "bridge" between local farmers & local consumers
- creating economic growth up and down the regional agricultural supply chain
- increasing local food security

Benefits:

- Healthy and fresh
- Promoted local farms to buy into fiber/food hub
- Level community investment to fill in gaps of the private for-profit investment with public moneys
- Improve food chain distribution
- Strengthens environmental health

Barriers

- Government
- Cost - farmers markets are now more costly than grocery stores
- Need stronger connection between rural production centers and urban population consumer hubs

Customize it

- Dairy processing - milk, cheese, ice cream
- Deer processing to reduce population year-round
- Native plants and seeds for sale
- Permaculture
- Seed processing
- Full production hemp farms
- Greenhouses
- Help small farms process meet
- Strengthen local practices

Other ideas

- Community farm plots
- Individual farm plots for families/households

Participant Feedback |

Annual Folk Festivals in Community Spaces

An annual community folk festival which would:

- be held at a public park or community recreation space
- engage high quality crafters and makers
- engage local musicians
- celebrate local culture & heritage

With the goals of:

- generating much-needed revenue for local county and city parks
- stimulating the regional maker-entrepreneur economy
- stimulating local business
- encouraging local residents' sense of place & belonging

Benefits:

- Network with other growers
- Integrate events into schools & 4H
- Use school properties to host
- Host at farm sites to show where food is grown
- U-pick flower arrangements
- More human interaction, less tech
- Local parks and mega-sites as venues
- Renaissance festival
- Concert venues
- Improves mental health
- Unique enrichment

Barriers

- Human green
- 4th industrial revolution
- 15-minute cities
- Government
- Fear of nature, animals, and bugs
- Urban disinvestment spills over to rural areas

Customize it

- Use of river in Marshal
- Canoes and kayak rentals
- Hiking trails
- Bike rentals

Other ideas

- Less focus on alcohol

Participant Feedback | Community Farm Stores

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- generating much-needed revenue for local county and city parks
- stimulating the regional maker-entrepreneur economy
- stimulating local business
- encouraging local residents' sense of place & belonging

Benefits:

- Healthier food
- Shift from boutique farmers markets to lower cost/affordable model
- Expand local farmers market model
- Treating food like it matters
- Supporting local growers
- Build community
- Support other farmers

Barriers

- Cost
- Government
- Regulations/red tape
- Funding

Customize it

- Local farmers will join and understand the community win-win
- Work with the Future Farmers of America project(s)
- Local florist supply for a sustainable design model

Other ideas

- Air and water conservation park with community farm store and trails

Participant Feedback | Summary

Regenerative Farming Montessori Schools

- Key Benefits: Increased access to project-based learning, potential for sustainable agriculture education.
- Key Barriers: Funding gaps for building infrastructure; regulatory hurdles in integrating farm schools into local districts.
- Customization: Partnering with local FFA chapters and existing school programs.
- Other Ideas: Using unused land for agricultural co-ops.

Food & Fiber Hubs

- Key Benefits: Creation of local jobs and support for small-scale farmers.
- Key Barriers: High initial costs for establishing hubs; competition with existing supply chains.
- Customization: Community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs and partnerships with local growers.
- Other Ideas: Integrating air and water conservation efforts into hub designs.

Annual Folk Festivals in Community Spaces


- Key Benefits: Opportunity to create natural spaces that align with community recreation needs.
- Key Barriers: Securing large tracts of land; ensuring ongoing maintenance funding.
- Customization: Habitat parks tailored to host multi-use festivals and educational events.
- Other Ideas: Expanding Marshall's proposal for a state park as a model for other communities.

Community Farm Stores


- Key Benefits: Boosting the local economy and showcasing Michigan-made goods.
- Key Barriers: Logistics of retail space and ensuring affordability for vendors.
- Customization: Retail corridors designed around Habitat Parks to drive foot traffic.
- Other Ideas: Seasonal pop-up shops to test market viability.


Community alignment

 Strong interest in curriculum relating to local growing


 Would like to see varying models and sustainability


 NA


 Healthy foods, variety of practices, local resources


 Strengthen partnerships and the rural/urban divide

 NA


 Utilizing natural resources for alternative engagements

 Open to this new model for enrichment

 Integrating current event models into unused areas

 Localize and flip current farmers market model

 Food first mindset

 Overarching environmental components

Consultant Analysis | Recommendations

Project Design Improvements

- Leverage existing community assets, such as FFA programs, 4H, and local festivals, to pilot initiatives
 - This allows the “piggybacking” of your programs onto existing success rather than reinventing the wheel at the beginning.
 - Show iterations of current and past successful programs to provide proof of concept for your programs.
- Emphasize multifunctional designs, like Habitat Parks that integrate festivals, retail, and conservation.
 - Provide benchmarking on similar models of artisan/maker/produce markets and spaces that are year-round to show sustainability.

Communication Strategies

- Simplify technical language in EDRA’s presentations to resonate with grassroots audiences.
- Incorporate testimonials and case studies into outreach materials to demonstrate feasibility.
 - Interview local influencers of change and collect quotes.
- Develop visuals and infographics that highlight community benefits and economic impacts.
 - Cite images to show local relevance
 - Provide simplified charts and models to explain local and regional agriculture and environmental models, emphasizing the need to shift and potential consequences.

Future Stakeholder Engagement

- Launch online surveys to gather input from a broader range of stakeholders.
- Create follow-up workshops or town halls to build on feedback.
- Provide participants with interim updates to maintain engagement and demonstrate progress.
- Host virtual engagement sessions via video call, collecting similar data using online white boarding programs (Google Jamboard, Miro, etc.)
- Collect community engagement data at existing community events with a table, question boards, and a knowledgeable rep to gather raw data and stories from local members.