

# **Community Assistantship Program**

**North Circle Project**

Prepared in partnership with  
Women's Environmental Institute

Prepared by  
Randall Dietel  
Research Assistant

University of Minnesota  
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Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)  
University of Minnesota  
330 HHH Center  
301--19th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455  
Phone: (612) 625-1551  
Fax: (612) 626-0273  
E-mail: [cura@umn.edu](mailto:cura@umn.edu)  
Web site: <http://www.cura.umn.edu>

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# North Circle Project

Current Status and Role  
within the WEI Land  
Stewardship Program



# Mission and Goals

- NCP Mission Statement:

- The North Circle Project supports the mission of the Women's Environmental Institute to support sustainable and organic agriculture and address issues of environmental injustice for rural and urban communities. The mission of the North Circle Project is to promote the health and character of rural communities through the **support of small family farms** and the **promotion of sustainable and organic agriculture** in East Central Minnesota and West Central Wisconsin. The North Circle Project seeks to **improve economic opportunities for local producers and access to healthy foods through the development of a stored, fresh and value-added food processing enterprise and through community outreach, advocacy and education.**
- 



WEI Board of Directors

Executive Director:  
Karen Joy Clark

Executive Assistant:  
Blake Traylor

Capital Campaign  
Development Coordinator:  
Karl Sevig

Director of Operations and  
Education:  
Jacquelyn Zita

Office Assistant:  
Tria Vang

Research/Advocacy Program

Education Programs

Land Stewardship Program

Eco-Retreat/Conference Center

Eco(A)Ware  
Emily Moore

Community Right To Know

PFC Initiative

EJEAC  
(Environmental Justice Education  
and Advocacy Collaboration)

Climate Justice Project  
Elenore Wesslerle

Scholar Under Fire  
Paul Wotzka

Prairie School

Organic Farm School

Organic Fast Track/Chisago  
County Spring Gardening  
Bonanza

North Circle Project  
Katie Zerwas

CSA  
Farm Manager (TBD)

Ethnic/Indigenous Heritage Gardens

CSA Farm Interns

Principal Investigator:  
Fardin Oliaei

Principal Investigator:  
Ann Fredrickson

Community Organizers:  
Caroline Martin  
Sheri Apunge






# Progress to Date

- NCP Press Release Published in Local Press
  - Farmer Outreach Meeting in October
  - Expanded Outreach Database
  - NCP Quarterly Newsletter Published – Distributed to 150 Homes
  - Consumer Survey – 200 Respondents
  - Producer Survey – 12 Respondents
  - Fall Quarter Advisory Board Meeting – Expanded Advisory Board
  - Completion of Feasibility Study
  - Beginning work on Business Plan and “Micro” Business Plans
- 





# Feasibility Study

- Background
    - Grant from CURA/CAP and the Initiative Foundation to perform the study
    - Feasibility Study Advisors/Consultants
      - Randy Dietel – B.S. in Applied Economics
      - Ward Nefstead – Prof. of Applied Economics at the U of M
      - Bill Schafer – Emeritus Prof. of Food Science at U of M
- 




# Feasibility Study

- Timeline to Date
    - August – gathering resources and data from Year 1
    - September – Consumer Survey, expanding database of potential farmer partners/clients
    - October – First meeting with potential farmer partners/clients
    - November – Presentation of initial Feasibility report data to Advisory Board, Producer Survey mailing, first draft of Feasibility Study completed
    - Nov./Dec. to present – Revising Feasibility Study draft
- 



# Feasibility Study – Summary

- Details of the Facility:
    - Proposed location – on River Road (bottom of the hill)
    - Equipment to process raw produce includes canning and dehydrating for first phase of project
    - Root cellar – provide storage for produce
    - Classroom/Meeting space
    - LEED Certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)
    - Certified Organic
    - Projected cost = approximately \$365,000
- 



