



Newton Community Farm, Inc. 2013 Business Plan

Submitted by: **Newton Community Farm, Inc.
303 Nahanton Street
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Submitted to: **Newton Farm Commission
City Hall
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Newton Community Farm: A place to dig, learn, and grow.

About Newton Community Farm, Inc.

In 2005 the City of Newton's Community Preservation Committee and Board of Aldermen voted to acquire the historic Angino farmstead, the final working farm in Newton, for use as a community-supported agricultural farm. Newton Community Farm, Inc. (NCF) operates the farm under a license from the City and with the guidance of the City's Farm Commission.



As a non-profit entity, NCF strives to benefit the community by:

- Providing locally-grown produce to residents through a variety of programs including our seasonal CSA offerings, on-site farm stand, donations to local food pantries, and weekly attendance at the City of Newton's California Street Farmers' Market;
- Educating the public about the sustainable use of land and other natural resources through hands-on classes, workshops, and drop-in farm volunteer hours;
- Preserving Newton's last working farm as a historic site and valuable open space; and
- Connecting gardening enthusiasts through events and networking opportunities.

Board Members

President*	Peter Barrer
Treasurer*	Anne Ryder
Clerk*	Richard Dinjian
Member	Jennifer Craddock
Member	Sam Fogel
Member	Dede Vittori
Member	Eugene Finkelstein
Member	Barney Keezell

Farm Staff

Farm Manager	Greg Maslowe
Farm Educator/Coordinator	Alison Wilson

Committees (Chair)

Board Affairs	Richard Dinjian
Buildings	Peter Barrer
Communications	Dede Vittori
Education	Jennifer Craddock
Events	Peter Barrer
Farm Operations	Greg Maslowe
Finance	Anne Ryder

* Executive Committee Member

Executive Summary

The Board of Directors and staff at Newton Community Farm are proud of our accomplishments in 2012. The year began with a temporary change in farm managers, as our veteran farm manager took an eight month sabbatical, leaving two capable interim farm managers at the helm. This transition required careful planning and attention to detail, but overall was very successful. We are happy to welcome Greg Maslowe and his family back to Nahanton Street and we are excited to see what Megan Talley and Joshua Faller can establish in their new farm in New York.



The farm enjoyed a relatively average year in 2012 from a financial perspective compared to our aggressive budget. After seeing major revenue jumps in prior years in both events and farm operations, this year was relatively flat in those areas, and in some cases, lower than expected. In addition, major costs were incurred in expanded staffing, insurance costs, and investments in equipment and infrastructure. However, we did see increased Education revenue in 2012, which shows that the strategy to invest in that area is starting to deliver.

Some highlights in 2012 included:

- Reconstruction of our on-site farm stand after a devastating fire in February 2012. The first was most likely caused by arson.
- The continued development of educational programming. 2012 was the first full year for our Farm Educator/Coordinator, Alison, and she did not disappoint. She delivered increased programming, above-budget revenue, and many happy participants.
- Major fundraising events: the Seedling Sale, the Fall Festival, and two dinners. In 2012, we again established a Dinner on the Farm in July, which was returned to its original plan of a multi-course dinner hosted by a local chef and farm patron.
- The first full year of experimental growing in the movable hoophouse.

With the momentum gained from these positive highlights, we plan to tackle a major challenge in 2013: Phase 2 of barn construction. Although we are excited to more fully utilize this space and we look forward to benefiting from its development, the construction period will bring tremendous upheaval to the grounds of the farm. The Board and Farm Manager are planning for ways to keep disruptions at minimum; however, we expect this construction to impact food and equipment storage, CSA distribution, events, and onsite educational programming. In addition to construction, in 2013, we intend to focus on the development of our volunteer base. NCF is blessed to have generous patrons. The seedling sale, fall festival, mass mailing

drives, educational programs, and day to day operations all benefit greatly from the use of volunteer labor. We would like to collect the data related to these volunteers in a meaningful way so that we may properly match volunteers with opportunities in future years.

There are many more activities and goals planned for 2013 within each specific farm function. As a board, we are excited to see what 2013 will bring and how we can best develop the farm for the community.



Farm Operations

2013 looks to be an exciting, but potentially challenging, year for farm operations. Greg Maslowe is returning as Farm Manager and is looking at a number of ways to increase farm-based revenues and keep NCF at the forefront of agricultural innovation.

