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# Developing Agrihoods: The Context for Petersburg

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# Developing Agrihoods: The Context for Petersburg

Alternative Planning Strategies for Creating Food-Centered Community Spaces

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# Panel

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## Contents

# List of Figures, Tables and Maps

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# Executive Summary

Petersburg is a city on the precipice of perhaps a defining moment in its history. The city is seeing growth in its population, development is happening throughout the city, there is a burgeoning business space within the city, and there is enthusiasm around the potential for what the city could be. However, Petersburg also continues to experience many negative societal outcomes, such as poor health conditions and food insecurity, an alarming crime rate and struggling public education system.

Petersburg also offers some hope for how community building can exist. There exists a strong sense of community, born out of shared experiences. The residents of Petersburg are some of the most vibrant, empathetic individuals and their willingness to take active roles in enhancing their community is an asset.

This plan hopes to serve the community of Petersburg in its attempt to improve the conditions experienced by residents. As the city begins an economic revival, this plan aims to center Black residents and communities as the primary beneficiaries of that growth. By placing control of community development directly in the hands of those living in affected communities, this plan aims to help educate, inform and engage residents in direct action.

Implementing an Agrihood in Petersburg offers an opportunity to showcase a new type of development, centered around not just agriculture but social justice. By proposing the development of small-scale housing within the footprint of an existing, active farm, there is the opportunity to engage the community, utilize existing supports and build a new system for development.

This plan will examine the prevalent existing knowledge surrounding the development of Agrihoods and will hopefully inform the interested stakeholder in finding a direct, actionable path towards involvement in the development of their own communities.

This plan is rooted in social justice. It is representative of the importance of placing development into the hands of those most affected by inequitable development. Every facet of this plan is intended to draw upon, build on, and serve the needs of the African American community in Petersburg – and hopefully elsewhere – for generations.

# Introduction

Plan Purpose

This professional plan supports Happily Natural, LLC, in its attempts to educate, teach and empower future generations of African Americans to lead healthier lives while improving the outcomes for themselves and their communities. Utilizing connections formed prior to the development of this plan, and as a result of ongoing cooperation with stakeholders, this plan seeks to identify an existing model of equitable community development that can then be tailored to specifically meet the needs of African Americans in creating more desirable living conditions within their community. This plan is intended to serve as a resource for Happily Natural, LLC and other BIPOC individuals, organizations and communities exploring the improvement of their communities through shared ideals such as nutritional education, shared agricultural production, housing, wealth creation, and ultimately, Black liberation. This plan examines extant barriers to Black liberation through a planning perspective.

The purpose of this plan is to encourage the development of the Petersburg Oasis CommUNITY Community Garden/Youth Farm into an Agrihood and to serve as an educational tool for anyone interested in Agrihood development, as well as helping identify entry points into the development process. The plan identifies how various organizations and entities collaborate across the planning spectrum to develop spaces that include housing and agriculture. The plan outlines goals and objectives to address the needs facing Petersburg in terms of housing, food security, and community development. The plan also acts as an informational and collaborative tool that can be shared amongst the food justice community to support the development of Agrihoods or other community-based initiatives elsewhere that encompass the same values of social justice, equity, and reparative work. The outcome of this plan is a set of recommendations and actions to support Agrihood development wherever there is the opportunity for agricultural production to be combined with housing. This plan will also support the creation of a network/alliance of community members and organizations across the central Virginia region engaging in food justice and community development work.

In 1943, Abraham Maslow identified physiological needs – including shelter and food – as the most basic and necessary of human needs. Without them, achieving any decent quality of life is unlikely. To that end, this plan proposes a means to improve the quality of life for African American individuals. The movement towards liberation revolves around the creation and ownership of Black businesses, education curriculums designed and taught by those within the community, development of housing affordability solutions to address the poor rates of homeownership in the Black community, as well as incorporation of a working farm or garden to increase food security. During this process, it is imperative to keep Black liberation a central theme. When Black liberation initiatives or movements are supported by funds from white organizations, whenever disagreements arise or a particular set of rules

aren't adhered to, those funds can be rescinded, crippling the initiative. By creating mechanisms and resources for interested and motivated participants, this plan will outline the various manners in which people can become involved, from the preplanning and conceptual stages through project completion, as well as creating a resource for information sharing.

Plan Organization

This plan begins with an overview of background information related to the development of Agrihoods, followed by a review of existing literature and knowledge centered on themes of social justice, housing, the African American experience in achieving equitable outcomes, the racialization of space, food sovereignty and others. Then, a presentation of case studies provides context for development. A summary of the research methods utilized is followed by interview information, findings, recommendations and finally, a guideline for implementation.

Client Profile

The client organization is Happily Natural, LLC, founded and operated by Duron Chavis, a local community activist and organizer. Per the Happily Natural website, Chavis is "engaged in coordinating innovative and dynamic initiatives around the topics of urban agriculture and local food systems in a culturally relevant way" (Happily Natural, 2019). In 2009, Chavis launched the Richmond Noir Market, a Saturday farmer's market targeting low-income communities located in what the USDA has designated as "food deserts" in Richmond, Virginia. The development of his first community garden in 2012 subsequently led to the development of urban farms, urban orchards, urban vineyards and work in poverty mitigation, workforce development, health and racial equity.

Happily Natural's work is conducive to building stronger neighborhoods and communities. Their initiatives and tools are useful for any community of individuals with a shared interest in improving their quality of life through application of a community-ownership model of development.

# Background

The emergence from the pandemic has shed new light on the importance of building strong communities that are supportive in nature and resistant to outside disruptions. The pandemic laid bare just how susceptible vulnerable populations are to these disruptions. As the pandemic worsened, the housing market experienced skyrocketing mortgage rates, decreased housing stock and other actions that intensified already present issues with homeownership. Inflation soared, layoffs were plentiful, the supply chain was disrupted, businesses closed, and the economy stalled. What emerged was the opportunity to reassess traditional forms of thinking, especially related to how we house people, how we feed them, and how we ensure they can support themselves.

One way to meet those needs in communities is to shift the narrative from "find space for agriculture" into "what type of development can this food space support?" There is the need for an examination of circumstances present in the Black community that are prohibitive to economic growth, such as unfair housing and planning practices, income inequality, lack of employment opportunities. Equally important is the creation of an action plan to promote development that serves the needs of all in the community, with particular focus on three basic concepts: food security, housing, and social justice.

Agrihoods

Considering the prevalence of all the issues associated with food access, community building and social justice, perhaps the most widely recognizable food-centered developments are Agrihoods, planned communities centered around agricultural production or gardening.

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) defines Agrihoods as single-family, multifamily, or mixed-use communities built with a working farm or community garden as a focus. Their housing best practices begin with the creation of "housing and mixed-use development that leverage the advantages of farm-adjacent locations" (Norris, 2018).

Urban Land Institute's *Agrihoods: Cultivating Best Practices* identifies the development of community relationships as a benefit when developing community based agricultural programs, stating "Agrihoods promote health and social interaction. A community farm can be the centerpiece of a development, and associated programming and educational opportunities can foster community social ties. Studies show that people who have satisfying relationships are happier, have fewer health issues, and live longer. Farms in communities provide residents with access to fresh produce, supporting positive health outcomes" (Norris, 2018).

Agrihood development can generally be identified by three distinct periods: conceptualization and pre-planning, development, implementation, and administration. The conceptualization and pre-planning period of the project, which includes some basic business formation actions, networking of interested stakeholders, and preliminary design concepts

is the first. After that period, we enter development, where all contracted and associated parties begin the process of physically building or developing the potential site. Following completion of the development period comes implementation, when the project is officially opened to serve the community, and administration, which is the ongoing process of maintaining and operating the site. It is noted that during this process, several actions may be occurring concurrently, such as business formation overlapping with establishment of legal entities, or project development could be occurring simultaneously to community involvement with physical activities on site. As evident at the Petersburg Oasis CommUNITY Farm, onsite greenhouses and community spaces are being built while community-based organizations are engaged in activities onsite. Progression through these stages is a protracted process, and often requires immense coordination amongst many different entities.

Pre-Planning/Conceptual

The first stage of Agrihood development is the preplanning and conceptual stage. At this stage, there is established interest on the part of an individual or organization to begin the process of developing an Agrihood in any particular location. For the purposes of brevity, this plan assumes that an interested party has already legally acquired the land. Prior to acquisition, it is understood that the landowner should be aware of the current zoning restrictions that apply to their parcel/project site and that no major rezoning is necessary. Rezoning and/or special use permitting processes often take considerable time and resources to navigate, and the costs associated with that process can be difficult to overcome.

A critical component to how your entity or project will operate is determined by how you formally organize your business. As a non-profit organization (501c3), you are able to engage in fundraising and receive donations, as well as procure costs and services without paying tax, but it is also general practice that any revenue generated by the enterprise goes back into the operational/administrative funds. Non-profit entities generally involve the organization of a Board of Directors, a group of individuals in the community that can provide oversight, support, and guidance for the organization. Establishing a Board of Directors from an array of areas is best practice, as it gives the organization a valuable resource to draw guidance from. Furthermore, any community-based project such as an Agrihood would benefit from the inclusion of members of the community, such as local residents. The opposite of this would be to have a for-profit entity, either a limited liability company (LLC) or a corporation, where revenue could be retained as the executive of that business organization sees fit. How an individual chooses to formalize their business has a distinct impact on business practices.

Once land has been legally acquired, the process of coordinating the business, financial and management plans is needed, as is networking and identification of resources. The landowner may choose to utilize the services of a landscape designer, architect, or other

design-related entities to assist in planning the layout of the space. This may be the first introduction into developing outside relationships and engaging in networking/resource building for the landowner. While purchasing the property will legally require the utilization of a real estate agent and a lending institution, both of those are common practices in real estate. In planning for a site that involves either a greenfield site or raw, undeveloped land, it is important to utilize the services of a design professional to ensure that the land can support the vision of the landowner. Utilizing a professional at this stage can help prevent issues with local ordinances or regulations, which can often be costly to resolve or rectify.

At this time, it is also reasonable to assume that there may be interaction with local government as well since many development activities will require connection to city utilities. Additionally, during the next phase (development), the landowner will likely be getting involved in the permitting process to ensure that all land uses, and development is appropriate for the site.

Also involved in the pre-planning and conceptual stage of Agrihood development is the identification of and informal association with other community groups, individuals or entities that have been identified as key to the development and administration of an Agrihood. These entities may involve local schools, residents, volunteers, nonprofit organizations, or other community groups. Since this plan directly involves the concepts of social justice and food sovereignty, this may look like people that can assist with technical assistance regarding agricultural planning, social justice advocates/groups, and others involved in community building. Additionally, at this stage, the landowner may begin to identify other community groups engaged in similar social justice efforts, since many of these groups are working towards a general outcome of social justice.

These relationships may also span a wide range of interests and level of involvement. Since some of these relationships are simply reliant upon a relationship and willingness to participate, informal association (handshake agreements) may be all that is required. If relationships and associations are determined to be reciprocal, more formal practices may be required. For example, if a local after school program can advertise or promote "Agricultural Day" for their participants and bring children to the Agrihood on a regular basis, that is beneficial to them in their business as it is appealing to parents. Conversely, the local Agrihood is building community relationships and providing educational programming, both of which can be leveraged when seeking outside funding in the form of grants, which is a common undertaking. Some of these relationships may exist in the form of Memorandum of Understanding, or MOUs. These are signed agreements that delineate the responsibilities and benefits to be gained by distinct entities through a mutually beneficial relationship. Should pre planning activities progress to the point where formal business agreements are needed, it may be reasonable to utilize formal business contracts to protect the legal standing of all involved parties. For instance, the Agrihood may choose to enter a contract with a local produce retailer to provide a predetermined amount of produce on a regular basis in turn for

the retailer paying a contracted cost. These arrangements would require a more formal business relationship since the relationship involves significant financial costs.

Perhaps the final step in this stage is engaging with a potential developer. The development of housing is likely the most financially burdensome portion of the entire development process, as construction costs tend to be high. At this point, the landowner can either choose to engage with a professional developer and be able to pay the cost of the development, or the landowner may choose to build at a much slower pace and attempt to keep development minimal. This can be done by identifying organizations or individuals with development experience to lend their services free of charge or finding individuals willing to provide volunteer labor under the supervisors of a project or construction manager. Another approach within many Agrihoods is to draw in potential residents to assist in the construction, offering the option of residence once development is complete.

Lastly, and perhaps the most important component of the pre-planning or conceptual stage is the securing of capital to undertake the project. There are generally two distinct paths that can be taken at this stage. Presuming the landowner was able to purchase the site with personal funds, undertaking development can be costly. At this stage, a determination must be made to either seek permanent financing through a bank loan, or to pursue fundraising, or to engage in grant applications seeking funds. Each of these steps takes considerable forethought and consideration. If the landowner chooses to seek financing, there is the commitment to repay the funds, and defaulting on a loan can make it difficult to receive a subsequent loan. Like loans, grant funds also come with stipulations that must be met. Having knowledge of grant management or identifying community sources that can provide that service for you free of charge, can help the landowner keep costs low. Grant administration is often an allowable cost on grant applications since the nature of applying for, receiving, and closing out grants is complex. Nonprofit organizations often employ or retain a grant writer position specifically for that purpose.

