



Gorham Community Agriculture Plan 1.02

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Community Agriculture Definitions

- **Community Garden** – Community gardens are a collaborative effort between gardeners, municipalities, or community partners to provide access to gardening space for those who may not have safe or productive access at their home. Providing a space for neighbors to gather and grow food builds community and positively contributes to food security. Garden plots can be constructed with free or donated materials that are generally low-cost or considered to be waste products. Common materials include partially composted horse manure, leaves, newspaper, cardboard, wood chips and seaweed. While most community gardens are built on publicly owned land, some may be located on privately owned or semi-public spaces.
- **Containment** – Used in a soil contaminant context. Recommended practices when gardening in an area with high-risk soil. For example, suggested containment practices include preventing contact with the contaminated soil by creating barriers. For example, the contaminated soil can be covered with a semi-permeable barrier that allows water to pass but not contaminated soil particles, and then the barrier can be covered with a thick layer of clean soil. After encapsulation, the area may be used for raised bed gardening.
- **CSA** – Community Supported Agriculture is a system consisting of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation. Traditionally, CSA members, or shareholders, buy a share of the farm's production prior to each growing season, and receive regular distributions (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) of the farm's harvest throughout the season. This funding allows farmers to receive necessary capital at the start of every season. Through a CSA, shareholders and farmers agree to share the risks and rewards of the growing season.
- **EQIP** – Environmental Quality Incentives Program, a program ran by NRCS. The program provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits.
- **Food Desert** – An area in which at least 33% of the population has low access to a healthy food retail outlet. Low access is defined as more than 1 mile from a supermarket in urban areas, and more than 10 miles from a supermarket in rural areas.
- **Gleaning** – The act of collecting leftover crops from farm fields after a commercial harvest, or when commercial harvest is not economically profitable. This practice dates back over 2,000 years, and has seen a resurgence recently. Today, volunteer groups recover what is not harvested, and provide it to community members in need.
- **Land Trust** – Land trusts work to conserve lands through various means, including purchase of land outright or by holding development rights. They also serve as stewards for conserved land, managing it for low intensity use by the public. In some cases land trust-managed land provide an opportunity for community agriculture projects, foraging, or other activities.
- **NRCS** – Natural Resource Conservation Service. USDA agency who provides technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers.



- **Mitigation** – Used in a soil contaminant context. Recommended practices to minimize risk of interaction with lead-contaminated soil. For example, suggested mitigation practices include washing hands and gardening clothes well after touching soil, adding compost to lower soil lead concentrations, and avoiding growing leafy and root vegetables.
- **Perennial Agriculture/Food Forests** – A system of low-maintenance plants which mimic the ecological relationships of nature. These plants are selected for their edible properties, medicinal properties, or general usefulness towards agricultural uses. Their designs are comprised of layers (similar to a natural forest), which are suitable to the site and promote biological activity.
- **Permaculture** – The conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive systems which have the diversity, resilience, and stability of natural ecosystems.
- **Regenerative Agriculture** – Agriculture practices which focus on rebuilding soil organic matter and restoring degraded soil biodiversity resulting in carbon drawdown and improving water quality.
- **Remediation** – This is the practice of physically removing contaminated soil from a site. It is generally expensive and presents challenges for transport and disposal of the toxic materials removed. This strategy may be indicated only if certain criteria are met such as: Very high levels of contamination, use by sensitive populations, and ample financial resources being available.
- **Rural** – Typically defined by the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS)¹ as some combination of; open countryside, rural towns (places with less than 2,500 people), and urban areas with populations ranging from 2,500 to 49,999 that are not part of larger labor market areas (metropolitan areas).
- **Urban** – Defined as an area where the Census Bureau finds an urban nucleus of 50,000 or more people. This may or may not contain an individual city of 50,000 or more people.
- **USDA** – US Department of Agriculture. Government agency which provides significant funding and resources for agriculture projects, including community projects and commercial-scale farms.
- **Vermiculture** – The practice of intensively farming worms to accelerate decomposition of organic material into compost. The compost created by these worms is high in nutrients.

¹ "Rural Classifications - Overview." October 2019. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/>



Introduction

This adaptive Community Agriculture Plan or “CAP” is intended for use by the Town of Gorham to support a more sustainable and resilient locally based food system. It seeks to accomplish this by empowering local people and organizations to play a greater role in food production, processing, and distribution.

As noted by many Gorham residents during the early COVID-19 era, in Spring, 2020, Maine is at the end of long supply chains, and its food systems are subject to significant disruptions. Evidence of public desire for greater food independence can be seen in drastic shortages of supplies such as seeds, seedlings, and chicks in both the 2020 and 2021 growing seasons.