Season extension is a rapidly growing sector of the farm economy in New England. NCF has been experimenting with season extension practices for the last few years and is poised to enter into this area of growth more fully. Through the use of row covers, quick tunnels, and our new high tunnel, as well as cold hardy varieties, NCF is planning to extend our CSA season from its current 22 weeks to 24 weeks. This would allow the farm to modestly increase the price of CSA shares, which will help the overall finances of the farm. It will also provide our customers with greater access to local, nutritious food. NCF's onsite farm stand already opens as early as late-April and runs through Thanksgiving, but we will be looking to add an even greater variety of crops to what is on offer at the farm stand during the early and late season. This will be easier with an extended CSA season, as the larger volume of food we'd need to be producing will increase the efficiency with which we can grow it.



NCF is in communication with the Market Manager for the City of Newton's California Street Farmers' Market to talk about ways we can increase both the volume of customers at the market and the amount we make at each sale. This winter, NCF staff have been thinking through ways to improve our marketing and expand our

offerings. We hope that our efforts to increase our sales at the market will have a larger positive impact on the entire market, making it more vibrant.

Part of NCF's mission is to engage with the broader farming community. In 2013 we will be partnering with City Growers, an urban farming initiative in Roxbury, to provide them with seedlings for their farm. This provides another revenue stream for the farm, utilizes our greenhouse more fully during much of the year, and provides a valuable service to an organization trying to transform—or perhaps create—a farming culture in metro-Boston.



The main challenge facing farm operations in 2013 will be working around barn construction—scheduled to begin in April and run through the end of December. Not having access to the barn means having to find space to wash, store, and distribute produce (CSA distributions take place in the lower bays). Storage for farm tools and equipment, in particular our tractor and implements, will also be issues. The farm board and staff have already begun making arrangements for each of these.

Other challenges include continuing to maintain soil health under an increasingly rigorous growing schedule and increasing labor efficiencies as staff responsibilities increase. While the specifics of how we address these issues are unique to NCF, the problems are common to all farms. Soil health is the foundation of organic agriculture, and in the middle of summer there are never, no matter how long the day, enough hours to get all the work done.

This is an exciting time to be involved with agriculture. Awareness of the need for local, nutritious food has never been higher. Demand for delicious, fresh food has never been greater. The challenges that face NCF in 2013 are nothing compared to the opportunities that await us.

Research and Development

NCF Orchard

Our orchard currently has sixteen five-year old apple trees and ten two-year old apple trees, planted six feet apart. All are “dwarf” size (less than 12 feet tall), which require staking for support. The older trees have been bearing modest crops for two years, while the younger ones should begin to have fruit in 2013. The care and maintenance of the NCF orchard is always developing. This year, Sam Fogel, is focusing on changing his pruning practices. Pruning consists of trimming or removing selected branches, in order to assure that each remaining branch receives sun on every leaf, and optimal nourishment from the roots, so that large healthy apples can be produced.

The older trees were initially pruned to the vertical-axis system, with the trees trimmed to a pyramid shape with a dominant central leader. Due to the six-foot tree spacing, branches from adjacent trees are now touching each other, casting shade, and limiting fruit production. This winter, members of the NCF Tree Team will be trimming these trees to narrow the pyramid shape and assure more sun exposure. In 2013, we will experiment with the younger trees by introducing a new pruning system, called the Tall-Spindle System, in which the trees will have their side branches cut short, to about 12 inches. This approach has been found to have the highest yield per acre at the Cornell and UMass horticulture departments. Next spring, when the younger trees have young small fruits, we will “thin” them by removing all but five per tree, to insure that the majority of the tree’s photosynthetic energy goes into growth.

High Tunnel/Hoophouse Experimentation

The farm completed construction on its moveable high tunnel (a type of unheated greenhouse) in the late fall of 2011. While it has been successfully used for research and development in the previous season, this will be the first year when the same person who plants the high tunnel will also be harvesting from it. This will allow it to be more fully integrated into both the growing and marketing schedules.

We have already experimented with growing tomatoes, spinach, lettuce, and kale in the high tunnel. For 2013 we will likely build on what we have learned about growing these crops under plastic, as well as experimenting with even more crops such as cucumbers, heirloom tomatoes, salad mix, and mache. The goal is to understand what can most profitably be grown in this valuable space, but also to understand the variety of crops we can grow throughout the year to provide for adequate crop rotations.





Education

In 2012, the volunteer-based Education Committee led by our Farm Educator/Coordinator (FEC), Alison Wilson, evaluated and expanded program offerings in response to a perceived community demand. The expansions included outreach to area public and private schools, the development of a pre-school partnership program, expansion of the Farm Spouts program, and the development of a new program for middle school students: SAY F (Socially Aware Young Farmers). As a result, education income exceeded budget. In 2012, NCF offered 28 classes, multiple workshops, and the Halloween event serving 87 families and 59 individuals in aggregate. Twenty-three middle and elementary school students attended our summer programming, while Farm Sprouts served 66 families with preschoolers. In addition, programming, both on and off-site, connected the farm with 6 different schools (a preschool, 4 elementary schools, and the high school), one local business, and a few other Newton nonprofit organizations. In aggregate, this additional programming, outside of NCF's classes and summer programs, connected the farm with 30 additional families in the community.