At the end of this stage, the Agrihood has already committed a substantial number of resources into the project. The landowner is likely involved with multiple entities (builders, municipalities, volunteers, community-based organizations, nonprofits, etc.), and once the status of those relationships has been finalized, the next phase of Agrihood development can be started.

Development

After land has been acquired, financing is secured for whichever route the landowner chooses, and all other legal duties have been satisfied, the landowner can “break ground” on their Agrihood. Whether choosing to do the development portion themselves or by choosing a contractor, the Agrihood begins to take shape according to the vision of the entity operating it. Since Agrihood development can take many different forms and involve different types of management structures (discussed later), for the purposes of this plan, the entity is the individual or organization that retains final control and ownership of the Agrihood.

Before beginning any development or construction work, the Agrihood must ensure that all required permits have been obtained. If the Agrihood is being developed for agricultural use, and the plan for the Agrihood includes housing, then there may be some rezoning or special use permitting required. This process requires a considerable amount of time, resources and technical knowledge to navigate, another limiting factor for burgeoning projects or organizations that are limited administratively.

In terms of Agrihood developments, the pace of development can vary from project to project, similar to most real estate projects. If being conducted on a small scale (under 10 acres) it is reasonable to presume that the individual owner/organization may conduct and engage in development themselves, experience permitting. In typical Agrihood developments, the project size is generally in excess of 10 acres. Historically, Agrihood developments (when utilized as real estate development tools) tend to resemble more traditional housing developments, with large lots (over an acre) scattered around a larger tract of land, sometimes over 10,000 acres in size. Those large-scale developments almost always involve a landowner procuring/owning a property and engaging a developer to complete the housing component of the Agrihood. Projects of larger scale are often reliant upon more contracted/firm timelines for completion, since sale of the homes as quickly as possible is the goal. Developments of that size generally include some financing (unless the owner invests significantly through private funds), and those loans must be repaid to the financing institution at a predetermined time. Smaller Agrihood developments have the luxury of developing at whatever speed is reasonable and capable for the managing entity. In many cases, small scale Agrihoods (under 10 acres) start as greenfield sites or raw land, and the agricultural component often comes to fruition before the housing component.

As mentioned previously, several aspects of each phase may overlap or continue into the next. Often, smaller Agrihood developments with a smaller farm imprint may be able to get to the practice of farming or gardening sooner than larger Agrihoods. This again underlies the main distinction between small scale (up to 10 acres) and large scale (>10 acres) Agrihoods. The larger scale Agrihoods tend to complete all phases of construction and development at the same time, i.e. the houses are built as the garden is being built, and the entire space is open to the public at a specific time (when homes hit the market). In small scale Agrihoods, especially those that are centered around gardening/farming, farming may begin whenever the land has been cultivated for that specific purpose. Often, there will be people interacting with the physical space and gardening, hosting community groups, or providing educational programming on site concurrently with farm operations.

There are generally two paths the small scale Agrihood can take when developing their spaces. In the pre-planning stage, several Agrihood operators mentioned it was their intention to purchase land that already had existing structures on the parcel. This was done intentionally to reserve the resources that are needed to develop new buildings on a previously vacant site. Some Agrihood operators purchased rural land that had pre-existing buildings, and those structures were renovated and fitted for residential use, which did not

require any amendments to local zoning code or special use permits. This type of arrangement often occurs in more rural settings where land has already been cultivated for agricultural purposes and thus makes the transition into establishing an Agrihood more feasible, since the infrastructure is already in place. In practice, this looks like the landowner purchasing a defunct farm site and then undertaking renovations themselves. Another approach when considering urban Agrihoods is to approach the real estate acquisition process with enough capital to purchase adjoining lots in the future, should they become available. This method of development allows for the landowner to utilize the connected green space between the homes as the shared agricultural space, while using the newly acquired housing space to accommodate other individuals. This is often where the guiding principles of the organization or vision of the landowner begins to take shape. Purchasing adjoining lots and then progressing towards identifying like-minded individuals to sell to can start the process of building an intentional community. It is also important to recognize that this process could result in the continued displacement and gentrification of historically Black and Brown spaces, if private landowners can acquire and sell to preferred individuals. However, in keeping with the tenets of this plan, it is presumed that any undertaking associated with social justice, equity and food sovereignty goals would not engage in discriminatory practices related to housing access.

Once development has been completed and structures have been assembled to provide housing, the development phase can be considered completed. It is now the time for the entity to either enter into what is normally considered its operational phase, or the stage in which the space is being actively and continuously engaged, and at the same time may be housing individuals who have purchased or been invited to live in the space.

In many cases, during the pre-planning stage, project coordinators may have identified an acquisition budget (to provide funds for acquiring a property), as well as identifying a construction/development budget (to cover costs associated with development), and a third budget, which constitutes operating, maintenance, and administrative costs, should there be any. This is the phase of the project where the Agrihood may start to realize financial gains, or produce revenue from their agricultural production, should that also be part of the model. At this stage, the Agrihood may be generating revenue, or home sales may have helped some funds expended during construction. Additionally, organizations will also transition into a more secure, permanent financing plan to support operations, should that be an option.

Implementation/Operations

The implementation phase is the start of the final phase in an Agrihood. At this stage, the Agrihood is likely producing food that could be handled in several ways, from selling at market to donating, or placing that food in food pantries. Another distinct change is that the Agrihood is now under the guidance of a particular individual or organization, and often has several outside organizations that also utilize the space. For example, the MOUs or contracts that were developed during the pre-planning phase are likely now executed. If funds are

changing hands between entities, there should be some level of basic accounting practices that have been established. As a formalized business, the managing entity will be responsible for financial fidelity of the Agrihood, and if there is a Board of Directors, there should be a system of checks and balances to ensure funds are being managed properly. A sound business plan is critical to the success of any initiative or startup, and without one, organizations may have difficulty weathering changes or interruptions in the market, such as a pandemic or economic recession. Sound accounting principles generally involve the inclusion of contingency costs for development, since costs tend to vary over periods of time, which impacts revenue streams.

The implementation phase also includes the application of a management plan or administrative structure of the Agrihood. Traditionally, large scale Agrihood developments operate under the purview of a neighborhood or homeowners association, and often incorporate professional management companies to conduct day to day services within the Agrihood, such as lawn maintenance and general upkeep. Small scale Agrihoods may rely upon agreements with outside partners to provide contracted services, such as hiring a farm coordinator, or an outreach coordinator that can take up the duties of community relations, which is vital when incorporating social justice values. Having a clear management structure is helpful in delineating where support is needed and where assets can be allocated. Clear management structures can also be useful when applying to receive grants, since most lending institutions and private philanthropic organizations are more likely to provide financial support when they have a clear understanding of how the funds will be administered. Receiving grants also comes with the responsibility to engage in outcome tracking or some other form of performance standards to ensure funds are diverted to the most efficient sources. Grant writing and administration is often a staffed position within most organizations. As it relates to small scale Agrihoods, grant writing services are often provided by a volunteer with experience in that field that will provide their services free of charge, or the Agrihood may receive technical assistance from an outside organization that can guide them through the process. It is also reasonable for the grant writer to include detail about any funds that will be paid out as labor in a grant request, since many grants consider this an allowable cost.

Ongoing costs associated with an Agrihood must be considered long term. It is the goal of any initiative to be successful over an extended period of time. If Agrihoods depend upon outside donations to achieve their mission and there are changes in that relationship, funding could be compromised. Additionally, if an Agrihood has secured financing through a small financial institution and that institution becomes insolvent, project viability will be compromised. Identification of multiple sources of income can help weather the instability caused by disruptions in the market, or in the case of federal funds, government shutdowns or loan defaulting.

Despite its originations as a real estate development tool, Agrihoods provide, to date, the *closest* model of a food system solution that identifies the symbiotic relationship of housing, food access and improved quality of life. Many facets of the Agrihood concept are useful and applicable to this plan. This plan will adopt the Agrihood development model and apply its best practices and frameworks to build new spaces in the city that can serve the residents of Petersburg.

Evaluating Existing Systems: A Literature Review

Community revitalization takes many forms, and there are many facets related to it. The United Nations defines community revitalization as "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generation solutions to common problems." While that definition is applicable in general, there is a particular component unaddressed – the identification of "common" problems. In American society, the "problems" that are common to Black communities are often starkly different than the problems face in other cultures or social groups. In terms of offering solutions and plans for the Black community, one must first look to identify the main barriers to producing an acceptable quality of life. Food, housing and social justice work must be considered through the lens of the Black lived experience and not merely through a planning perspective. We must acknowledge the failure of traditional planning to eradicate problems in the Black community while recognizing the ability of planning to reverse course and produce more equitable outcomes. To that end, an examination of relevant literature associated with food, housing and social justice have been examined, as well as exploration of the concept of Agrihoods, which is loosely defined as the centering of agricultural production in urban development.

Food Security/Access

Food security was identified as a central theme throughout the literature, which is relevant considering its place within this plan. When addressing food access issues, the predominant notion is that "access to healthy food in the local food environment can be challenging, particularly for Black Americans living in communities where there are more unhealthy food options and access to healthy food is so inadequate as to be described as food apartheid communities" (Bradley & Galt, 2014). This statement supports the importance of rooting food production at the center of this project, closely aligned with housing.

Perhaps the most prevalent of all components of any literature is the identification, analysis and implementation of food systems designed to meet community needs. In *Black Food Matters*, Monica White identified in her essay "Sisters of the Soil" the efforts of individuals to participate in urban agriculture, highlighting "participation in urban agriculture as a strategy to reconnect with and reassess their cultural roots and reclaim personal power…by participating in food production, they demonstrate agency and self-determination in their efforts to rebuild a sense of community" (White, 2020). The engagement of community towards food production is imperative in rebuilding communities that can thrive. When

communities can establish a set of shared ideals, such as self-improvement, the chance for achieving greater outcomes becomes more attainable.

In attempting to describe some of the challenges and considerations faced by low-income African American residents in a New Orleans food desert, Kato and McKinney stated "our results suggest economic constraints are more influential in determining where the participants shop for food than spatial and temporal constraints" (Kato & McKinney, 2015). This mirrors other literature that suggests that individuals are so constrained by their economic status in making food choices that traveling longer distances and taking more time to secure food become less important. The economic impact is compounded when people – already making choices due to financial constrains – must expend additional funds to travel to where produce is provided at a decreased cost, thereby increasing the reliance upon transportation, which can be cost prohibitive. How can economic progress be realized if so many individuals are making these types of choices? How can anyone increase their financial security if the economic rationale is illogical?

This speaks to the importance of reshaping the economic conditions of African Americans so that food choices are more a result of personal satisfactions than factors such as distance from food, cost of food, and the time it takes to acquire food.

The inclusion of a productive food space is imperative and must be included in any effort to establish community, either as a resource for the community's own sustenance, or as a commodity in a market, or any other utilization that is desirable by the community. With careful consideration paid to the placement of gardens/farms, we can thereby reduce the reliance upon transportation in food security.

Housing

The shifting patterns of urban geography make it particularly difficult to isolate and address how spatial issues are impacting Black liberation. Much attention has been paid to the location of community gardens, how housing proximity to food vendors' impacts health, as well as attempting to engage in place-based planning. Other considerations include the agglomeration of African Americans within urban areas. With the recent pandemic, housing became a hot topic, as evidenced by skyrocketing cost of living, decreased housing stock, and prevalence of substandard housing. As we transition out of the pandemic, access to safe, affordable, decent housing remains a key goal. There is a myriad of solutions available to address this disparity, including government incentives for housing developers, loan and grant programs for homebuyers, community land trusts, as well as reanalysis of the built environment and its contributions to inequitable development.

One solution, as suggested by Horst and McClintock, involves the use of incentives in planning. "Planners can also require or incentivize urban agriculture space as a condition of approval for affordable and multifamily housing. The problem is that urban agriculture may be seen as competing for land with new housing, businesses, or other uses, particularly in

cities experiencing population growth and encouraging compact development" (Horst, McClintock, & Hoey, 2017). This may be particularly useful in showing effective methods for combining the housing model with food production. Many plans pivot towards other models, such as mobile markets designed to serve neighborhoods with low food access, farmers markets, developing transportation assistance programs to transport citizens to grocery locations, expanded grocery pickup/delivery options, cooperatives and several public/private partnerships between food producers and local retail locations (URSP 666 Commercial Revitalization, 2019).

When engaged in planning involving the transformation and placement of Black communities, particular attention should be paid to the process involved with planning how sites are selected. In addressing the issues associated with Black space and place, Andrea Roberts argued "local governments struggle with how to interpret or manage fraught public histories or sites of conscience…However, stories of Black agency in these contexts are often similarly repressed or overshadowed by places and sites with conciliatory or uncomplicated versions of Blackness…representing Black agency demands a comprehensive portrayal of Black identity and heritage, including manifestations of fugitivity, subversion, and resistance in the past and the present" (Roberts, 2020).

Planners can contribute to equitable development by voicing support for continued work to address the impact to which Black housing and space is addressed in an urban setting. The geographical placement of farms and gardens can also be informed by the housing market. If there are pockets of urban settings with low homeownership rates and vacant land, planning efforts should be made to utilize those sites. Additionally, careful consideration should be given to placing food production sites near other community supports, such as mental health and social services, transportation hubs, and culturally relevant places.