# Feasibility Study – Summary

- Principal Sources of Revenue:
  - Winter CSA Shares
  - Corporate gift boxes
  - Internet sales
  - Chef Demonstrations
- Secondary Sources of Revenue
  - Incubator Kitchen rentals



# Feasibility Study – Summary

- Market Potential

- Growth of organic sector is 20% annually, compared to entire food sector which is 1% annually
- Market for corporate gifts valued at \$18 billion annually
  - 2% of overall market was for food items, or \$360 million
  - Market grew 4.25% in 2005
- Currently over 60 CSAs in MN and 17 CSAs in region surrounding WEI
  - Median size of CSA is 135 members, that's approximately 2,295 CSA subscriptions in NCP area



# Feasibility Study – Summary

- Acquiring Raw Produce:
  - Contracts with growers
  - Purchasing “seconds”
  - End of market buy-outs at area farmers markets
  - Outreach – expanding the supply of organic produce



# Feasibility Study – Summary

- [Financial Analyses](#)



# Feasibility Study – Summary

- Total Projected Capital Expenses:
  - Facility costs: \$365,000
  - Working capital: \$50,000
  - Covering first four years: \$120,000
  - Total = \$535,000





# Feasibility Study – Summary

- Outcomes:
  - Create two new jobs
  - Purchase approximately 77,500 lbs of organic produce (increase of 17% per year)



# Feasibility Study

- Next Steps
  - Submit final draft of Feasibility Study to professional scrutiny
    - AURI, Members of Advisory Board, Strategeries, Small Business Development Center, others?
  - Write NCP Business Plan and “Micro” Business Plan Templates for potential farmer partners
    - Business Plan assistance from Advisory Board members, AURI, Strategeries, Small Business Development Center, Prof. Ward Nefstead, others?
    - Legal Assistance from MAP for Nonprofits
    - Grown Locally (IA), Farm Market Kitchen (WI)
  - Building Farmer Partnerships
    - Community Meeting to introduce project to farming community
    - One-to-one meetings with individual growers to solicit participation
  - Financial Resource Development – seeking grants, donations through creative fundraisers



# Feasibility Study

- NCP Timeline – **YEAR 0: January 1, 2008--- December 31, 2008**
  - Strategic Investment Plan (early draft by February 1, 2008)
  - Funding the Start Up Budget
  - Capital Campaign Drive for North Circle —set target goals
  - In-Kind Commitments
  - Grants
  - Loans and Financing
  - Phase I Farmer Recruitment Plan (beginning in January)
    - Packets and information organized
  - Continue to develop data base and newsletter circulation (on-going)
    - One on one recruitment and commitment plan implemented
    - Conversion planning for farmers
    - North Circle-related Events
  - County Use Permit secured
  - Organic Certification Plan for Farmer Collaborative
  - Phase I Equipment Plan
  - Phase I Construction Plan
  - Project Green Light – initial architectural drafts
  - Complete architectural plans.
  - **Construction begins June-September 2008**
  - Phase I Product Development Plan – with AURI (NC product portfolio)
  - Phase I Begin development of E-commerce website
  - Phase I Governance Model established.
  - Phase I Set up Legal Counsel.



# Feasibility Study

- NCP Timeline – Year One – Jan. 1 2009 – Dec. 31 2009
  - Completion of certified kitchen, packing/education space/root
  - cellar/bottling room., juicing/press room, solar dehydration, passive
  - solar greenhouse (as possible)
  - Equipment for Year One secured.
  - Protocols for Year One.
  - Vehicles, etc. and shared equipment acquired.
  - Year One Marketing and Business Plan.
  - County, State, Organic Certification Regulations
  - Funding secured for initial construction and operations.
  - Contracts with farmers secured.
  - Other venue contracts secured.
  - Personnel hired.



# Feasibility Study

- NCP Timeline –
  - Year 2 - 4
    - Updated Marketing and Business Plan.
    - Continue construction as possible.
    - Continue development of North Circle.
  - End of Year 4 – expected to become profitable – begin “Phase 2” planning

# Thanks, Randy!

Any  
Questions?