Figure 1: The COVID-19 pandemic sparked an intense interest in local food production (April 2020).

Increasing Maine’s consumption of food from local sources has been recognized as a key goal of Maine’s climate action plan² released in December, 2020. The plan calls for Maine to increase food consumed from state producers from the 2020 level of 10% to 20% by 2025 and to 30% by 2030. The plan notes that broad-based cooperation between individuals, organizations, and multiple levels of government will be required to meet these ambitious goals. Supporting community agriculture will play a crucial role by both increasing demand for locally produced food as well as supply.

This CAP begins with an introduction to “Community Agriculture” concepts and definitions. It provides an inventory of the Town of Gorham’s existing community agriculture infrastructure and capacity, including key organizations and their roles in community agriculture initiatives. Recommendations are provided for expanding community agriculture installations, programming, and policy which will support moving the community towards a sustainable and resilient food system. It concludes with recommendations for keeping this plan current through an “adaptive planning” process.

² “Maine Won’t Wait, A Four-Year Plan for Climate Change”. December, 2020. https://climatecouncil.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf



What is Community Agriculture

“Community Agriculture” is an expansion of what is often described as “urban agriculture”. Urban agriculture has been practiced since the dawn of cities and continues to be practiced today even in our largest metropolises. We use the term “community” in place of urban to describe the initiatives included in this plan in order to better reflect societal and technological changes that have fundamentally upset the traditional definitions of “urban” and “rural” land uses.

Community agriculture in contrast with “individual” or traditional agriculture is a developmental approach to food systems that is integrated in the community and emerges from a culture of mutualism and succeeds when the community engages with land resources (***Attachment A: Community Agriculture Defined***). While there is some overlap between several of the elements, in general “individual” agriculture includes larger-scale commercial farms that receive USDA subsidies. Many of these farms exist in Maine, and they form a crucial part of our local food system. In some cases, “individual agriculture” may support “community agriculture” initiatives, but not necessarily. For example, a farm may offer agri-tourism opportunities such as educational programs to learn how to prune apple trees. The educational program would serve as a community agricultural initiative.

Small scale agriculture is not new, nor is institutional support for it. For example, “Victory Gardens” were encouraged to increase food supplies in the United States during both world wars. However, many new types of initiatives have been developed to expand the capacity of community members to grow and process local food. The intent of this plan is to outline how the Town of Gorham can foster these activities in the current era. The Town’s Community Agriculture Plan is a development program that aligns local food culture, current resilience trends. It merges when people have access to land.



Figure 2: A large scale “individual” agriculture farm (Sept 2020).



Figure 3: A community agriculture initiative in Portland (Aug 2020).



Community Agriculture Benefits

The community agriculture activities described in this plan will supplement and build on existing efforts to support traditional commercial farming in the state of Maine. By increasing demand for local, in-season products, growing the agricultural labor force, and by protecting prime farmland Maine's agricultural industry will be revitalized. Where the overall goal is to build stronger and more resilient local foods systems, many initiatives are equally as relevant in both rural and urban communities.

Key benefits of supporting community agriculture include:

- **Increasing broad-based public awareness of food systems.** This includes details about what produce is in season and how it can be prepared. Information on permaculture design can help maximize the use of smaller spaces to provide much greater benefit, and with lower maintenance, than a traditional lawn.
- **Building community economic development.** For example, the presence of a nearby community garden is frequently listed as a valuable amenity in real estate advertisements. "Edible Main Street" demonstrations and farmer's markets are recognized as a strategy for activating commercial centers, encouraging walking and adding to "quality of place".
- **Provide increased markets for local commercial farms,** making key changes to the "demand" side of the economic equation to meet state goals to increase consumption of locally grown food to 30% by 2030.
- **Provides valuable public health benefits.** Community agriculture helps to address food scarcity or "food deserts", reducing economic or social barriers preventing access to nutritious food. Adding regenerative approaches to producing foods improves the nutrient-density of foods, reducing degenerative diseases. Additional physical activity benefits, for example from walking to a local community garden or browsing an edible Main St. walking loop also exist. The Town of Gorham can also help reduce pathways for lead exposure, by raising awareness of potential lead contamination and value of soil tests for lead screening.



Figure 4: An introduction to permaculture taught by local permaculture expert, Aaron Parker (April 2019).



Figure 5: Edible Main Street planter in Gorham, Maine (August 2019).



- **Provides environmental benefits for Maine communities.** Community agriculture is a strategy for meeting goals in Maine’s climate plan to increase consumption of local food. Restoring soil biomass is one of the best ways to sequester carbon, something that we can do to reverse climate change. In addition, by increasing markets for local agriculture, more farms can maintain their operations rather than be converted to subdivisions. Finally, permaculture designs can provide buffers that reduce runoff of nutrients to waterbodies, creating “edible hedgerows” to meet stormwater management goals.

Plan Development

The goal of this CAP is to serve as a blueprint for the Town of Gorham to support and expand its community agriculture programming. It is important to note that individual initiatives should not exist in “silos”, but rather linked with each other, and also to other community goals. For example, goals to make Gorham Village more walkable by stimulating active transportation can be addressed by maintaining an Edible Main St. demonstration and continuing to support an active, thriving farmers market.

This CAP was shaped by Gorham Parks & Recreation, Gorham Village Alliance, and Gorham’s Town Planner with survey input from the community and facilitated by the Cumberland County Soil & Water Conservation District. The plan draws on experiences of several other towns including Portland, South Portland and Gray, and several organizations from Cultivating Community to Maine Foodscapes, to The Resilience Hub, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association and Maine Food Security Council.

Additionally, this plan consulted the Town of Gorham’s Comprehensive Plan and recent permaculture developments in the Village area. We sense potential for integration with the Conservation Commission, and additional Town Departments.

The recommendations section of this plan includes a number of cross-linked goals. Each section includes notes on how it connects with other linkages, and when common stakeholders are involved.



Community Background

Agriculture History

The Town of Gorham's 2016 Comprehensive plan affirms the town's agricultural roots, as well as the contemporary challenges - and opportunities - facing the agricultural sector:

"Renewed interest in local, fresh food is spurring a revival of farming in Gorham and across Maine. According to the latest U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture, land dedicated to farming in Cumberland County grew 21% between 2007 and 2012, from 51,727 acres to 62,701 acres. The number of farms increased 14% during the same period, from 630 to 718.

The Census of Agriculture does not provide town-level data, but farming has always figured prominently in Gorham's settled history, and continues to contribute to both the scenic character of the community and to its economy. Historically, dairy farms dominated the landscape throughout Gorham. Today, there are only a few active dairy farms, as more and more farmers are turning to specialty crops, artisan farms, agri-tourism, and direct to consumer sales as a way to help their farms remain economically viable. Community supported agriculture (CSA), where local residents can buy a share of a farmer's product, has become popular and there are several CSA farms in Gorham.

The long, slow decline of agriculture in Maine during the latter part of the 20th century has left its mark on local attitudes toward farming, with many people still unaware that farming is on the rise and little recognition that farming is a significant contributor to Maine's local, regional, and state-wide economies. The rise in farming activity has also created new tensions between property owners interested in revitalizing farmland and neighbors who may object to the sights, smells, and sounds of farming activities. Since most local ordinances in Maine were developed during the period of agricultural decline, many - including Gorham's - do not adequately address farming uses and in many cases create inadvertent barriers to local farmers."

Community Demographics

The following Population & Demographic Issues and Implications were provided from the 2016 Comprehensive Plan:

- Gorham's population increased by an estimated 17% from 2000 to 2014, outpacing surrounding communities, the county, and the state.
- Gorham experienced a natural population increase (births minus deaths) of 435 from 2000 to 2010 - but a migration-related increase of 1,354.
- Gorham's largest population increase from 2000 to 2014 was among 45-64 year-olds. While the 25-44 year-old population decreased by an estimated four percent, the population under 25 increased by over six percent.
- Gorham's population is increasingly educated; in 2010, over 37% of the population had a bachelor's degree (up from 31% in 2000).



Survey Results

A Community Agriculture survey (Attachment B. 2020 Survey Results) was conducted in September 2020 to gain input into priorities for this Community Agriculture Plan. Survey responses indicated high value in Farmer's Markets, Adult Education for Gardening, Farmland Preservation, Gardening Programs for Youth, and Community Gardens.

Community Goals

In response to the State of Maine's goal "*to safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens resources*", Gorham's Comprehensive Plan lists the following objectives:

- To safeguard lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry.
- To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.

The following goals were developed to meet these objectives:

1. Adopt a process for spending density transfer funds collected to protect open space, with farmland identified as one of the priorities.
2. Work with local, regional and statewide organizations to protect important areas of remaining farmland.
3. Amend the Land Use Code to better support and promote farming by removing unreasonably burdensome ordinance language and permitting processes for farm operations, including at a minimum changes to provisions relating to:
 - a. Setbacks
 - b. Signs
 - c. Commercial sale of products grown
 - d. Required parking for farm stands
4. Approach the USM Muskie School to partner in the development of a detailed inventory of current farming activities and comprehensive economic impact analysis to better understand current farming activities in Gorham and the impact farming has on the local economy.