Housing solutions for individuals is twofold: it is of particular importance to ensure there is a supply of affordable housing for individuals in need, and it is equally important that the housing be in a convenient area. Insight into how homeownership can alleviate this challenge is needed. It will be important to analyze the prevalence of not just the rates of Black homeownership, but how much of that homeownership is a result of generational transfer of homes. This can help inform the intensity of efforts to change Black homeownership rates. It can also help illuminate practices to avoid when suggesting future policy.

Equity Based Work/Racial Justice

The first step towards approaching any equity-based work relies upon the premise of acknowledging that white power structures have engaged in and perpetuated unequal development. Regarding the food movement, Alison Alkon stated in her work that "such a consistent narrative, along with the movement's predominately white and middle-class character suggests that it may itself be something of a monoculture. It consists of a group of "like-minded" people with similar backgrounds, values and proclivities, who have come to similar conclusions about how our food system should change" (Alkon, 2011). She further

asserted that "for many of us [whites], our involvement with the food movement, along with our academic training, has contributed to the belief that the dominant narrative…may drown out other stories. In these stories, food is not only linked to ecological sustainability, community, and health, but also to racial, economic and environmental justice" (Alkon, 2011).

An early example of attempting to correct this issue was undertaken by the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California. The party worked towards developing community-based systems to ensure racial justice occurred following the civil rights movement. The Panthers were motivated to address "the unequal distribution of jobs and resources between black and white communities, between city and suburb, the physical destruction of black neighborhoods and subsequent dislocation of black residents, and the systems of capital flow" (Self, 2000).

Another approach to addressing racial justice is rooted in community capacity building, helping communities develop their ability to engage as a collective to achieve equitable outcomes. Saria Lofton stated "community capacity-building efforts have the potential to enhance organizational development and enable collaborations to enhance efforts to incorporate urban agriculture into communities with inadequate food access" (Lofton, 2022). These collaborations may look like partnerships with other farms, informal partnerships with local vendors or business, or public/private partnerships with the shared goal of increasing food access options.

Another aspect of the literature relates to creating spaces that are inviting and welcoming of Black people. In her work challenging narratives of Black existence, Andrea Roberts noted "curation of a space, place or landscape should be a process of investigating the absences – what Jacob Gaboury refers to as the "null value" …the null value of the critical voice is central to recognizing place-making as African American freedom-seeking. Rendering these places visible and geographic requires creating spaces for co-creation" (Roberts, 2020). This challenge is central to the idea of creating a space for African Americans, rooted in their design, and intended to support their visions.

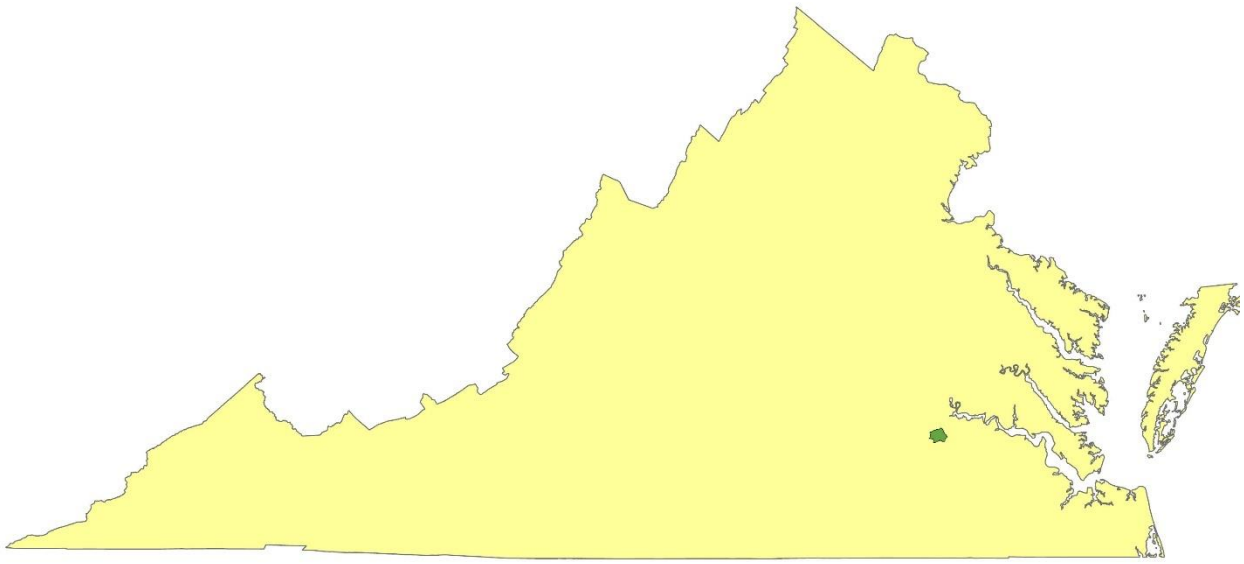
Additional analysis is needed not in terms of gauging effectiveness of meeting "equitable" outcomes but defining what "equitable" means. Attention must be paid to the process of attempting to define what equity looks like for a community. This should be achieved through interviews and case studies, looking at communities centered on this planning approach and how they performed over time. If we can more clearly define the ideals we are attempting to achieve, perhaps more effective planning practices can be implemented. Interview questions for residents will involve an assessment of current conditions they find to be favorable or unfavorable towards building intergenerational wealth, ideas around the placement and operation of Black space, and barriers to racial justice present in their communities.

# The Petersburg Context

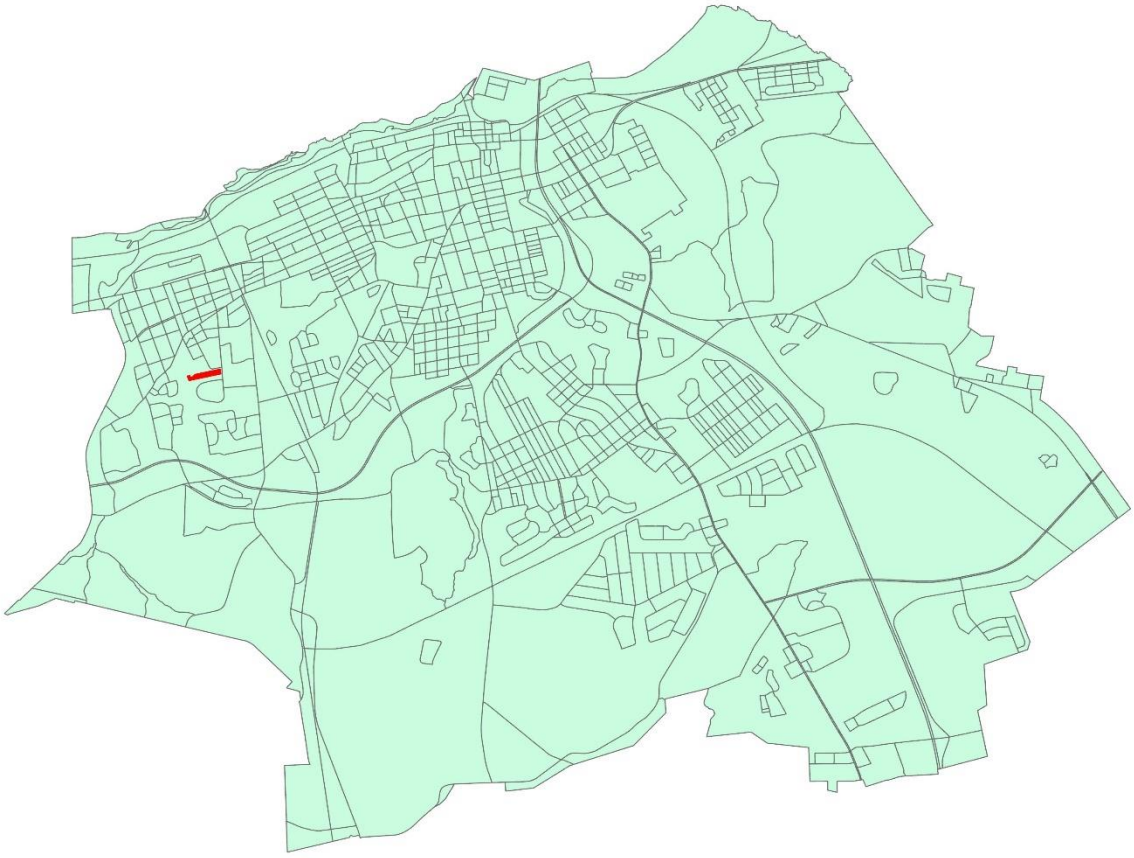
Study Area

Located 24 miles south of Richmond, Petersburg is an independent city nestled between Chesterfield and Dinwiddie counties, as well as Fort Lee, a military installation, and Colonial Heights, another independent city. Lying directly south of the Appomattox River, Petersburg was once a center of robust economic activity, situated between major transportation arteries of Interstates 95 and 85, as well as State Route 460.

Map 1. Location of Petersburg within State of Virginia



Map 2. Location of 535 Beech Street within City of Petersburg



The project parcel identified as the platform for the Agrihood development is in the western portion of the city, due south of the Business Route 460 that traverses east-west through the northern portion of the city. The residential portion of the area is bounded by 460 along the north and Interstate 85 to the south. Residential development extends west into west Petersburg before dissipating into scattered residential west of the city.

Existing Conditions

According to US Census Bureau statistics, Virginia has a population of 8.6 million residents. The Central Virginia region (Richmond MSA) has a population of about 1.2 million, which constitutes about 20% of the entire state population, and Petersburg comprises about 3% of the MSA area.

Petersburg boasts one of the highest concentrations of African Americans compared to almost any other city in the state, with over 76% of the population identified as African American. This makes Petersburg uniquely situated to support an initiative of this magnitude. Perhaps nowhere else in the state is as poised and ready to support the concept of Black economic independence and sustainability.

Table 1. Population Characteristics

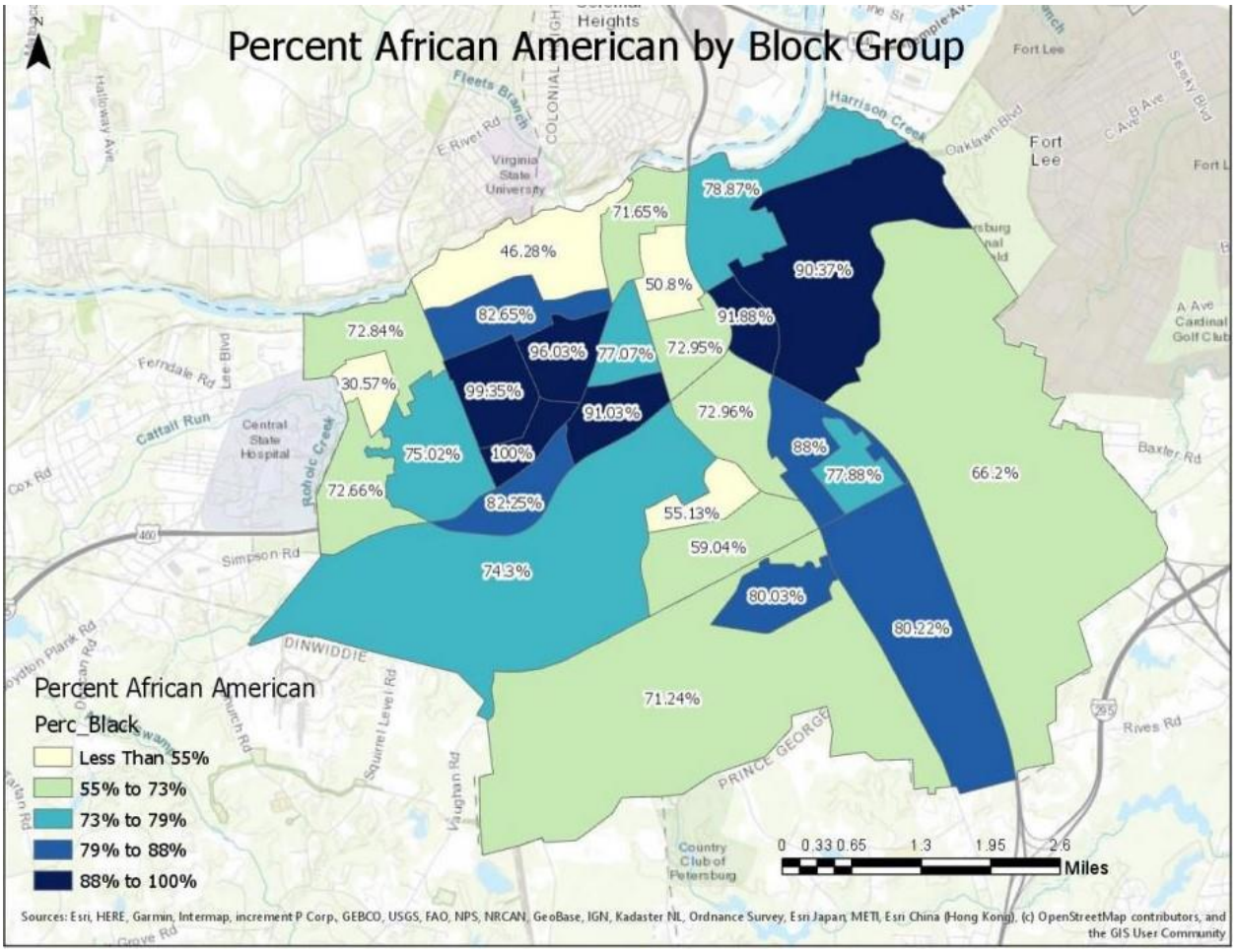
| Population | City of Petersburg | State of Virginia |
|---|---|---|
| Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021) | 33,429 | 8,642,274 |
| Population, percent change – 2010 to 2020 | 3.11% | 8% |
| Population, Census, April 1, 2010 | 32,420 | 8,001,024 |
| Persons under 5 years, percent | 6.90% | 5.70% |
| Persons under 18 years, percent | 21.00% | 21.80% |
| Persons 65 years and over, percent | 16.80% | 16.30% |
| Female persons, percent | 54.40% | 50.50% |
| White alone, percent | 16.60% | 68.80% |
| Black or African American alone, percent | 76.80% | 20.00% |
| White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent | 15.00% | 60.30% |

Source: US Census Bureau Quickfacts, 2021, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/petersburgcityvirginia,VA/PST045221 [1]

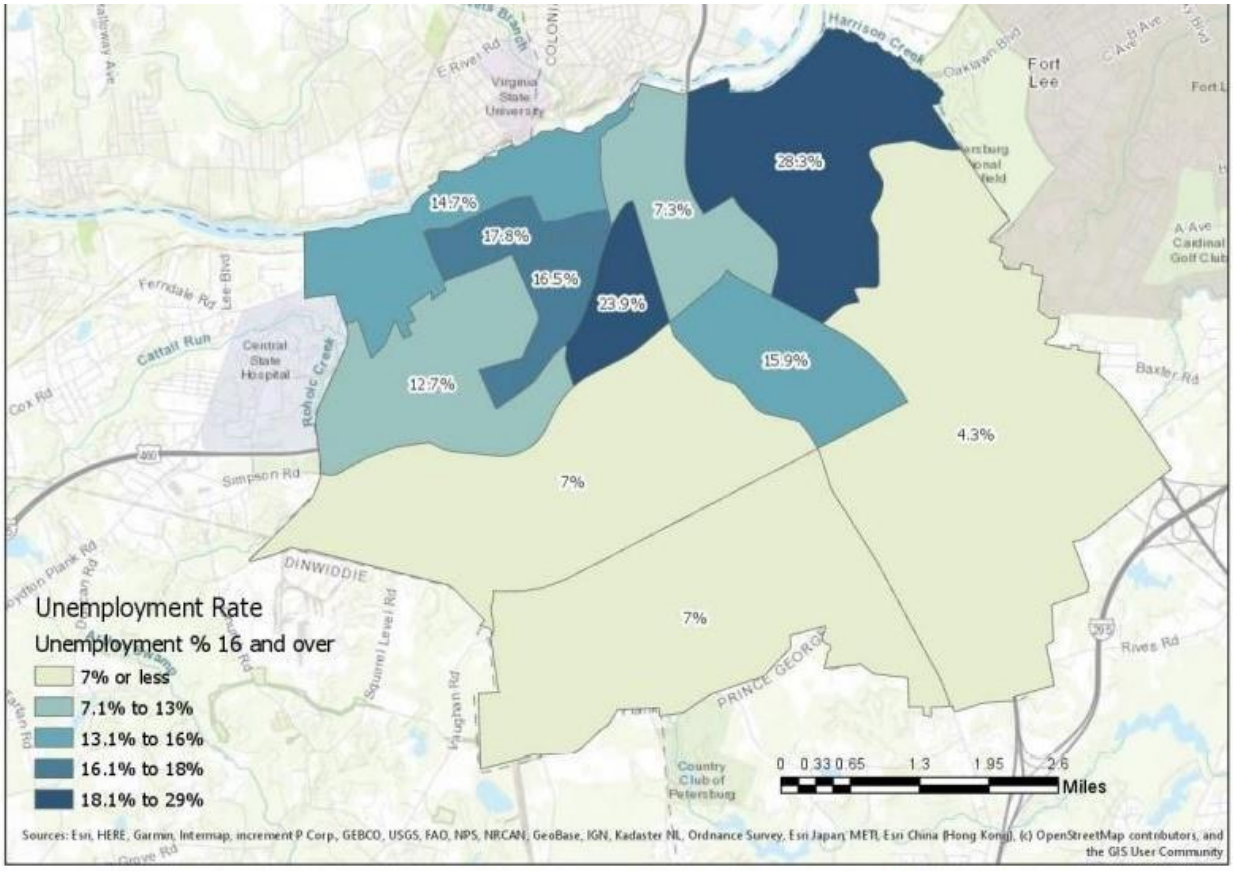
[1] Populations that represent less than 5% of population data omitted for brevity.

When examining the African American makeup by block group, the highest concentration of African Americans in the western portion of the city surrounds the project location, with all block groups reporting percentages more than 91% African American residents, as visualized in Map 3.

Map 3. African American Percent by Block Group



Map 4. Unemployment Rate in Petersburg, 2017




Map 3 represents the unemployment rate in the city in 2017, as reported by Census data. The southern, exurban portion of the city experiences significantly lower rates of unemployment compared to those located closer to the traditional city center along the Appomattox River.

Table 2. Homeownership Statistics

| | Petersburg | Virginia |
|---|---|---|
| Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2016-2020 | 36.10% | 66.70% |
| Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2016-2020 | $111,800 | $282,800 |
| Median selected monthly owner costs - with a mortgage, 2016-2020 | $1,163 | $1,822 |
| Median selected monthly owner costs - without a mortgage, 2016-2020 | $431 | $481 |
| Median gross rent, 2016-2020 | $958 | $1,257 |
| Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2016-2020 | 76.90% | 85.20% |

In terms of select homeownership indicators (Table 2), Petersburg trails the state average in most areas. Petersburg's owner-occupied housing unit rate is almost 50% lower than the state average, indicating that only 36% of the housing units in the city are occupied by owners, inferring that roughly 64% of the city's housing stock is in the hands of renters, which makes it difficult for African American families to establish generational wealth, for which home ownership is vital. We can also see that the value of owner-occupied housing units in Petersburg ($111k) is 86% lower than the state average (282k), which highlights just the tip of the iceberg in terms of housing disparities experienced by African American residents. If there are positive characteristics for renters in Petersburg, data shows that the median gross rent ($958) is lower than the state average of $1,257. This could be attributed, however, to poor housing conditions within the city and the inability to attract development in terms of quality housing stock.

Lastly, the rate of individuals reporting living in the same house from one year to the next was lower in Petersburg (76%) compared to the state, which reported 85% of residents in the same place year to year. This reflects the level of instability residents face year after year, often moving to keep up with the affordability of housing compared to moving by choice.

As shown in Table 3, economic and employment conditions disproportionately affect African Americans as well, with the city experiencing lower labor force participation amongst its residents (60%) compared to the state overall (64%). The median household income for Petersburg residents is more than $30,000 lower than the state rate, and the average per capita income is roughly half the state average. Perhaps the most troubling statistic indicates that Petersburg has a rate of poverty more than double the statewide average. Petersburg has a 22% poverty rate, with just 10% being the mark for the state.

Table 3. Economic and Educational Status

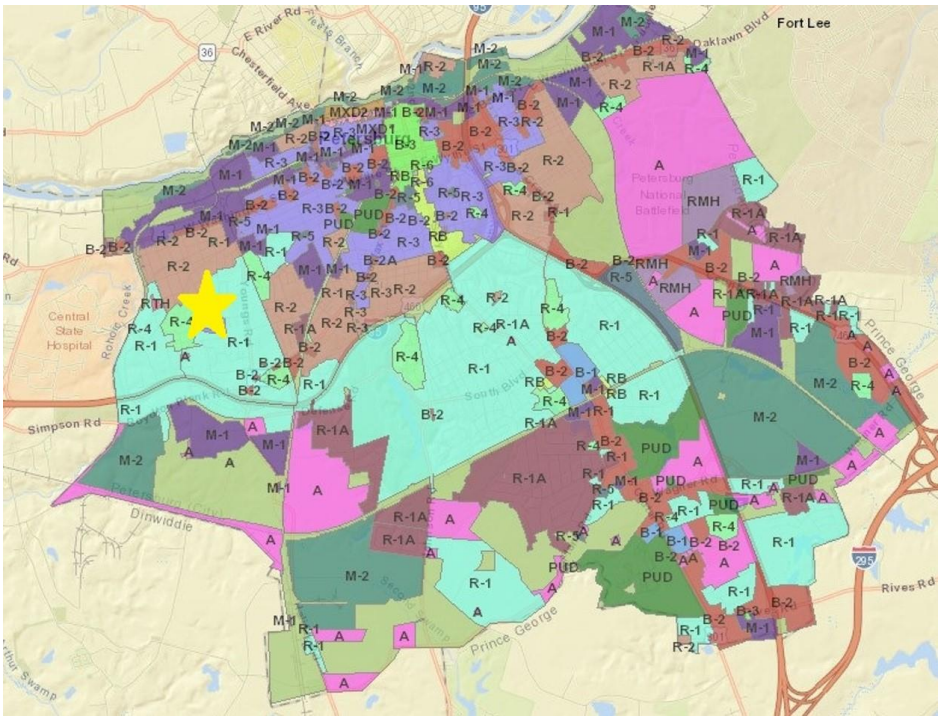
| | Petersburg | Virginia |
|---|---|---|
| High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2016-2020 | 83.30% | 90.30% |
| Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2016-2020 | 20.30% | 39.50% |
| With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2016-2020 | 16.40% | 8.00% |
| Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent | 14.50% | 8.00% |
| In civilian labor force, total, percent of population age 16 years+, 2016-2020 | 60.00% | 64.00% |
| In civilian labor force, female, percent of population age 16 years+, 2016-2020 | 59.60% | 60.40% |
| Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2016-2020 | 24.4 | 28.6 |
| Median household income (in 2020 dollars), 2016-2020 | $43,029 | $76,398 |
| Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2020 dollars), 2016-2020 | $24,789 | $41,255 |
| Persons in poverty, percent | 22.60% | 10.20% |

In terms of assessing economic conditions and need, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's assessment tool indicates Petersburg has a distress score of 150 (on a scale of 0-150), which is classified as "Highly Distressed". According to this designation, Petersburg receives additional consideration from the State regarding funds being diverted to the locality to improve economic conditions.

Zoning Analysis

As the figure indicates, our project location site, 535 Beech Street, is currently zoned as R2 residential, which includes allowances for urban agriculture.

Map 5. Zoning within City of Petersburg




Currently, the parcel that our potential Agrihood site is located is zoned for residential use. R2 zoning is defined in Article 4, Section 1 of the Petersburg Zoning Code as a single-family residence district. The use regulations for this zone are identical to those in R1 (residential) districts, and indicates that uses in accordance with farming, orchards and nurseries, or propagation of other crops is allowable. The regulation also indicates that temporary stands may be set up to be used seasonally for sale of products, which is conducive to urban farming. Limitations include the sale of animals associated with general agricultural production, such as bees, rabbits, or chickens, given that those creatures do not become objectionable to the surrounding residences. In this context, community garden space must be closely regulated to ensure compliance with local restrictions. The regulations also stipulate that there can be no permanent retail or wholesale business operations can exist within the space.

The zoning regulation does allow for several building types to be constructed or assembled on site, including temporary buildings that are incidental to construction operations that can be removed upon completion of construction/development or abandonment of the site, and also allows for an assortment of housing solutions, such as single-family dwellings and accessory buildings, such as guest houses.

Figure 1. Typical Residential Development Around Project Site, (Intersection of Beech and Pleasants, looking north)


Source: Google Images Street View, July 2019

Accompanying the restrictions set forth regarding housing types allowed on site and activities permitted on site, there are additional restrictions regarding off street parking and supplementary uses for the space, as well as limitations on the height, area, and bulk regulations on buildings. This is of particular importance considering increased activity, expanded operations at the site and construction of additional structures could encroach upon or violate zoning restrictions.

The Petersburg Oasis CommUNITY Garden/Youth Farm site is already taking advantage of existing onsite parking, as evidenced by the presence of a lot adjacent to the parcel. The parking lot is typically used for individuals utilizing the existing open public space adjacent to the farm site, which includes picnic tables and a covered shelter and some green space. Careful planning will be needed to ensure that the amount of vehicular traffic does not produce conditions (unreasonable amount of vehicle traffic) that would cause the city to restrict parking in that location.

Figure 2. Parking Immediately Adjacent to Project Site


Source: Google Images Street View, July 2019

Currently, all residences along Beech Street and Pleasants Lane have driveways and based on observation, very rarely do drivers park their cars on the street. Increased traffic could overwhelm the current parking setup; therefore, consideration must be paid to the possibility of adding additional parking on site or other solutions.

Precedent Plans

Petersburg has had substantial support in their efforts to enhance the community, ranging from economic plans, comprehensive land use planning, economic development incentives and various other measures. In recent years, graduate students at VCU's Wilder School Urban and Regional Planning Program have produced plans around food access in Petersburg, with the most recent report published in 2019 which recommended several food access solutions (URSP 666 Commercial Revitalization, 2019). Additional reports were conducted in 2021 regarding disposition and development strategies of vacant properties in 2021 (Stankus, 2021), which provided an analysis of vacant structures and potential reuse.

The City of Petersburg falls within the Crater Planning District Commission, which helps develop plans to guide the city as part of the larger Crater region. Their plans include guidance and recommendations in the areas of transportation, economic development, environmental planning, Defense/Military planning and other technical assistance. The city planning department has identified several plans and studies that guide their model for development, including design plans, housing studies, complete streets models, and fair housing choice programs.

Petersburg also acts in accordance with the PTB2040 plan, the city's comprehensive plan that guides development within the city. The plan recently received an update in 2021 and serves as the most current version. In the comprehensive plan, Petersburg outlined several goals and set timeframes for achievement, as well as identifying neighborhoods that needed revitalization. They also consider the impacts that unemployment and poor economic conditions have put on the city.

It is the intent of this plan to help secure, utilize and elevate community resources for all individuals.

# Theoretical Framework

## Black Liberation

The re-emergence of the struggle for Black liberation in America has, in recent years, become more visible, with the advent of social media providing visual documentation of Black trauma (i.e. 2020 murder of George Floyd) and how it impacts communities. With a resurgence of focus on this issue, lots of interest and attention has been put into reanalyzing existing theories and models, as well as the increase in production of peer reviewed literature to support and inform development. When addressing liberation and independence of a group, struggling to break free from oppression, it is important to identify the difference between liberation and independence. Sulayman Nyang, in their essay analyzing the political thought of Bissau-Guinean intellectual, revolutionary and political organizer Amilcar Cabral, offered this distinction: "to Cabral, a significant difference was apparent between national liberation and national independence, with the former entailing transfer of political power from colonialists to Africans without any major structural changes in the inherited state; the latter…meaning total demolition of colonial structures and the emergence of a new type of state system whose powers are totally mobilized" (Nyang, 1975).

As mentioned previously, this model exists to serve the needs of African Americans. There must be as little reliance, cooperation, and involvement with traditional white power structures as possible. This is not intended to be exclusionary, but to attempt to retain as much control over the community as possible. History has shown that Black led coalitions, initiatives and projects can be derailed by upsetting or disrupting the white power structure. To that end, it was with careful consideration that several methods and theories were assessed to gauge applicability and effectiveness that this model hopes to reach. The primary model is that of Black Capitalism, the political idea that seeks to build wealth through ownership and development of businesses. This can be pursued in two ways - either through a collective, group effort, or other actions focused on individual success. William Reed offers this outcome: "Black capitalism…position[s] blacks as the owners of land, the means of production and businesses" (Reed, 2017). It is in this model we identify the efforts of the Black Panthers in Oakland, California in the 1960s, where community control was the primary objective. They believed that ownership of the businesses in a Black community should have Black owners and applied the same logic to education and other endeavors of particular interest to the survival of African Americans.

## Black Capitalism

For the purposes of this plan, Black Capitalism is defined as "complete African American ownership of businesses, means of production, housing, land, economic development decisions, and complete control over the educational and workforce development components of their communities." It is also the intent of Black Capitalism to create systems that are self-empowering and communally self-reliant.

When addressing integration of Blacks into white society in America, Black Panther Stokely Carmichael (aka Kwame Ture), posited "we reject the goal of assimilation into middle-class America because the values of that class are in themselves anti-humanist and because that class as a social force perpetuates racism. We must face the fact that, in the past, what we have called the movement has not really questioned the middle-class values and institutions of this country…reorientation means an emphasis on the dignity of man, not on the sanctity of property. It means the creation of a society where human misery and poverty are repugnant to that society, not an indication of laziness or lack of initiative" (Ture & Hamilton, 1967). It is the aim of this project to provide guidance towards creation of a sense of community that reflects our own internal values, free from other philosophies that perpetuate our oppression.

It is also helpful to define how we distinguish between institution, system, and other terms. "When we define "system", we have in mind the entire American complex of basic institutions, values, beliefs, etc. By structures, we mean the specific institutions (political parties, interest groups, bureaucratic administrations) which exist to conduct the business of that system…the first is broader than the second" (Ture & Hamilton, 1967). Because of the complex nature of these entities and their interaction, it is important to understand how terminology is used and applied.

Within Black Capitalism, the main goal is the modernization of those structures. If modernization must be realized, Ture recognized that the acquisition of economic independence and educational literacy were not enough. There must be the presence of political power. "If ever the political scientists wanted to study the phenomenon of political development or political modernization in this country, here was the place…that range of areas characterized by the predominance of Black people and rich black soil" (Ture, p. 99). He later indicates how important it was to maintain the delineation between white and Black causes: "as in many southern communities, they [Blacks] were at the mercy of the white power structure…the power they had was delegated to them by the white community. And what the master giveth, the master can take away. The power…did not come from the black community, because that community was not organized around public political power." (Ture, p. 101). This concept is the driving factor underlying the importance of maintaining all control of created systems within the Black community.

The pursuit of independence is ever changing. Some of Black America's most thoughtful minds have sought this independence in many different forms. In seeking this self-reliance for black people, Booker T. Washington was met with considerable resistance in his efforts to help his people progress, from both the white power structure as well as other black intellectuals. His "ideal of a self-reliant black community turned segregation upside down into separation; was the celebration of "the nation within the nation" that will never be integrated" (Gates & West, 1996)

Naturally, this conceptual framework must transition into a more concrete, streamlined offering. To achieve that purpose, analysis of the current conditions in the city of Petersburg is needed. This step is intended to identify inequality and disparities facing African Americans, offering substantial data that the literature and research is not conveying –a quantifiable representation of the social issues faced by African Americans.

## Methods

This plan is informed by community relationships, interviews with city officials in several offices, interviews with operators of similar housing and food initiatives, as well as community outreach communication. Of difficulty with the plan was the ability to capture wide community input with limited resources in an efficient manner.

The research questions for this plan were selected to help illustrate the total spectrum of challenges in Agrihood development and to help identify the significant limiting factors. Findings were synthesized and a SWOT analysis performed to help identify themes and concepts. This plan was largely focused on the qualitative responses and information associated with development, since quantitative data can be challenging to utilize in support of social initiatives. By collecting qualitative data, conversations were able to follow a natural course and allowed for spontaneous thinking and ideas to emerge. In order to best provide recommendations that are reasonable and achievable, attention was given to the natural network of stakeholders and participants in existing community spaces.

In consideration of those difficulties, this plan utilized information sharing amongst professional networks and technical knowledge in the examination of case studies.

### Stakeholder Outreach Methods

Community contacts were initially identified by utilizing the Federation of Intentional Communities, a national database of communities centered around various causes. After sorting through hundreds of communities, several relevant communities were identified and contact information was obtained. After initial contact by email communication, some basic information was shared about project purpose and intent, as well as collection of some ancillary data to help zero in on pertinent questions. Following email communication, phone and video calls were scheduled and conducted, which lasted up to an hour.

Research Questions

The following questions were developed to help challenge the thinking associated with traditional planning practices, to collect qualitative responses that can be assessed for thematic elements, and to perform comparison amongst other localities of similar nature engaged in community development initiatives.

Table 4. Research Questions and Analytical Methods

| Question | Analysis |
|---|---|
| What are opportunities and challenges for Agrihoods in Petersburg? | Interviews with city officials, residents, other local Agrihood operators |
| What community resources have a track record of success in assisting in community development efforts? | Interviews/surveys with residents, other non profit organizations |
| What community engagement strategies have proven useful in establishing trust and rapport? | Interviews with city officials, Agrihood operators |
| Where are the gaps in service?<br>What else would your organization do if it had more resources?<br>What are barriers to implementing and maintaining Agrihoods? | Interviews with Agrihood operators |
| What other considerations does Petersburg have for vacant space that could be used for agricultural space? | Housing policy examination |
| How are other cities of similar demographics using or benefitting from Agrihoods? | Case studies |
| Have initiatives or projects designated exclusively for African Americans experienced success? What have been the challenges? | Agrihood operators, nonprofit organizations, community-based groups |
| What sources of public funding have proven beneficial to development/operations? | Local, State, Federal Programs, grants |

Interviews

This plan will rely upon conducting interviews with various stakeholders and participants involved in various levels of the planning process, from soliciting input from residents, gathering best practice information from other Agrihood (and similar initiatives) developments. Furthermore, as the city of Petersburg is actively engaged in economic and community development, interviews with individuals in city and state government will be conducive to examining barriers in the planning process for initiatives like Agrihoods. It can also help identify community resources with a track record of assisting in completing community development projects, which can prove useful in developing best practices.

Interviews with operators of nonprofit organizations engaged in community development work, as well as operators of similar Agrihoods will be useful in examining barriers to implementation and learning about the ongoing challenges with maintaining their developments.

Table 5. Interview Contacts

| Contact | Location | Organization | Context for Interview |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tyrone Cherry | Petersburg, VA | Petersburg Oasis Community Garden/Youth Farm | Farm Operation/administration |
| Terry Symens-Bucher | Oakland, CA | Canticle Farms | Agrihood operation/administration |
| Leah Coltrane | Richmond, VA | Maggie Walker Community Land Trust | Financing |
| Michael Reilly | Richmond, VA | Foodshed Capital | Financing |
| Kate Pickett-Irving | Richmond, VA | Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development | Financing, Housing, Business Support, Public Funds |
| Trista Grigsby | Richmond, VA | Chesterfield County Public Schools | Agricultural education |
| Gerri Archer | Richmond, VA | Hogan Group | Real Estate |
| Obar Moyo | Petersburg, VA | Petersburg Oasis Community Garden/Youth Farm | Agricultural education |
| Valerie (last name withheld) | Louisa, VA | Twin Oaks Farm | Agrihood operation/administration |
| Lauren DeSimone | Richmond, VA | Virginia Community Capital | Financing |
| Caitlyn Cameron | Ithaca, NY | EcoVillage @ Ithaca | Agrihood operation/administration |

# Findings

Interviews

Over the course of 8 weeks (early February to late March 2023) interviews were conducted with a range of individuals. Interviews were conducted by using a set a prescribed questions generally related to the topic of Agrihoods, real estate, financing, planning, and several other topics, followed by more open-ended questions. Interview subjects were identified through several different ways, including searching national databases of intentional communities and collecting contact information, asking the client to identify some potential sources of information, conducting field observations that led to natural conversations and by researching institutions generally associated with Agrihood development.

Agrihood Operators (Canticle Farms, Twin Oaks, Eco-village Ithaca)

Agrihood operators across the country were identified and chosen to provide context for Agrihood development, asked to share their best practices, and to also help identify gaps or needs. These interviews were conducive to gaining understanding of the challenges faced in all stages of Agrihood development, from acquisition to operations. Operators were asked to identify some of the positive relationships they developed throughout the process and were also asked about what endeavors they would like to engage in but currently don't due to lack of resources (time, money). In general, more effective community engagement was a distinct theme. Additional themes of networking, finding funding sources, and being committed to social justice causes were among the most popular.

Lending/Financing Sources (Foodshed Capital, Virginia Community Capital)

Interviews were also conducted with those engaged in community building efforts on behalf of lending institutions. Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) offer low interest loans to individuals and organizations committed to agricultural and social justice work. Some of the themes that emerged from these conversations centered around finding ways to get the money into the hands of individuals, which is often more challenging than it seems. Lending institutions have made significant commitments to funding initiatives led by BIPOC individuals, communities and organizations, and still there remains the opportunity to create more streamlined sources of funding and citizen engagement.

Real Estate/Housing (Maggie Walker Community Land Trust, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Hogan Group)

Time was spent speaking with individuals associated with housing initiatives at the local, regional and state level. Maggie Walker Community Land Trust is associated with the development of the Bensley Agrihood, and had valuable insight related to the challenges of dealing with zoning ordinances, applying for permits and other government interactions, and providing an efficient, affordable housing stock to address current needs. Similar to lending institutions, individuals pointed to the inability and difficulty in connecting potential

homeowners to supports across the spectrum of the real estate process, from learning how to improve financial stability, accessing funding, and learning basic real estate practices. Community engagement is also of importance, as many individuals noted that undertaking community engagement is a lengthy, costly endeavor, and contracting out those services or partnering with more specialized organizations to perform that work.

Agricultural Education (Urban Agriculture and Plant and Soil Sciences Education)

Several important concepts emerged from conversations with those engaged in agricultural education. First, the importance of nutritional education and providing fresh produce to communities was evident. So many negative health outcomes could be minimized, lessened or eradicated when access to information and nutrition is received. Additionally, another important factor to be aware of is the identification of what crops and produce can provide the desired amount of return, or in other words, how much do you hope to sell? What is of value to the grower? Helping identify the most value-added items will assist in developing sound financial models and estimates.

Case Studies

From a rigorous examination of case studies of Agrihoods emerged the necessity to refine examination in a more deliberate manner. Owing to the proliferation of Agrihoods in recent years, there has been much difficulty in establish uniform definitions or standardization of procedures useful across all scales of development. It has also been difficult to identify useful policy recommendations that can be implemented across different scales of development.

The most natural distinction to appear amongst Agrihoods is the total size of the operation. Agrihoods can range in size from less than an acre to large scale housing developments covering tens of thousands of acres with expansive lots. Therefore, it was determined that examination of Agrihoods, regardless of intention or purpose for development, not exceeding 10 acres in total size would be ideal. This is due to the inherent difference in larger developments indicated earlier in the plan. In terms of economics, values/culture, agriculture, makeup and demographics, larger Agrihood developments have little to offer in terms of comparison and modeling. Additionally, since the core mission of this plan is to produce an outcome centered around not just agriculture, but social justice, the omission of developments larger than 10 acres is also useful in developing a closer examination of viable practices and values that could lend themselves to other developments of the same size. It was determined that developments larger than 10 acres tended to resemble traditional real estate developments, with single family homes scattered across large swaths of land. The reduction of scope to properties of small size thus produces two positive outcomes: elimination of irrelevant quantitative data in comparison and elimination of developments where priorities were not aligned with social justice.

Despite the omission of large real estate developments from consideration in planning purposes, there are themes that are present even in large scale developments that are found

in those developments more closely aligned with justice: preservation of agricultural space, the promotion of agriculture as a component of daily living, and the recognition of the growing trend in real estate wherein potential homebuyers value a sense of community and interaction when considering buying a home.

Furthermore, after the reduction in development size, it becomes clear that the most useful comparative tactic is to analyze the intended purpose, mission, or goal of the development. While most developments under 10 acres may operate similarly in terms of operations and administration, many were created for purely sustainable, environmental, or agricultural reasons. While these characteristics are also valuable to this plan, it obscures the ability to focus on projects closely aligned with the intentions of this plan.

Table 6. Agrihood Case Studies

| | Location | Established | Designation | Purpose, Goal, Mission | Implementation Mechanisms or Participants | Major Funding Sources | Setting | Size (acres) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bensley Agrihood | Chesterfield, VA | In progress | Agrihood | Affordable housing, empowerment of young women of color | Landowner, non-profit organizations, MWCLT | USDA | Suburban | 9 |
| Canticle Farms | Oakland, CA | 1960's/70s | Urban garden | Faith, social justice, earth based non violent activism | Landowner, land trust | Donation, private funds | Urban | 3-4 |
| Twin Oaks Farm | Louisa, VA | 1967 | Farm, intentional community | Egalitarianism, sustainability | Non profit organization, residents | SSI (older residents), business proceeds | Rural | 350 |
| Capital City Farm | Trenton, NJ | 2013-2015 | Urban farm | Address social inequality | Land trust, Trenton Area Soup Kitchen | Mercer County Open Space Fund, private donations, public funding | Urban | 2 |

The examination of case studies presented the need to narrow the scope of analysis. Other initiatives were compared to assess the different outcomes when projects engage in similar efforts. Projects were examined to determine major themes that emerge either in the purpose or mission of the project, the levels of interaction between public and private partnerships, as well as an examination of funding sources. This analysis was useful in arriving at research findings, which were then woven into SWOT analysis and also to inform the recommendations.

Capital City Farm

Trenton, New Jersey's Capital City Farm was the first commercial urban farm and is the fruition of an agreement between the D&R Greenway Land Trust and the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. The farm is two acres in size and is situation in the middle of an urban area. The property was previously undeveloped, neglected and was being used for illegal dumping and gathering space for those experiencing houselessness. Initially conceived to address social inequality issues within the city, mismanagement and disagreements led to dissolution of the development. During preplanning, a Board of Directors was assembled, and partnerships were established with several stakeholder groups. The Watson Institute of Public Policy of Thomas Edison State University assisted with community outreach strategies, the design firm Designing the We (DTW) created design concepts and community engagement. Based on that collaboration, it was decided to proceed with creation of the Garden State Agrihood and proposed using the space to engage in larger social justice conversations.

Figure 3. Capital City Farm, Trenton, NJ

During its operational phase, the farm struggled with sustainable funding, staffing and community engagement. Due to financial constraints and inconsistent staffing, the Land Trust withdrew its place as fiduciary and fiscal sponsor of the project in 2019. The Garden State Agrihood NPO suffered from lack of clear mission statement and role in the development of the initiative. The Land Trust was reported as only having interest in installation and maintenance of trails on preserved land and was reluctant to provide services beyond that.

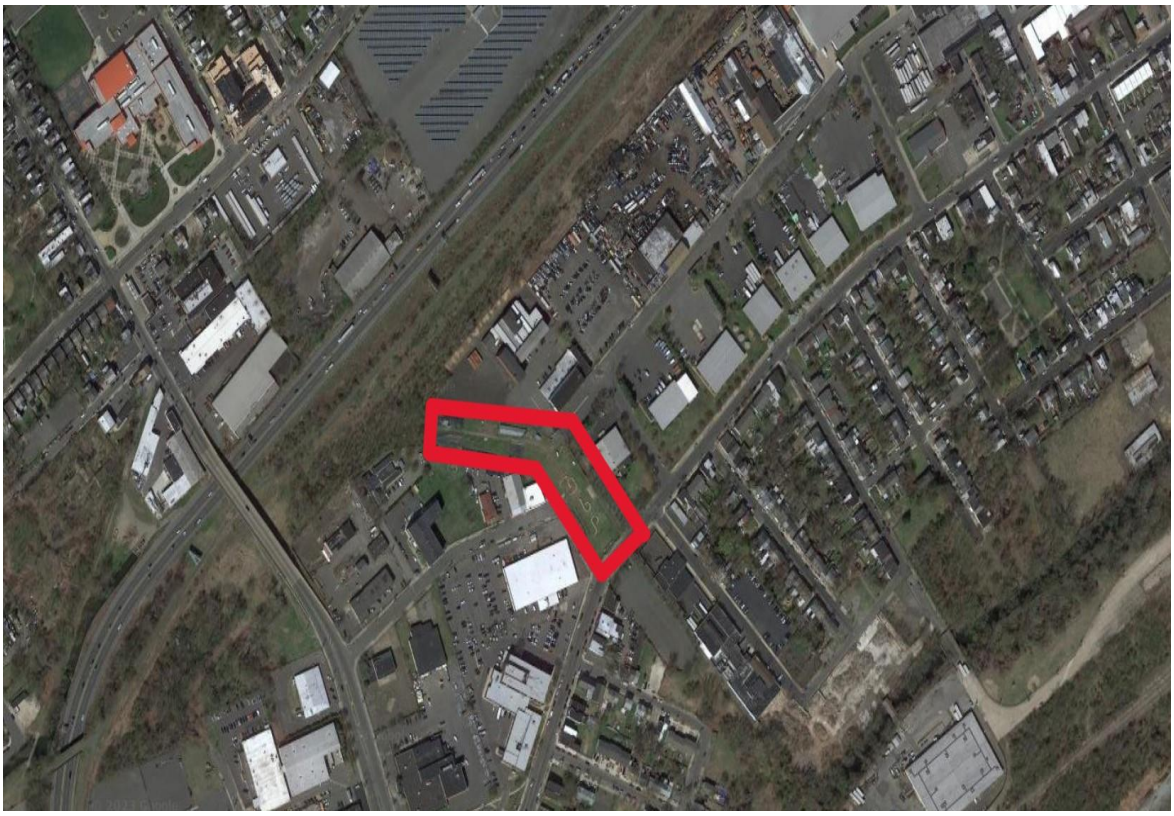
To help offset costs, the farm received public funding in the form of the Mercer County Open Space Fund, but those funds did not exceed $10,000-$20,000 annually.

In 2020, the farm was assessed by Ellen Fallon-Senechal, an analyst and graduate student studying urban agriculture at Rutgers University, examined the farm using the Four L framework: land, labor, liquidity and leadership. Her examination revealed that the farm is unsustainable without "an adjustment of the Agrihood board's commitment to address participation, maintenance and management" of the project. She also determined that the Mercer County Open Space Fund was insufficient to meet the ongoing needs of the project.

DTW found that very little was done to engage and solicit community feedback, and that most residents had little knowledge of the development. After assessing community input as part of their role, DTW acknowledged that the issues and needs most important to the community were education/youth development, jobs/economic development, safety, and environment/greenspace. Among the top programming desires were youth and job programs.

It was realized that if the initiative were to continue moving forward, The Garden State Agrihood NPO must clearly discern what the intentions and expected outcomes are for all stakeholders. The farm and its operational difficulties give context to the importance of having clearly defined expectations and purposes when engaging the public and continuing operations. It is also a reminder of how fragile the relationship with other outside organizations can be, especially when those organizations are the financial backing of the project.

Figure 4. Capital City Farm Aerial



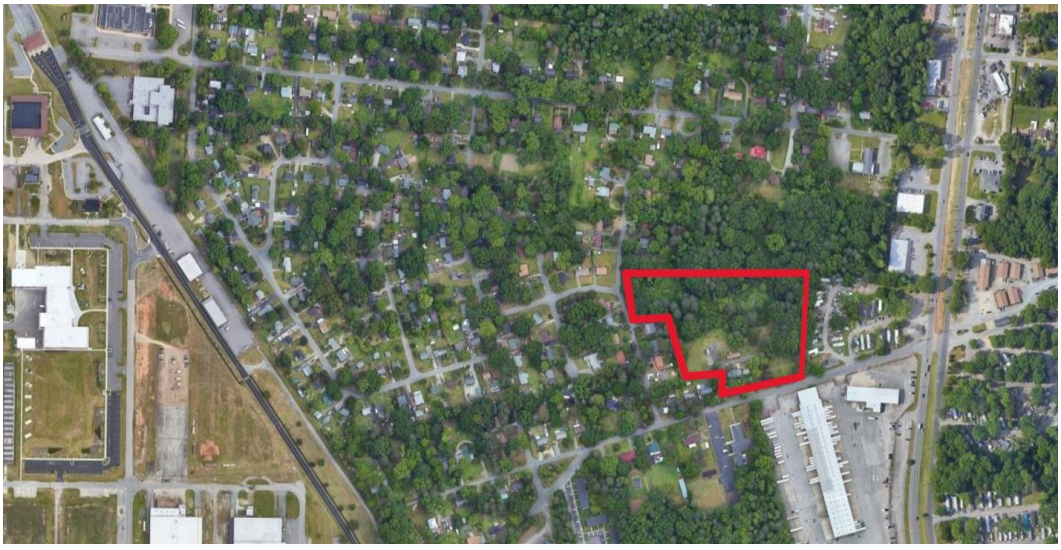
Bensley Agrihood

The Bensley Agrihood offers a unique perspective on the implementation of an Agrihood in terms of its preplanning and development phase. Intended to serve as Chesterfield County's permanently affordable agricultural community, the project is a result of collaboration between a private landowner, Duron Chavis, the founder of Happily Natural, LLC, a nonprofit that works towards social justice issues, and Maggie Walker Community Land Trust.

Figure 5. Bensley Agrihood Stakeholders

Located in a racially diverse neighborhood, the project has sought to improve the lives of young women through the partnership with Girls for a Change, and it seeks to remedy housing issues in the area as well. The project is currently undergoing zoning analysis to determine how densely the property can be developed, which will inform housing plans for the site.

Figure 6. Bensley Agrihood Aerial



The development process currently undertaken lends valuable context to the development of the Petersburg site. The localities are similar in their makeup and are close in physical

proximity to each other. Additionally, any outcomes of the current Chesterfield housing and zoning analysis will be useful in assisting with determining policy barriers to completing development of this scale. Also, community engagement efforts will be useful in informing this plan of the methods available for soliciting community feedback.

Canticle Farms

Canticle Farms is the product of a lifetime committed to addressing social inequality through the lens of faith, social justice and earth based nonviolent activism. The farm is located in a densely populated section of Oakland, California known as the Fruitvale District.

Figure 7. Canticle Farms Agricultural Work

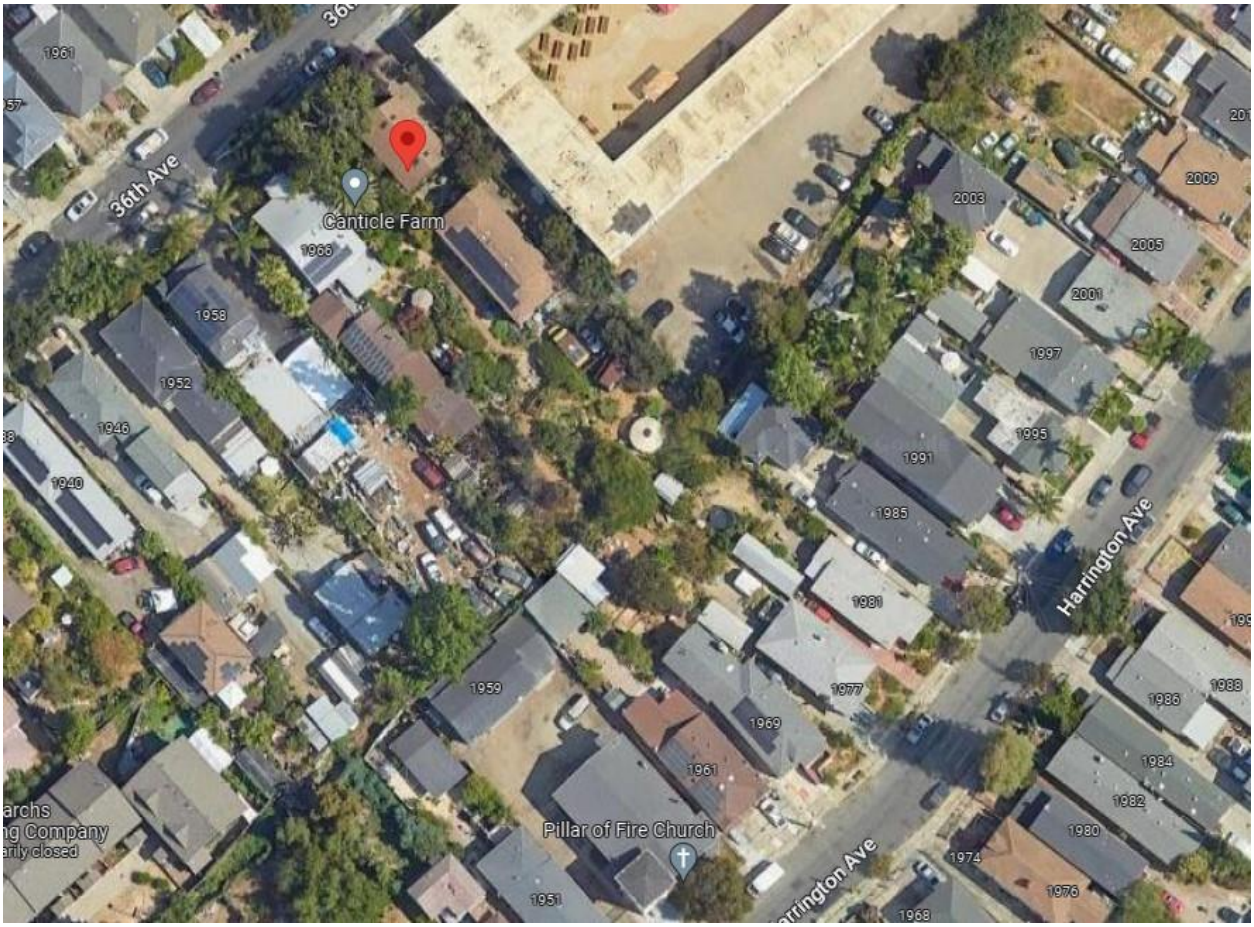
Source: https://canticlefarmoakland.org/

Founded years ago, as the result of a home purchase, Canticle Farms turned into a initiative by the homeowners to provide housing to individuals re-entering society after incarceration. The husband-and-wife property owners recognized that their project would soon morph into a larger endeavor, and immediately made the move to organize their affairs as a 501c3 organization, which granted tax exempt status. In addition to that business organization, the group then began working to acquire adjacent and bordering lots to their residence and placing those properties into a trust that ensured it would remain committed to serving as affordable housing. As time passed, the group was able to acquire enough surrounding properties that shared a common greenspace that the idea was borne to include agricultural production in their activities. As part of their programmatic offerings, the dedication to support re-entry materialized upon purchasing another property to the rear of their location. Through personal fundraising, the organization was able to acquire enough funds to establish subsidies to account for the decreased home costs they passed to the residents. The organization acquired all of their properties through their non-profit status, which allowed for

decreased financial commitments. Among other programmatic and educational offerings were activitism education, restorative justice, creation of a workshop space and a teaching garden. The organization relies upon significant volunteer support, and donations to the organization are the primary source of funding.

To ensure that there were no conflicts in the collection or administration of funds, the organization made it a point to only engage with organizations that were willing to give financially without restriction or giving just to give. This allowed the funds to be used in a flexible manner without having to be subject to monitoring or grant reporting. Canticle Farms has been able to provide a range of options for potential residents, including rental units and options for purchase.

Figure 8. Aerial Location of Canticle Farms




The initial vision of the project, as described by the owner, was to be malleable. Owing to the nature of community development and real estate, flexibility was key in navigating both changes in the real estate market as well as providing a living for themselves. The ebb and flow of residents has also been constant, as has their agricultural offerings. Currently, the

garden produces some food and herbs that can be used as medicines, which can be sold for revenue. The organization has formalized a partnership with another entity that specializes in grant writing, helping secure funds that work towards enhancing and building urban gardens.

In terms of community engagement, Tsymen-Bucher reiterated the commitment to serving the members of their community in the most direct, non-extractive way possible. At the center of their engagement is the belief that you must have trust and intimate contact with you community in order to keep an initiative like this sustainable or desirable. The development of that trust has led to an increase in external partnerships, contacts and resources that are leveraged regularly to help maintain the space. The final financial pieces of the puzzle reflect that growth. The farm owner indicated that there is now a national pool of relationships with people with wealth that can be tapped for funding, and the organization also gets grant funding through religious organizations.

Currently, the Canticle Farm project intends to expand its operations with the opening of a second project site in Sheep Ranch, California, roughly three hours to the east of Oakland in the mountains of central California. Current project design and conceptualization has only just begun, and while land has been acquired and is currently being surveyed, there have been no decisions on the course of development for the space.

Twin Oaks Farm/Acorn Community

Twin Oaks is one of the oldest intentional communities in the state of Virginia. Currently in their 56$^{th}$ year of operations – established in 1967 – the farm has developed a blueprint for sustainability and how to manage an intentional community. Founded on the principles of egalitarianism, income sharing, and sustainability, the project has maintained a steady population since its inception. The community took careful consideration when developing their bylaws in the early stages of development, and many of those principles are still evident today. Recently, the community underwent drastic reorganization when several members of the community disagreed about their adherence to issues related to social equity, white supremacy and the role their community played in that space. After several members of the community were separated, the new group promoted and circled around a new set of rules meant to eliminate sexism, racism, ageism and competitiveness within their community, and have reported that things have stabilized since the initial schism.

Figure 9. Twin Oaks Community

Source: Twin Oaks Community

The community is able to sustain itself financially through the production of handmade hammocks, which are the primary source of funds, but the farm also produces tofu and engages in seed growing. Through a partnership with Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (SESE), and under the guidance of Ira Wallace – who serves as the agricultural expert on site and is a resident of Twin Oaks – the farm has acquired subcontracting work with SESE to produce, pack and ship their seeds to individuals purchasing them online. Organized as a 501d, the group takes responsibility for the needs of the individuals living there, such as housing and food. The farm collects SSI from older residents, if applicable, and gets the rest of their funds from their retail operation of hammocks, tofu and seed growing. The farm organizers indicate that roughly 60 to 75% of their food consumption can be accommodated by on site farming, with the rest being purchased externally. The farm maintains a 3 acre organic vegetable garden, a hoophouse, and also has a collection of dairy and beef cows. Their 501d status permits the collection of donations from outside sources, and those funds remain critical to helping stabilize operations.

In terms of administration of the community, the organization has utilized members as "planners", who serve on 18-month staggered terms, and they collectively manage and run the farm. Based on the work of BF Skinner, the farm engages their leadership as planner/managers, and each is in control of a different facet or component of the farm's operations. They also hold weekly community meetings, where concerns are addressed in an open forum.

For their community engagement efforts, the farm partners with other groups in the community already engaged in community development work, and admittedly do not have the capacity to engage in that endeavor on their own. The group maintains adherence to several principles related to equality, and "participatory democracy" is one utilized often, where the group aims to hear and consider all voices, and also acknowledge that they take extended periods of time to come to decisions about how to move forward. While this may seem cumbersome to some focused on efficiency and turnaround, the group has found this pragmatic approach to decision making to work in their favor, and report that they generally have few, if any, major disagreements on the direction of the farm. In an effort to preserve their safety and remain neutral, the group does not engage in any activism in the Louisa County area, choosing to take an anti-antagonistic approach. Located in a heavily conservative region, the group has made the decision to avoid conflict whenever possible, hoping to avoid disruptions in the farm operations.

Strength/Weakness/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) Analysis

SWOT analysis can be helpful in summarizing overall themes, conditions and circumstances that produce the current environment. The ability to separate and identify these values is essential in building effective recommendations.

**Strengths** – The city of Petersburg is fortunate to have a community makeup that is deeply connected and concerned about the issues facing Petersburg. There are many individuals willing to contribute to the betterment of their community, and there is an immense sense of pride amongst city residents. Also, the project location presents an ideal location to begin providing food and community space, as evidenced by being located directly in a residential neighborhood and in close proximity to a public school, which is an anchor institution in the community. There are also present an extensive array of community based and nonprofit organizations working towards social justice, food sovereignty and other critical social issues. Lastly, the project site itself is conducive to providing housing, as the current operations onsite only utilize approximately 25-33% of the total parcel imprint. This provides extensive land space to construct housing.

**Weaknesses** – The lack of access to upfront capital was a common theme throughout the research. Individuals often don't have the income on hand to purchase market price homes, and in terms of Agrihoods, the initial costs associated with acquisition and development are hard to overcome, considering most new business enterprises or startups don't generate revenue in their early years. Additionally, the implementation of an Agrihood development in Petersburg could be challenging due to municipal mismanagement/inefficiency. The area has been in decline for a long time and has only recently saw a change in attitude about the prospects of the city.

**Opportunities** – Field observations and interviews with residents established the concept that citizen and resident readiness for change is tangible. Long time residents of the city

bemoan the disorganization that has plagued it for so long, but are wholly optimistic about the future. This also speaks to the resiliency of African Americans as individuals and a community. There is also a notable opportunity to engage in protracted, intense community engagement. Engagement is often a limiting factor, and even well established organizations find difficulty in completing this task adequately, even by their own admission. There is also great opportunity to identify the most effective ways of measuring success of an Agrihood, since there are so many variations and iterations of that model.

**Threats** – Among the most visible threats to the community and success of community development initiatives is the diminishing amounts of public funds allocated for social and health equity projects. Changes in political administrations can cause disruptions in public funding, as political views may impact the "necessity" of social programs. Virginia has recently experienced a change in gubernatorial administrations, and as a result, many social programs saw significant reductions in annual budgets. Additionally, when a city is limited resource-wise, such as Petersburg, there can be an eroding public willingness to engage in altruistic behaviors if they perceive that those making decisions are not acting in their best interest.

# Recommendations

Based on the findings above, derived from case studies, literature review, existing conditions, research and interviews with a range of individuals involved in Agrihood and food justice work, a series of recommendations must be developed to meet the goal of creating an Agrihood in Petersburg. What follows are an outline of goals, objectives and actions that are intended to produce and foster an environment of resource sharing, networking, and support for any Agrihood or community-based development.

**Goal 1. Create regional food systems networking alliance**

Every interview and field conversation conducted throughout the research period of this plan echoed a similar sentiment: the need to find a more efficient way to connect all the interested parties and stakeholders engaged in Agrihood development (or other agricultural initiatives centered around social justice). Across the spectrum of interviews, everyone mentioned that they perceived there to be a deficit in the connectivity of all the critical parts of the process. Suggestions were made to identify ways to increase a coalition of people and organizations engaged in the work already.

*Objective 1.1 - Increase connectivity of organizations participating in food initiatives.*
Action 1.1.1: Creation of a living document and resource toolkit (Central Virginia Food System Alliance) that can be shared with potential initiative participants (network map).
Action 1.1.2: Establish regular information sharing relationships between regional Planning District Commissions, units of local government and nonprofits/community-based organizations centered around planning.
Action 1.1.3: Establish a permanent connection between nonprofits and community-based organizations seeking funding with entities that specialize in community engagement, such as Virginia Community Voice.

*Obj 1.2: Identify steps necessary to create a seamless financial spectrum to assist individuals with Agrihood development, from inception to completion.*
Action 1.2.1: Educate community members and interested food justice stakeholders on availability of funds through public and private financing sources.
Action 1.2.2: Establish formal relationship with Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI)
Action 1.2.3: Increase marketing efforts to support additional fundraising.

*Obj 1.3: Work with existing lending institutions (CDFIs) to better connect individuals to the appropriate funding sources.*
Action 1.3.1: Establish a shared resource point (Virginia Community Capital) to deploy individuals to appropriate funding source.
Action 1.3.2: Establish regular informational sessions provided by lending institutions for residents

**Goal 2. Identify alternative planning practices for food-centered development**

What is clear from the literature review and interviewing individuals actively engaged in administering Agrihoods is the need to rethink and reframe how we engage in traditional planning practices. Identification of alternative planning techniques underlies the need to shift how we think about how our actions impact individuals. By continuing to engage with systems as they currently are, we can expect the same results. By placing the decision-making power back into the hands of the people, we can expect that resources will be deployed more equitably.

*Obj 2.1: Maximize agricultural development on existing vacant/underutilized parcels.*
Action 2.1.1: Create active database of vacant parcels across the central Virginia region, updated at regular intervals, that are available for development.
Action 2.1.2: Develop new jurisdictional zoning policies that allow for donation of vacant land into a land purchase pool for individuals under income threshold.

*Obj 2.2: Expand support services available to individuals engaged in food centered development.*
Action 2.2.1: Create partnership with local universities to connect planning and agriculture students with individuals in the planning and development stages of Agrihood development.
Action 2.2.2: Support existing labor force through training and education.

## Goal 3. Advocate for additional educational/information programming for residents

Another theme emerging from research and community interaction was the need to increase the knowledge base available to citizens of a community. Similar to the philosophy of "a rising tide lifts all boats", an expansive offering of educational programming can help to educate citizens of the basic principles needed to effectively engage in the improvement of their own conditions.

*Obj 3.1: Expand the educational offerings available to city residents.*
Action 3.1.1: Utilize existing relationships with community educational institutions to provide educational programming, free of charge, to city residents across fields of business management/incorporation, real estate, financial planning, agricultural education.
Action 3.1.2: Creation of a fund dedicated to compensating individuals that can offer educational programming in the community.

*Obj 3.2: Provide resources for high school students interested in agricultural or community development work.*
Action 3.2.1: Create digital and paper materials and resources that can be shared as educational and informative sources.
Action 3.2.2: Research economic impact of agricultural production for different crops

## Goal 4. Increase citizen participation in planning practices

Across the spectrum, especially considering recent social events, attention has been refocused on building trust, establishing positive community relationships, and a movement towards more participatory planning. With the social unrest of recent years, emphasis has been placed on incorporating the input, advice and guidance from residents and marginalized communities into the decisions and policies that impact their lives.

*Objective 4.1: Expand opportunities for individuals to engage in the planning activities of their community.*
Action 4.1.1: Creation of a public fund to compensate residents for their participation in the planning practices of the local jurisdiction.
Action 4.1.2: Creation of a public fund to compensate residents for their service towards community or civic groups.
Action 4.1.3: Creation of a public fund to compensate residents for their time spent served engaged in community development efforts, such as canvassing, administering/hosting focus groups.
Action 4.1.4: Creation/maintenance of a volunteer/resource sign up database.

*Objective 4.2: Close the gaps in knowledge that exist amongst residents as it relates to planning.*
Action 4.2.1: Create digital and paper materials and resources that can be shared as educational and informative sources.
Action 4.2.2: Connect with previously existing groups and networks engaged in community development work.

**Goal 5. Increase food security, positive health outcomes**

The central theme of this plan is to increase food security. Efforts and actions should be made to increase the amount of fresh, nutritious food to residents most in need. Several recent studies and reports, especially from the Urban and Regional Planning school at VCU, which engages students in various platforms addressing food insecurity.

*Objective 5.1: Increase access to healthy, nutritious foods for residents.*
Action 5.1.1: Establish protocol/policy to allow placement of urban agriculture sites in close proximity to communities needing support.
Action 5.1.2: Allow flexibility in zoning policy to allow additional business and retail operations to occur without a formal license under a certain cash limit (exchange of goods/services)
Action 5.1.3: Upgrade existing infrastructure related to non-vehicular traffic (sidewalk improvements, bike lanes, etc)

*Objective 5.2: Increase access to affordable housing for residents below income threshold.*
Action 5.2.1: Partner with organizations providing subsidies for potential homebuyers.
Action 5.2.2: Hold regularly scheduled information sessions relating to affordable housing.

## Implementation

The development of an agricultural space is a process that often takes place over an extended period, and in many cases, is never quite complete. In terms of traditional real estate development, completion is often realized upon receipt of the certificates of occupancy or when homes are sold to homebuyers and people begin to occupy the space. Agrihoods often continue to develop and grow over the course of their lifespan, such as acquisition of additional parcels, the expansion of operations into other locations, the growth in number of residents and the required infrastructure upgrades needed to accommodate that growth. Additionally, since Agrihoods often depend on relationships with outside organizations, growth and development also continues in that arena over the course of the operational phase.

To meet the changing demands and needs of Agrihoods, it is important to identify goals, actions, and objectives over three phases of time: short-term, mid-term, and long term, as well as identifying the entities or individuals that may engage at that time.

Goals, objectives and actions to be completed in the short term are those that can be developed and realized within a 2-year time frame, with the time frame beginning with the conceptual/pre planning phase. These are actions that do not require extended commitments, such as obtaining a business license, purchasing land, and creating a networking database that can act as a resource point. These actions are important because they represent the point in which organizations begin to take shape and immerse themselves into the work towards establishing an Agrihood. The incorporation/establishment of your organization as a legal entity will impact the operation and administration of a project throughout its lifespan, and sound business practices should be idealized during this time. This is also the period in which community relationships and engagement should begin, which will help guide your course of development. Building a coalition of support will impact the mid and long term aims of your organization.

Mid-term objectives and actions occur within the 2-5 year period of an Agrihood, or the implementation phase discussed previously. Successes and accomplishments may be present at this time, and the Agrihood should have started to stabilize operations. This is the point where more complex operations may start to take shape as the Agrihood begins to conceptualize expansion or growth and have a more thorough understanding of their own capacity. Additionally, there may be some burgeoning community consensus regarding attitudes towards the Agrihood. Coalescing that support into more directed initiatives and one-off endeavors may occur during this time, such as establishing advisory groups, operating a retail component, realizing profits and other actions.

Long term actions are those that occur beyond a 5-year period and continue over the course of the Agrihoods operations. These actions are the fruition of early planning choices made during the pre-planning phase, such as the adoption of certain principles or values. Once operation of the Agrihood has stabilized, the project should begin to focus on enhancing their own operations and looking to develop larger networks of collaboration. Once practices have been standardized, capacity to expand becomes more feasible and the Agrihood moves into a phase of expansion, maintenance or other practice they find appealing. At this stage, there should be a distinct level of trust and cooperation between the Agrihood and the community, receipt and administration of grants is ongoing, and other complex business activities.

For the following implementation tables, abbreviations were utilized to reference stakeholders involved in the process of developing an Agrihood.

Happily Natural, LLC = HN.
Maggie Walker Community Land Trust = MWCLT.
Petersburg Oasis Youth Farm/Community Garden = POCG.
City of Petersburg = COP.
Foodshed Capital = FC.
Virginia Community Capital = VCC.
Department of Housing and Community Development, Division of Economic Development and Community Vitality = DHCD.
Virginia State University College of Agriculture = VSU.
Canticle Farms = CF.
Chesterfield County Public Schools = CCPS.
Hogan Group = HG.
Twin Oaks Farm = TOF.
Better Housing Coalition = BHC.
Virginia Community Voice = VCV.
HDA Advisors = HDA.
Farm to School Programs = F2S.
Virginia Housing = VH.
Planning Districts = PD.

| | | Short | Mid | Long | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal 1. Create regional food systems networking alliance** | Obj 1.1: Increase connectivity of organizations participating in food initiatives. | | | | all |
| | Action 1.1.1: Creation of a living document and resource toolkit (Central Virginia Food System Alliance) that can be shared with potential initiative participants (network map). | | | | HN |
| | Action 1.1.2: Establish regular information sharing relationships between regional Planning District Commissions, units of local government and nonprofits/community-based organizations centered around planning | | | | HN |
| | Action 1.1.3: Establish a permanent connection between nonprofits and community based organizations seeking funding with entities that specialize in community engagement, such as Virginia Community Voice. | | | | HAD, BHC |
| | Obj 1.2: Identify steps necessary to create a seamless financial spectrum to assist individuals with Agrihood development, from inception to completion. | | | | VCC, FC |
| | Action 1.2.1: Educate community members and interested food justice stakeholders on availability of funds through public and private financing sources | | | | VCC, FC, DHCD, VH |
| | Action 1.2.2: Establish formal relationship with Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) | | | | VCC, FC, DHCD |
| | Action 1.2.3: Increase marketing efforts to support additional fundraising | | | | HN, POCG |
| | Obj 1.3: Work with existing lending institutions (CDFIs) to better connect individuals to the appropriate funding sources | | | | VCC, FC, DHCD, VH |
| | Action 1.3.1: Establish a shared resource point (Virginia Community Capital) to deploy individuals to appropriate funding source | | | | VCC |
| | Action 1.3.2: Establish regular informational sessions provided by lending institutions for residents | | | | VCC, FC, DHCD, VH |

| | | Short | Mid | Long | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Goal 2. Identify alternative planning practices for food-centered development | Obj 2.1: Maximize agricultural development on existing vacant/underutilized parcels | | | | COP |
| | Action 2.1.1: Create active database of vacant parcels across the central Virginia region, updated at regular intervals, that are available for development | | | | MWCLT |
| | Action 2.1.2: Develop new jurisdictional zoning policies that allow for donation of vacant land into a land purchase pool for individuals under income threshold | | | | MWCLT |
| | Obj 2.2: Expand support services available to individuals engaged in food centered development | | | | HAD, PD |
| | Action 2.2.1: Create partnership with local universities to connect planning and agriculture students with individuals in the planning and development stages of Agrihood development | | | | VSU |
| | Action 2.2.2: Support existing labor force through training and education | | | | HDA |

| | | Short | Mid | Long | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal 3.** Advocate for additional educational/information programming for residents | Obj 3.1: Expand the educational offerings available to city residents | | | | VSU, COP |
| | Action 3.1.1: Utilize existing relationships with community educational institutions to provide educational programming, free of charge, to city residents across fields of business management/incorporation, real estate, financial planning, agricultural education | | | | HAD, VSU, CCPS |
| | Action 3.1.2: Creation of a fund dedicated to compensating individuals that can offer educational programming in the community | | | | COP |
| | Obj 3.2: Provide resources for high school students interested in agricultural or community development work | | | | F2S |
| | Action 3.2.1: Create digital and paper materials and resources that can be shared as educational and informative sources | | | | HN |
| | Action 3.2.2: Research economic impact of agricultural production for different crops | | | | HN, POCG |

| | | Short | Mid | Long | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal 4.** Increase citizen participation in planning practices | Objective 4.1: Expand opportunities for individuals to engage in the planning activities of their community | | | | VCV, BHC |
| | Action 4.1.1: Creation of a public fund to compensate residents for their participation in the planning practices of the local jurisdiction | | | | COP, HN |
| | Action 4.1.2: Creation of a public fund to compensate residents for their service towards community or civic groups | | | | COP |
| | Action 4.1.3: Creation of a public fund to compensate residents for their time spent served engaged in community development efforts, such as canvassing, administering/hosting focus groups | | | | COP |
| | Action 4.1.4: Creation/maintenance of a volunteer/resource sign up database. | | | | HN, VCC |
| | Objective 4.2: Close the gaps in knowledge that exist amongst residents as it relates to planning | | | | |
| | Action 4.2.1: Create digital and paper materials and resources that can be shared as educational and informative sources | | | | HN |
| | Action 4.2.2: Connect with previously existing groups and networks engaged in community development work | | | | VCV |

| | | Short | Mid | Long | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal 5.** Increase food access, positive health outcomes, housing | Objective 5.1: Increase access to healthy, nutritious foods for residents | | | | HN, POCG, TOF, F2S, CCPS |
| | Action 5.1.1: Establish protocol/policy to allow placement of urban agriculture sites in close proximity to communities needing support | | | | COP, PD |
| | Action 5.1.2: Allow flexibility in zoning policy to allow additional business and retail operations to occur without a formal license under a certain cash limit (exchange of goods/services) | | | | COP, PD |
| | Action 5.1.3: Upgrade existing infrastructure related to non-vehicular traffic (sidewalk improvements, bike lanes, etc) | | | | COP, PD |
| | Objective 5.2: Increase access to affordable housing for residents below income threshold | | | | COP |
| | Action 5.2.1: Partner with organizations providing subsidies for potential homebuyers | | | | VCC, VH, DHCD |
| | Action 5.2.2: Hold regularly scheduled information sessions relating to affordable housing | | | | DHCD, VCC, VH, BHC |

# Summary

Petersburg has an extensive history of navigating through challenging times. From its inception, African Americans have played an important role in the development of the city, and today that spirit is still present. As evidenced by an extensive network of community support and stakeholders, the Petersburg Youth Farm has matured into a resource for not just the residents of the neighborhood but of the city as a whole. By incorporating some innovative planning techniques and building a housing development truly dedicated to community needs, we can improve lived experiences in the city.

By adopting the recommendations set forth in this plan, the Petersburg Youth Farm can further cement their status as a community resource by providing affordable housing stock and fresh produce for residents, thereby increasing health outcomes and reducing food insecurity. By allowing flexibilities in development and planning practices, the city can help channel underutilized parcels into the hands of stewards who are working towards the goals and objectives of this plan.

This plan highlights the challenges and difficulties associated with creating and maintaining developments that are centered around Black liberation and independence. It puts forth a set of alternative methods that can be useful in creating Agrihoods and other types of developments that work towards social justice. By sharing resources, creating a regional network of collaboration, and by engaging in the work with mindfulness and respect, we can take control of the development of communities most in need.

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# Appendix A – Interview Questions

Interview Questions – Financing

What have homebuyers indicated as some of their primary deterrents/obstacles to buying a home?

What are some lending flexibilities your organization has found to be useful in supporting potential homeowners?

How have financial institutions pivoted to serve underserved communities, or what unique options are available to those with low financial security?

What public funding sources are beneficial to development/operations of Agrihoods?

What public/private partnerships were useful in development?

Where are resources overcommitted? (Where can we pull back resources and still deliver effective outcomes?)

Interview Questions – Real Estate

What policies have you challenged in getting rezoning completed?

What limitations do homeowners indicate is the most challenging to overcome?

How has the establishment of a trust benefitted your organization in terms of land management/developing housing stock?

What creative funding agreements have you developed to support homebuyers?

Interview Questions – Agrihood/Farm Operators

Who have you worked with that has helped support your current operation?

How do you plan on moving your project forward?

What plans (if any) do you have for expansion? Why is this important to you?

What type of revenue is generated by your operation?

What portion of your total operating fund comes from the sale of produce?

How has the organization of your business entity impacted your operation? (LLC, corporation, 501c3, 501d, etc.)

How do you conduct community engagement? How does the community view your initiative/project?

Have you faced challenges related to your core social values or mission?

What more would you do if you had more resources?

Why did you select your project site? (Flexible zoning? Pre-existing projects? Availability of land?)