The expanded program offerings also required additional responsibilities for the FEC. The expansion of the FEC role is considered to be an investment in the future educational programming at the farm; and therefore, this role is funded from educational offerings along with supplements from other farm operations.

The Education Committee's goal is to offer programming that reflects the full cycle of sustainable food production from soil health and growing plants, shrubs, and trees; to food processing and cooking; to composting. Our intent is to enable Newton citizens of all ages to learn sustainable gardening, to create a variety of items from the fruits of their own labor, and to reconnect with their natural environment, all while also encouraging an 'environmentally sustainable lifestyle.'

In 2013, the Education Committee's main focus will be on the evaluation of all programming, using data collected from past offerings, and investigation of any required licensing and insurance, in order to establish a base of programming and uncover directions for expansion. Specifically, the committee plans to develop the following seven distinct areas of education offerings and outreach:

1. Develop community farm experiences for young families through weekly *Farm Sprouts* and the *Ready, Set, Grow* series, as well events for Halloween and a spring Teddy Bear's Picnic; and for youth through *Budding Chefs* and a variety of after-school, summer educational programs for middle school and elementary ages.
2. Develop opportunities for reconnection with the natural environment to encourage participants to foster a 'sustainable lifestyle' by offering programs such as *Walking in a Winter Wonderland*, a variety of methods for food growing and processing, and 'art' based classes, for both youngsters and adults.
3. Provide outreach and support for projects in local public and private schools, as well as pre-school programming that include visits at the farm.
4. Develop a repertoire of annual program offerings that will immediately use the space in the renovated barn interior when it is completed in December 2013.
5. Develop professional programming for pre-school educators and develop and pilot professional programming for elementary educators in the Boston area.
6. Develop program structures, systems, and materials to educate and train farm educational volunteers.
7. Promotion of farm educational offerings through both print and social media networks, including the farm web site.

In sum, the Education Committee will continue to build its repertoire of offerings to the Newton community and schools in the coming year, while also strengthening its role internally to support the vision of the farm.



Events and Outreach

The main objective of holding events at the farm is to foster community involvement and enable public access to the farm, which is owned by the City of Newton. In 2013, we plan to attract high numbers of participants to the farm's five primary events:

- The fifth annual Seedling Sale is planned to bring hundreds of home gardeners to the farm. In the past we have typically sold more than fifteen thousand seedlings on just one weekend. In addition to purchasing seedlings, attendees will be exposed to the farm community, including the space itself, as well as opportunities to learn more about our educational offerings and to become Friends of the Farm. The event is also a significant source of income for NCF.
- The Fall Festival, our largest single annual event, attracts nearly 1,000 people to the farm, where individuals and families can enjoy bluegrass music, food, children's activities, pumpkin decorating, and tours of farming operations.
- Halloween on the Farm in the fall brings new faces and young families to the farm. We expect that the families enjoying this event will look forward to participating in other ways in future years. Although this event is coordinated by the Education Committee, the Board sees it as a way to invite the community to the farm, enjoy the open space and activities, and learn more about what the farm has to offer.
- Annually, NCF holds two farm-to-table events: Dinner on the Farm, held at the farm in July and dinner at Lumiere, held at a local restaurant in October. Both events offer opportunities to engage our donors and share our harvest.



Although the farm is dependent upon the efforts of a few key staff, NCF also significantly benefits from the work of our volunteer pool. In 2013, we hope to strengthen our efforts to recruit and engage volunteers with the farm, particularly in the areas of communications, events, and fundraising.

Preservation

The primary preservation project continues to be Phase 2 of the barn renovation, working closely with the Farm Commission, the City of Newton's Buildings Department, and the Architect, CSS Associates. The project, funded by the Community Preservation Committee, includes conversion of the main floor into handicap-accessible community and workshop space with bathrooms and a demonstration kitchen. Plumbing and heating systems will be installed and connected to site utilities. CSA and farming service areas on the ground floor will be improved with a new concrete floor, produce washing station, and permanent lighting. Site regrading and landscaping around the barn will assure handicap access to both levels.