Existing Community Agriculture Initiatives

Community Agriculture Stakeholders

Town of Gorham

- Parks & Rec Department: Determines park locations for installations. Hosts educational events.
- Planning Division
- Economic Development Division
- Conservation Commission

Gorham Village Alliance: Maintains the Edible Main Street program. Ensures community ag projects are in keeping with Village aesthetic.



Individual Businesses: Support community projects through volunteering, donations, or fee-for-service.

- Landscape Revolution
- Nurseries
 - Edgewood Nursery
 - Ossipee Trail Garden Center
 - O'Donal's Nursery
- Grocery Stores
- Restaurants

Commercial Farms: Support community projects through donations. May offer agro-tourism opportunities.

- Benson farm - composting operation
- Rust Farm
- Parsons
- Grants
- Orchard Ridge
- Findview
- Patten's
- Martin - Place
- King's
- McNeally
- Mosher
- Holistic
- Merrifield
- Allen's
- Smiling Hill Farm
- Rusty Knoll
- Hickory Harvest
- Acorn Acres
- The Hop Yard- provides locally grown hops to over two dozen Maine breweries, including some of the largest in the state.

Youth Organizations: Participate in educational and volunteer opportunities.

- Local Schools
- Scouts

Land trusts:

- Presumpscot River Land Trust
- Maine Farmland Trust

Religious Organizations: Participate in volunteer opportunities.

- Fort Hill Community Church

Gorham Garden Club



Farmer's Market

University of Southern Maine

- Environmental Science Department
- Sustainability Department

Policy

Land Use Regulation

The Town's Land Use Ordinances presently support agriculture by allowing it as a by right use within the Rural Zoning Districts and allowing smaller urban agriculture type uses within other Zoning Districts. The town also has a Development Transfer Ordinance section that allows the purchase of additional density in the village/growth areas which allows for the purchase of open space and farmlands for the protection of them.

The Town is currently working on an ordinance amendment that would allow agritourism. This proposed use would allow those uses for education and the general enjoyment of the farming atmosphere.

Economic Development

The Economic Development Division, as part of the Department of Community Development, is working with local farmers to actively promote the heritage of local agriculture in Gorham. Through local press outlets and advertising, the Town has highlighted Gorham's agriculture community and ties to regional economic development. In addition, the Town is utilizing Gorham Community Access Media (GoCAM) which produces regular features on the local economy, including agricultural businesses.

Education

Adult Learning

Gorham Parks & Rec provides many opportunities for adults to learn about permaculture methods and food preservation. New equipment was purchased in 2021 for use with food preservation courses and is also available for rent. This equipment was purchased through CCSWCD's community agriculture grant from NACD.

Courses on the following topics have been offered since 2009:

- Food Preservation
- Composting
- Edible Landscaping
- Gardening

Gorham Parks & Rec partnered with Aaron Parker of Edgewood Nursery to provide workshops on "*Introduction to Food Forests*" and "*Introduction to Edible Plants*" in 2019 and 2020.



A Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/GorhamFoodForest>) was created to help disburse information about Town community agriculture initiatives, food forest plant features, and educational opportunities. The page has accrued over 450 followers.

Youth Education

Gorham Middle School started a garden in 2004. The space provides garden beds for vegetables and flowers as well as fruit trees, composting, and vermiculture. Garden produce is donated to the local food pantry or used in cooking demonstrations at the school.

In 2019, the Gorham summer rec camp began incorporating garden education into their junior camp at Little Falls Recreation Center. Campers plant seeds and learn the basic needs that plants have to produce food.

Plantings

Community Gardens

Gorham Recreation hosts 8 garden beds in Robie Park for community members to use. Gorham High School staff have expressed an interest in expanding the garden space here for school use.

In 2018, 4 mobility accessible raised beds were constructed by a boy scout at the Little Falls Recreation Center. One is dedicated to the Lakes Region Senior Center and the other three have been utilized by the junior rec program with produce being donated to the Gorham Food Pantry.

Perennial Agriculture

Gorham installed two food forests in 2019 with support from the Cumberland County Soil & Water Conservation District and funding from the Quimby Family Foundation. A small food forest is located within the Gorham Village area at Phinney Park which contains two fruit trees and an array of edible herbaceous shrubs. A larger food forest was installed at Little Falls Recreation Center and contains a range of unique edible plant species like kiwis and pawpaws as well as more common plants like black raspberries and strawberries.

These food forests installed by community volunteers, Town Recreation staff, and CCSWCD staff. They were designed for the public to interact with them and signage is posted for help with identifying plants and their various uses.

Maintenance is provided seasonally through community workdays. The Gorham Village Alliance has taken on the responsibility of coordinating maintenance for the Phinney Food Forest on Green St. The Little Falls Food Forest maintenance is coordinated by neighborhood volunteers with some assistance provided by Gorham Recreation for mowing paths and the front apron.

Edible Main Street

In 2019, Gorham Village welcomed an "Edible Main Street" program with support from the Cumberland County Soil & Water Conservation District and funding from the Quimby Family Foundation. In its first year, the demonstration had 11 participating locations with 24 planter



boxes which were built by a local Eagle Scout. These numbers almost doubled to 19 participating locations in the following year with an additional 24 planters built by local Girl Scouts.

Starting in 2021 the project will be coordinated by the Gorham Village Alliance who coordinate location sites and promotional materials.

Programs

Community Resources

Gorham Parks & Rec has canning equipment which is available for loan to support food preservation.

Composting

The Town of Gorham is home to Benson Farm which partners with Garbage to Garden, a curbside composting business to provide a large-scale composting operation. This service is not available for Gorham residents at this time.

Farmer's Market

A farmer's market is held in the green space adjacent to the Baxter Memorial Library on Saturday mornings throughout the spring and summer. It brings together about 10 vendors offering produce and crafts. A winter market runs in the Gorham Park & Rec building from October through December.

Recommended Community Agriculture Initiatives

The following proposed recommendations were developed by CCSWCD working with stakeholders from the Town of Gorham and are derived from community needs and goals. These recommendations are aspirational, and need further public engagement before being adopted by the Town.

It is recommended that a municipal staff point person is designated to be responsible for community agriculture programming. This person should already have a role in open space management and will serve as a contact within the municipality for key partners to coordinate action plans.

Key partners for implementation have been included in this list. It may be useful to share relevant action plans directly to key partners with a role in implementation.

Three categories are presented for the timeline and indicate priorities, with a starting point of Spring 2021, to facilitate planning:

Short Term: May be completed within the next 2 years.

Medium Term: May be initiated or completed within the next 5 years.

Long Term: Initiation and completion is expected to take place 5 years or longer from now.



The items included in these tables are intended to be used to help guide high-level decision making and planning. More information on how to implement each action plan is included in the attachment section of the document in the “detailed action plan guides”. The detailed action plan guides were developed for Southern Maine communities, and include information that can be used to determine how to create municipal-specific programs. The community may choose various methods to implement these recommended action plans.

Policy

Policy Module	Community Goals	Actions Plan Summary	Timeline	Key Partners
Land Use Regulation (Attachment C-1) <i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Events, Soil Contamination, Economic Development, Perennial Agriculture, and Foraging & Gleaning.</i>	To assist people with overcoming economic barriers to accessing land for food production	1. Clarify ordinance language to be more specific and utilize modern language.	Short	Town Council
	To promote local food production to achieve economic self-sufficiency goals	2. Draft modern language to determine which land uses are characterized by “farming”. Apply this language to the next Comprehensive Plan.	Short	
	To align municipal ordinances and policies with community agriculture needs			
To produce economic benefits, both directly as local food is produced and indirectly as businesses	3. Specify the applicability of edible plants and trees for traditional landscape purposes.	Medium		
	To integrate community ag goals into other sustainability initiatives			



<p>Economic Development (Attachment C2)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Events, Edible Main Street, Perennial Agriculture, CSAs, and Farmer's Markets.</i></p>	To build workforce capacity through education	1. Engage Gorham Schools and local career and technical education providers on ways to raise awareness of and promote the benefits of a thriving local agriculture sector.	Short	<p>Gorham Economic Development Division</p> <p>Gorham Village Alliance</p>
	To enhance branding of community identity	2. Ensure Gorham's agricultural heritage is included in all promotions of Gorham's local economy.	Medium	
	To promote local food production to achieve economic self-sufficiency goals	3. Take steps to elevate the exposure of Gorham Farmers Market within the community to raise awareness of local producers.	Short	
	To recognize opportunity to invest in public spaces, seek funds from grants and volunteers to do improvements and maintenance.	4. Connect community partners and collaborate on grant funding opportunities to address shared priorities for local agriculture, open space and recreation.	Short	
	To connect the public with commercial agriculture growth	5. Continue to utilize existing resources (i.e. GoCAM, GEDC) to promote examples of successful commercial agriculture in Gorham, and collaborate on activities and events to promote local businesses.	Short	



Education

Education Module	Community Goals	Actions Plan Summary	Timeline	Key Partners
<p>Adult Learning (Attachment C3)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Events, Youth Education modules, Gleaning & Foraging, Soil Contamination, and Soil Health.</i></p>	<p>To improve awareness and understanding of local food systems as a means of community resilience.</p>	<p>1. Increase adult programs offered through Parks & Rec</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Gorham Recreation</p>
		<p>2. Install bee hive at Robie Park to use for community education programs.</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>GHS Bee Club</p>
	<p>To inspire the community to engage in locally grown food systems.</p> <p>To increase accessibility to fresh locally grown produce and promote food security.</p> <p>To increase understanding of gardening basics and plant needs and create more successful gardeners.</p> <p>To grow the labor force, grow the local food economy, and create vocational opportunities</p> <p>To promote understanding of ecological relationships as a way to create habitat and food sources that are self-sustaining.</p>	<p>3. Utilize trail heads for educational materials on plants that may be available for foraging.</p>		



<p>Youth Education (Attachment C4)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Events, Youth Education modules, Soil Contamination, and Soil Health.</i></p>	To increase youth understanding of where food comes from and the importance of local food systems.	1. Increase garden space at Robie Park with dedicated space for High School programming.	Medium	Heather Whitaker-Gorham Middle School
	To inspire youth to engage in locally grown food systems.	2. Install beehive at Robie Park to be maintained by the High School Bee Club.	Short	Gorham High School
	To increase accessibility to fresh locally grown produce and promote food security.	3. Improve and expand food system and gardening education throughout school system with a focus on elementary schools.	Medium	GHS Bee Club Gorham Recreation GHS Eco Club
	To promote understanding of ecological relationships as a way to create habitat and food sources that are self-sustaining.	4. Provide garden-based lesson plans for spring and fall activities.	Medium	GMS Green Trees Club
	To increase understanding of gardening basics and plant needs and create more successful gardeners.	5. Provide opportunities for students to join an extracurricular garden club.	Medium	
	To increase the sustainability of our food system in the long term.	4. Hold activity days for youth to be involved in garden activities.	Medium	
	To grow the labor force, grow the local food economy, and create vocational opportunities.	5. Permanently incorporate gardening education and access to garden plots for Gorham Summer Rec Programs.	Short	
		6. Increase nutrition education in all schools.	Medium	



<p>Events (Attachment C5)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Events, Youth Education modules, Soil Contamination, and Soil Health.</i></p>	<p>To unite community around food and local agriculture.</p>	<p>1. Hold educational garden walks to demonstrate different garden techniques.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Gorham Recreation</p>
	<p>To improve awareness and understanding of local food systems as a means of community resilience.</p> <p>To inspire communities to engage in locally grown food systems.</p> <p>To increase accessibility to fresh locally grown produce and promote food security.</p> <p>To generate community excitement around local food initiatives.</p> <p>To encourage sustainable economic growth based on local agriculture.</p> <p>To shape and share community culture and personal cultures.</p> <p>To connect communities to their ecosystem.</p>			



Plantings

Planting Module	Community Goals	Actions Plan Summary	Timeline for Installation	Key Partners
Community Garden (Attachment C6) <i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Land Use Regulation, Economic Development, Events, Youth Education, Adult Learner, Soil Contamination, and Soil Health modules.</i>	To inspire the public to engage in locally grown food systems. To improve awareness and understanding of local food systems as a means of community resilience.	1. Consider additional locations and space for community gardens.	Short	Gorham Recreation Gorham Garden Club
	To increase accessibility to fresh locally grown produce and promote food security. To demonstrate low maintenance gardening techniques that can be applied on a large or small scale. To increase community connections, including multigenerational relationships.	2. Increase promotion around available community garden spaces.	Short	
	To connect with nature To improve public health through benefits of working outside and increasing access to healthy food To build economic and community development To have a stronger community presence.	3. Seek additional community input to determine the need for community garden spaces. Expand program accordingly.	Medium	



<p>Connecting Growers to Land (Attachment C7)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in community gardens and adult education modules.</i></p>	<p>To assist people with overcoming economic barriers to accessing land for food production</p> <p>To inspire the public to engage in locally grown food systems.</p> <p>To improve awareness and understanding of local food systems as a means of community resilience.</p> <p>To increase accessibility to fresh locally grown produce and promote food security.</p> <p>To utilize low maintenance gardening techniques that can be applied on a large or small scale.</p> <p>To promote understanding of ecological relationships as a way to create habitat and food sources that are self-sustaining.</p> <p>To increase community connections including multigenerational relationships.</p> <p>To increase multigenerational connections</p>	<p>1. Seek additional community input to determine the need for this program.</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Resilience Hub Land in Common</p>
<p>Perennial Agriculture</p>	<p>To improve the quality of public spaces and</p>	<p>1. Reestablish native species on Town land.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Gorham Recreation</p>



<p>(Attachment C8)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Land Use Regulation, Economic Development, Events, Youth Education, Adult Learner, Soil Contamination, and Soil Health modules.</i></p>	<p>encourage community interaction.</p> <p>To build economic and community development.</p>	2. Utilize trail heads and other open spaces as spaces for edible and native plantings.	Medium	
	<p>To increase accessibility to fresh locally grown produce and promote food security.</p> <p>To demonstrate low maintenance gardening techniques that can be applied on a large or small scale.</p>	3. Continue to maintain the existing food forests and expand as resources allow.	Short	
	<p>To promote understanding of ecological relationships as a way to create habitat and food sources that are self-sustaining.</p> <p>To inspire the public to engage in locally grown food systems.</p> <p>To improve awareness and understanding of local food systems as a means of community resilience.</p> <p>To increase habitat resilience and species diversity with the addition of perennial crops.</p> <p>To mitigate soil health concerns and build capacity for stormwater infiltration.</p> <p>To utilize space which may not be appropriate for traditional food production or have lower capacity for maintenance.</p>	4. Use existing food forests for hosting educational events and workshops on low maintenance gardening techniques, edible plants, and soil health.	Medium	



<p>Edible Main Street (Attachment C9)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Land Use Regulation, Economic Development, Events, and Perennial Agriculture modules.</i></p>	<p>To establish social care of town plantings and distribute workload associated with public landscaping.</p> <p>To create synergies with community members, volunteers, and municipal properties.</p> <p>To increase accessibility to fresh produce by bringing edible plants to the forefront.</p> <p>To create synergies with community members, volunteers, and municipal properties.</p> <p>To inspire the public to engage in locally grown food systems and local businesses to stimulate local economic activity.</p> <p>To improve awareness and understanding of local food systems as a means of community resilience</p> <p>To facilitate foot traffic in town and bolster the community's economy by creating a highlighting local business.</p> <p>To contribute visual cohesion & aesthetic appeal to the town center, perpetuating a sense of community and reinforcing the town center as a valued space.</p>	<p>1. Continue to support and grow Edible Main Street program in the Village Area.</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Gorham Village Alliance</p> <p>Scout Groups</p>
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Programs

Program Module	Community Goals	Actions Plan Summary	Time for Installation	Key Partners
<p>Community Resources (Attachment C10)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in adult education and youth education modules.</i></p>	<p>To inspire the public to engage in locally grown food systems.</p> <p>To provide the public with access to resources that may otherwise hinder their ability to complete garden or food preservation techniques.</p> <p>To increase accessibility to fresh locally grown produce and promote food security.</p>	<p>1. Incorporate local food into all school meals and other programs which provide youth services.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Gorham Schools</p>
	<p>To assist people with overcoming economic barriers to accessing land for food production</p> <p>To create economic efficiency by pooling resources for specialized equipment.</p> <p>To enable small scale agriculture to increase capacity through shared costs and risk mitigation in investments.</p>	<p>2. Promote resources that connect low-income residents with free garden beds.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Maine Foodscapes</p> <p>Gorham Economic Development</p>



<p>Composting (Attachment C11)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Adult Learners and Soil Systems & Fertility modules.</i></p>	<p>To inspire the public to engage in locally grown food systems.</p> <p>To reduce food waste in landfills</p> <p>To provide the public with an accessible option for composting.</p> <p>To reduce material costs for community ag projects.</p>	<p>1. Look into options to provide curbside composting, prioritizing residents in high density areas.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Public Works</p>
<p>CSA (Attachment C12)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Economic Development and Adult Learners modules.</i></p>	<p>To build resilient community relationships, farmers to consumers</p> <p>To stabilize revenue for producers over the growing season</p>	<p>1. Increase promotion of local CSAs, seedling sales/swaps, and farm stands.</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Conservation Commission</p>
<p>Farmer's Market (Attachment C13)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Economic Development and Events modules.</i></p>	<p>To inspire the public to engage in locally grown food systems.</p> <p>To provide local farms with a profitable market opportunity</p> <p>To improve awareness and understanding of local food systems as a means of community resilience.</p> <p>To provide a cultural amenity that unites community around food and local agriculture.</p>	<p>1. Continue to grow, advertise, and support the Gorham Farmer's Market.</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Gorham Farmer's Market</p> <p>Economic Development Division</p>



<p>Gleaning & Foraging (Attachment C14)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Land Use Regulation, Economic Development, Adult Learner, Perennial Agriculture, and Soil Contamination modules.</i></p>	<p>To increase public awareness and acceptance of gleaning / foraging</p> <p>To connect gleaning to food distribution systems</p> <p>To provide public education on gleaning/foraging in Maine, including guidelines on ethics, health, and safety</p> <p>To increase accessibility to fresh locally grown produce and promote food security.</p> <p>To inspire a broad-based, multi-general community engagement in locally grown food systems.</p>	<p>1. Seek additional community input to determine the need for this program.</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Gorham Recreation Conservation Commission</p>
<p>Soil Contamination (Attachment C15)</p> <p><i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Land Use Regulation, Adult Learner, Community Gardens, Perennial Agriculture, and Soil Systems & Fertility modules.</i></p>	<p>To raise awareness about possible contaminants in soil as a public health issue.</p> <p>To encourage home/community gardening and revitalize a community's value in local agriculture.</p> <p>To inspire stewardship of local lands & natural life</p>	<p>1. Encourage residents to utilize the University of Maine soil test</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>CCSWCD</p>



	through hands-on engagement.			
Soil Systems & Fertility (Attachment C16) <i>Consider relation to goals and action plans in Land Use Regulation, Adult Learner, Community Gardens, Perennial Agriculture, and Soil Contamination modules.</i>	To discourage the excessive use of inorganic chemical fertilizer nutrients which ultimately impact the health of water resources. To educate the public on the importance of soil health To promote understanding of ecological relationships as a way to create habitat and food sources that are self-sustaining. To improve awareness and understanding of local food systems as a means of community resilience. To inspire the community to engage in locally grown food systems.	1. Consider options to reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers within the Town, with a priority on the Village Area.	Medium	CCSWCD Gorham Public Works Gorham Recreation
		2. Provide more opportunities for homeowners to learn yard care methods that are alternatives to using pesticides and fertilizers.	Short	
		3. Increase outreach on the impacts pesticide and fertilizer use have on the health of local waterbodies, soil, and plant and animal habitats.	Short	

Adaptive Planning

Adaptive planning is an approach that can be characterized as “learning by doing”. Much of the recommendations found in this plan have already been tested in some form in the Southern Maine region, but several of these ideas are still in the “pilot” stage. As time goes by, more information will be gleaned from projects at the local, regional, and larger scales. In addition, community needs and goals will change. The plans should therefore be updated regularly to include new information, priorities, and goals as they emerge.

Keeping your plans fresh

These plans are written to create a planning framework from a starting point in Spring 2021. Time frames for recommendations range from short (within 2 years), medium (2-5 years), and

long term (more than 5 years). We therefore recommend that communities update plans according to the following schedules:

- Every 2 years:
 - Review the action steps in the plan and identify which have been completed.
 - Remove any actions that no longer appear relevant and add new actions as appropriate.
 - Adjust action item priorities, moving items up from long and medium term to short term as appropriate.
 - Conduct a community survey to assess changing needs, priorities, and trends.
- 10 Year interval:
 - Complete an update of all plan sections, incorporating new information. Items completed in the action item table can be included in the background or existing program categories as appropriate.
 - Conduct a survey to assess trends and changing needs recorded from surveys conducted during previous 2-year intervals.
 - Hold a community agriculture forum to present results of community survey, incorporate feedback, help set priorities, and present proposals for new installations, programing, and other community agriculture initiatives.
 - It is recommended that this be completed in concert with municipal comprehensive plan updates.
 - Consider incorporating the community agriculture plan into the municipal comprehensive plan.

Conclusion

This plan has described how strengthening community agriculture will advance a number of other important priorities for the Town of Gorham and how it ties into state goals to boost consumption of local food from 10% in 2020 to 30% by 2030. The plan is intended to guide Gorham over the next ten years, and beyond, to meet these needs.

The summary of existing initiatives showcases the work already being undertaken by the Town and local advocates. It details who is involved, setting the stage for how other stakeholders can be brought into the process.

Perhaps the most important component of this plan is the action item table which presents the recommendations for how existing initiatives can be tied together, built upon, and added to in order to significantly build community agriculture in Gorham. The table references various implementation plans developed for the Southern Maine region and included as an appendix.

As a final note, it is important we acknowledge the contributions of municipal staff and community advocates in collecting the information used to produce this plan. The community will play a crucial role in updating this plan at regular intervals, assisting the community with identifying priorities and meeting community needs in the years ahead.



References

"Growing Local: A Community Guide to Planning for Agriculture and Food Systems". April, 2017
<https://growingfoodconnections.org/tools-resources/community-guide/>

"Home Grown Baltimore: Grow Local". November, 2013
<http://www.baltimoresustainability.org/projects/baltimore-food-policy-initiative/homegrown-baltimore/>

"Maine Won't Wait, A Four-Year Plan for Climate Change". December, 2020.
https://climatecouncil.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf

"Town of Gorham Comprehensive Plan Update". 2016. https://www.gorham-me.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif4456/f/uploads/2016_comprehensive_plan.pdf

Attachments

Attachment A: Community Agriculture Defined

Attachment B: 2020 Survey Results

Attachment C: Community Agriculture Module Attachments