As the design developed it became clear that the original CPC-approved budget was not sufficient to cover unexpected costs for lower level structural improvements, sprinkler systems, and fire alarm, despite considerable efforts to reduce the estimated construction cost and scope. Additional CPC funds were approved by the Board of Aldermen in December 2012, and the project will proceed in 2013. The Board of NCF will raise private funds for kitchen counters/appliances, produce washing station, and a produce cooler. Completion of the CPC funded project will be in late 2013, after which the Board will move ahead with the kitchen and other privately funded aspects.

The budget includes costs for temporary relocation of activities outside the barn during construction, such as storage for farming equipment and education supplies and a temporary outdoor location for the produce cooler. The budget also includes an allowance for unanticipated maintenance and repair expense related to the farmhouse and barn.

Administration

Communications

In 2012, NCF continued to correspond regularly with the farm community through seven monthly e-newsletters during our growing season and year-round email updates on farm events. The monthly newsletter included many interesting and informative articles and was consistently read by an average of 400 recipients per month. We also extensively publicized farm classes, programs, events, and our farm stand rebuilding efforts through many channels including the following:

- NCF's newsletter, website, Facebook page, and Twitter;
- media calendar listings and notices;
- newsletters, e-news, and blogs for other local environmental and community organizations;
- flyers at the local libraries, Newton's farmers markets, and events; and
- lawn signs on Newton's sidewalks and roadways.



We were particularly fortunate to receive a lot of favorable coverage of our events, farm stand rebuilding efforts, and the new hoophouse in the Newton Patch, Boston.com, Newton Tab, and the Mayor's Office Newton Tab column. Of particular note, NCF's Administrator, Rochelle Rosen, arranged for CNNMoney to visit NCF and profile our programs in a video on their website in the Best Places to Live 2012 section (refer to CNN Money's Best Places to Live 2012 website).

In 2013 we will continue our on-going communication program and will expand our use of social media to publicize the farm and promote sustainable agriculture. We will continue efforts to engage local and national media in profiling the farm and its benefit to the Newton community. Our efforts in 2013 will particularly focus on publicizing NCF's education programs, volunteer opportunities and recruitment, and the progress of the barn reconstruction project and associated capital campaign. We also plan to do a review of our website and will develop a plan for short-term and longer-term improvements.

Board Affairs

Working towards our goal of recruiting new board members and critical volunteers, in 2012 the Board of Directors was able to bring talented and enthusiastic individuals into new roles within the Farm community.

The Board welcomed Barney Keezell as a new member this year. Barney and his family have lived in Newton for more than 20 years and had previously volunteered at the Farm. Barney is retired from a long career as a social worker in the area of child welfare, including many years as a senior manager in state government, and he is also an avid organic gardener who is a graduate of NOFA'S (Northeast Organic Farming Association) land care course. In his role as a NCF Board member, Barney will coordinate volunteer participation and oversee the Friend of the Farm program.

The Board also recruited new critical volunteers with skills essential to the Farm's administrative needs, including Derek Weems who has begun leading the effort to clean and re-organize the Farm's donor and volunteer database.

Board Affairs again led a workshop in the fall, with this year's workshop focusing on clarifying and streamlining the relative roles and responsibility of the Farm Manager, Education Coordinator, and all other Farm employees and volunteers. The Board also re-visited and updated its rolling three year plan, with a vision towards keeping the Farm on track through the major barn construction in 2013 and beyond.

Fundraising

In 2013 we will initiate a \$240,000 capital fundraising campaign to complete the barn project. The first \$120,000 will be used at the end of 2013 to complete the kitchen and other aspects of the main floor to make it functional as a location for education and community space and also to install the produce washing station and produce cooler in the lower floor. The second \$120,000, when raised later, will fund installation of a screened porch on the north side of the building and office space for farm staff on a mezzanine loft over the main floor.

In 2013 we will repeat several events and appeals that have proven successful in generating donations to NCF. Although challenged by the barn project to find acceptable space, we plan again to host an informal Dinner on the Farm in July, which attracted over 80 guests last year. We also plan a formal dinner fundraiser in the fall.

We solicit donations twice a year, in April and November, by mail and email.

2013 Budget Summary

As noted above, 2012 was a challenging year for NCF. However, we were able to weather the storm due to the cash reserves built up during previous years. In 2013, we are setting some lofty goals, mainly to begin construction of phase two of the barn. This will require an additional capital campaign, which is not currently included in our operating budget as it is reflected below. In addition to the barn, our goals are to grow education revenue, to continue to host our successful fundraising events, and to continue to grow and sell local product onsite, through our CSA and at the City of Newton's Farmer's Market.

The charts below represent our revenue distribution for the year-ended December 31, 2012 and for our budgeted revenue for the same period in 2013 as well as further breaking down farm operations revenue for the same periods:

