



Massaro Community Farm

Planning for our Future

Strawman 5 Year Plan –
“Building for Sustainability.”



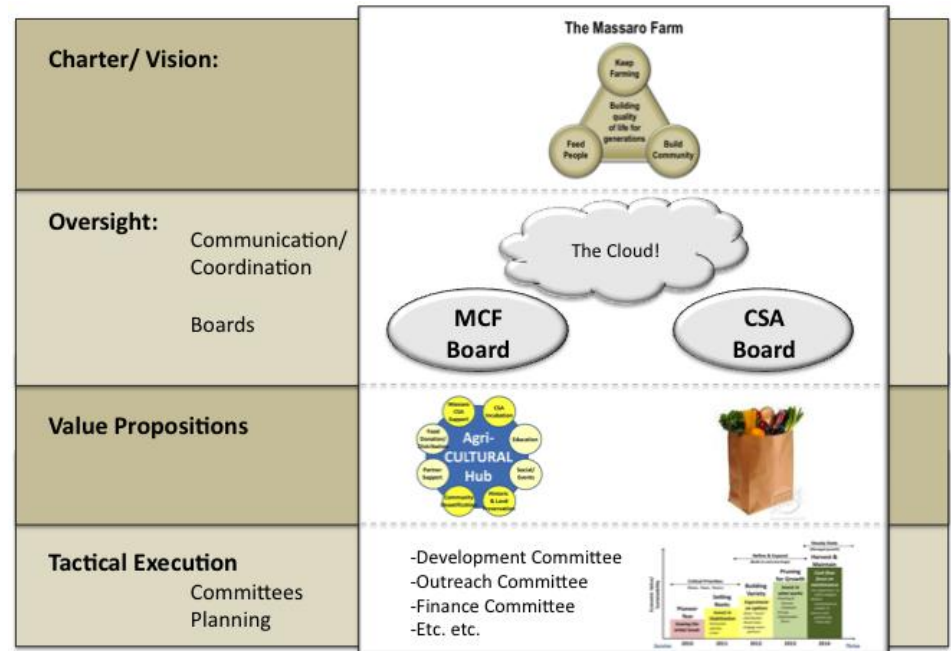
Massaro Community Farm

Creating sustainable successes (moving from “survive” to “thrive”) requires Massaro Community Farm’s many stakeholders to agree on direction.

*It’s ALL about decision making.
As a volunteer-based organization:*

- No one person’s agenda prevails (no one is the “boss”);
- Limited time to discuss all decisions;
- Personal “incentive” tied to non-monetary value (feel good).

Common direction/ purpose leads to common decision-making.



Keeping people engaged requires enabling some form of autonomy to make decisions – strategy helps to ensure decisions are consistent.



Strategic Development Committee

Committee Members

Darcy Shiber-Knowles

Anthony Ramirez

Sue AnderBois

Jon Gorham

Steve Munno

Suzanne Werth

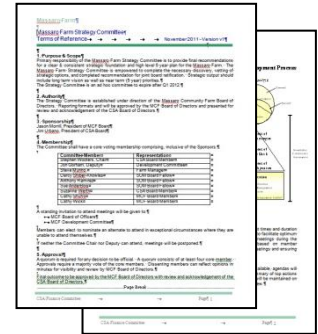
Cathy Shufro

Cathy Wick

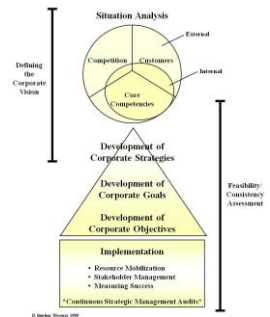
Stephen Wooters

The MCF boards sponsored an ad hoc committee to further develop the MCF strategic plan:

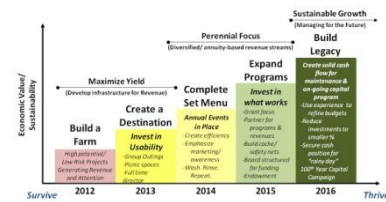
- **Terms of reference:** established a team and specific terms of reference for the expected outcome;
- **Strategic development process:** team gathered multiple times to go through a specific strategic development process, including re-iteration of the “situation analysis”;
- **Strategic clarifications:** taking the MCF charter and expanding on “what it means”;
- **Core values:** established a set of “values” that help to articulate the cultural foundations that go with the strategic priorities;
- **5 year plan review:** the team leveraged the outcomes from the strategic development process to establish a 5 Year Plan, qualitatively reviewing the key stages and drivers for prioritization of activities;



The Strategic Development Process

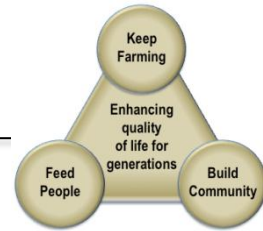


The strategic framework is intended to provide our key filters for decision-making - enabling greater leverage through delegation and execution against defined priorities.





Massaro Farm



Enhance Quality of Life for Generations

What it means:

Massaro Community Farm is an inclusive space that reflects many of the values and needs of its community.

In order to Enhance the Quality of Life for Generations, MCF will:

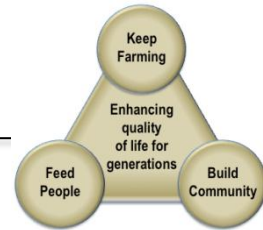
- Continue farming: MCF will remain a place for the community can experience farming firsthand
- Maintain 'curb appeal': Even though MCF is a 'working farm', being a good neighbor and enhancing the quality of life for the community involves keeping the farm clean and presentable. This will help the farm continue to be 'welcoming' to visitors/participants.
- Preserve the land: We are interested in protecting the land from development for "profit"
- Keep a long-term perspective: MCF plans for the future and will keep that perspective in mind when making decisions affecting the physical space of the farm or its operations. This includes making purchasing decisions based on quality, not solely price. Further includes planning for upkeep, repair, and replacement.
- Be financially responsible: In line with keeping a long-term perspective, MCF will continue to be financially responsible to maintain its long-term viability, not taking imprudent financial risks, leverage, or stretching its finances.
- Be real: MCF is a real, working farm. Our buildings and machinery are attractive, functional, and modern.
- Partner with local groups: As an inclusive community space, MCF encourages partnerships with local organizations, such as local youth clubs, local gardeners, birding associations, nature groups, etc.
- Inspire and Encourage Youth: MCF is a working farm that can inspire and train future generations to pursue a career in farming/agriculture. It can also be an example in environmental sustainability.
- Pursue Environmental Sustainability: We will use organic farming practices. We will engage in practices that respect our land and natural resources.

In keeping with this strategic plank, MCF will NOT engage in the following:

- We are not a 'museum': MCF is a working farm. We are not focused on historic preservation, but plan to be a fully functional, attractive, modern farm for many generations.
- We will not be exclusive: MCF is an inclusive environment where all members of the community are welcomed and encouraged to participate and enjoy the land.



Massaro Farm



Keep Farming

What it means:

MCF will continue to support an active and productive farm and farming business. In doing so, we will actively promote a culture of farming and sustainable agriculture while preserving and improving upon our land resource and regional cultural heritage.

In order to Keep Farming, MCF will:

- Be first and foremost a farm.
- Farm using sustainable/ecological practices: maintain organic certification - continue to use practices that align with organic specifications.
- Properly diversify: In order to retain financial and ecological sustainability, we will grow diverse crops, focusing on quality over quantity.
- Create a positive environment for the farmer and farm staff: Allow the farmer and staff the autonomy to make decisions and respect his/her expertise. MCF is a workplace that is supportive of its staff.
- Encourage participation: Community members are encouraged to volunteer on the farm. The farmer will also encourage participation from local schools through apprenticeship programs, internships, and training programs. This will help expose the community to the farming lifestyle and the option of farming as a career.

The MCF agrees with the State of Connecticut and its Declaration of Policy, that ‘it is in the public interest to encourage the preservation of farmland.’

In keeping with this strategic plank, MCF will NOT engage in the following: :

- Short-term thinking: MCF will be careful & deliberate. We will not rush or move too fast. MCF will always plan for the long-term interests of the farm over short-term interests.
- Overspecialize: MCF will never be a farm that produces just one crop (a monoculture). We will diversify for both financial and ecological sustainability.
- Cover the land with asphalt/Develop the land: While MCF is a community space, we will never develop the land in such a way as to jeopardize that we are first and foremost a farm.
- Treat the farm as a theater: This is a working modern farm, not a museum. The farmer will never be required to use antique tools or dress in ‘period appropriate’ clothing.



Feed People

What it means:

MCF will continue to use its resources as a farm to nourish people throughout the community: both through farming as well as donations to local organizations in need. In doing so, MCF will strive to minimize waste and sustainably optimize its productive capacity.



In order to Feed People, MCF will:

- Optimize production: MCF will slowly and sustainably grow the productive capacity of the farm. This may involve continuing to clear the land and increasing the acreage on which we farm.
- Minimize waste: Any food through careful stewardship, we will strive to maximize what we provide our community, either through the CSA/Farm stand or through donations to hungry community members.
- Deliver Quality and Diversity over Quantity: While MCF will continue to optimize production, we will prioritize diversity and quality of produce over the quantity we are able to produce. As stated above, we will not increase production through monocultures or unsustainable practices.
- Provide nutritious, healthy foods: MCF will continue to provide healthy, fresh produce to its community.
- Educate the community: We will help the community better utilize our produce by providing recipes/ideas for use. We will educate on simple ways to prepare and consume our products.
- Donate food to people in need: MCF will donate food to organizations that support local community members in need.

In keeping with this strategic plank, MCF will NOT engage in the following: :

- Define what is healthy: While MCF can offer recipes/suggestions, we will not support any one diet (vegetarianism, no dairy, no eggs, paleo, etc.).
- Lose sight of our core mission: MCF is a working farm and community organization that provides healthful, fresh food for the local community. We do not judge others for their choice of diet.



Build Community

What it means:

MCF is an inclusive place that is open and welcoming to the larger community. We are good citizens and neighbors in Woodbridge and focus on a community that encompasses Woodbridge, Amity, the greater New Haven area & Valley, and CT as a whole – with a special focus on those areas that are both close to the farm and in need of the community space.



In order to Build Community, MCF will:

- Remain politically nonpartisan and religiously agnostic: As an inclusive community, we welcome and are a safe space for people of all religious and political affiliations. We are nonpartisan and will not engage in politically or religiously-charged conflicts while judiciously advocating for farmland preservation and local agriculture.
- Stay in good stead with the town: We will take good care of the land that has been entrusted to us. We will maintain the land in a manner that is aesthetically pleasing, while continuing to be a working farm.
- Encourage fun: MCF is a place where people can go to have fun, play in dirt, run around, paint, practice yoga, etc. It is a working farm, but we will also retain places on the farm property where community members of all ages can come to unwind and be outside.
- Partner with other organizations: MCF is blessed to be part of a community filled with wonderful organizations. We will continue to partner with like-minded organizations (such as the Ansonia Nature Center) to leverage our joint strengths. We will also partner with local community organizations (such as the Garden Club, bird-watching organizations, local schools, etc) to maximize participation in the farm.

In keeping with this strategic plank, MCF will NOT :

- Alienate neighbors: MCF will not engage in practices that might alienate neighbors. This includes a commitment to keeping the farm property clean (ex. if farm machinery breaks and cannot be repaired, we remove it from the property).
- Engage in political or religious controversies: We will not officially endorse candidates for office. We will not take positions or back any political or religious opinions. We may engage in the political process as it relates to sustainable farming issues and the viability of MCF itself.



Core Values

Providing a cultural foundation for our key strategic priorities, our core values highlight what we “stand for” and “how” we will meet our vision.



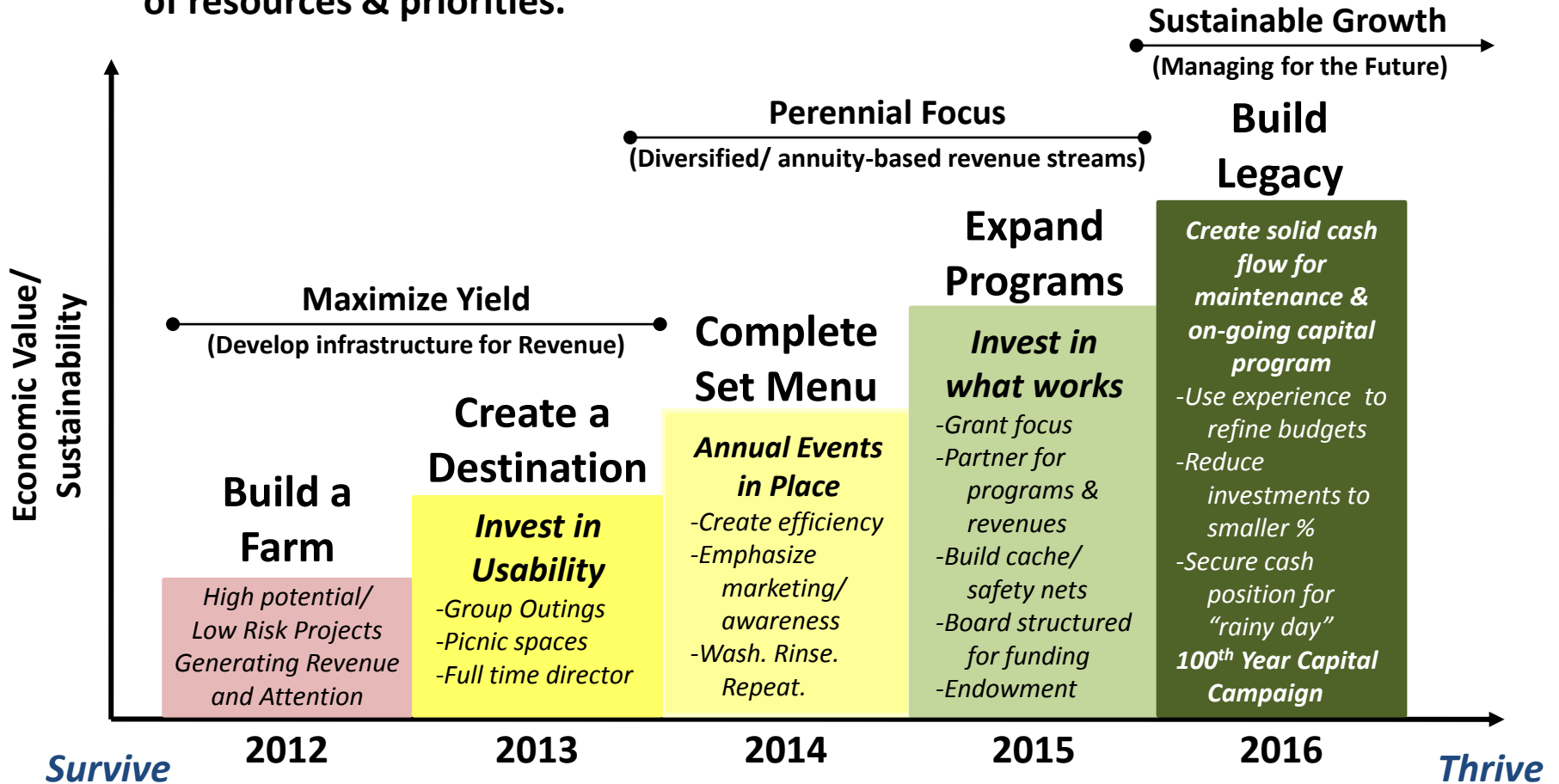
- **Sustainability:** We act today on behalf of future generations and in the context of an ever-modernizing society, so we take the long-view to responsibly invest in the future of our farm and our community. We support organic farming principles without the use of pesticides and herbicides, and we practice thoughtful stewardship of our land, water, buildings, finances, heritage, and limited natural resources.
- **Inclusion:** We believe that MCF should be a place where everyone in our community is welcome and comfortable, and that our public presence should be nonpartisan and mission-focused to preserve this accessibility.
- **Pleasure:** We believe in protecting and enjoying the beauty of natural and agricultural landscapes, delicious food, outdoor play, silliness, and activities for children of all ages. While we take our work seriously, we do not take ourselves too seriously. Our work activates the senses, provides new experiences, connects people to each other in community, improves health, and brings joy.

Success starts with having fun!!



Planning for the Harvest

Defining the stages of development support alignment of resources & priorities.





Near-term Prioritization

Within the immediate “Build a Farm” stage, focus more on the foundational items and overall infrastructure. Keeping ideas simple and executable – presuming the use of the filters outlined above, assigning responsibility and giving staff & volunteers the authority to achieve the objectives they are assigned without interference or objection. The creation of staffing and milestone plans is critical.

Strategic Plank	Key Objectives	Sample Priorities/ Tactics	Accountability/ Volunteer	Indicators of Success																														
Enhance Quality of Life for Generations	Ensure financial sustainability	Complete a repeatable, annual development plan and programs																																
		Increase partnerships with local corporations																																
	Ensure environmental sustainability	Approve 3 or 5 year capital & environment development plan																																
Keep Farming	Keep Massaro an active, working farm	Farm the land that is currently available for farming	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Priority</th> <th>Description</th> <th>MCF Cost Estimate</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Dairy Barn</td> <td>Office and bathroom, 1st floor distribution area, upstairs flooring, complete east end exit (viewing deck);</td> <td>\$50,000? <i>Construction currently underway, have \$35,000 budget.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Tractor Equipment:</td> <td>Cultivating tractor; toolbar with knives, sweeps, etc.;</td> <td>\$5,000. <i>Have ~\$3,000 remaining in budget from Werth Foundation grant</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Learning Garden:</td> <td>~50' x 50' space in which to host food/farm/garden related education program. Should be handicap accessible.</td> <td>\$4,000 <i>Received \$6,000 from Gimbel Trust, construction currently underway</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Tree/Shrub Establishment:</td> <td>For wind breaks, erosion control, wildlife and beneficial insect habitat, improving aesthetics, etc.. Fruit trees are <i>not</i> eligible for reimbursement in this program.</td> <td>\$2,500 <i>Have NRCS funding, reimburses up to \$7,000 in 2012-2013.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Pollinator planting:</td> <td>Establish contiguous .25 acre of pollinator friendly habitat. Likely to be located in long north/south strip at eastern edge of Field 4/Field 7 border.</td> <td>\$5,000 <i>Have NRCS funding, reimburses \$14,500 in 2012-2013.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Covered pavilion space:</td> <td>Space to be used for farm events and education programs</td> <td>\$15,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7. Berries:</td> <td>Blueberry, Raspberry and Blackberry plants: to be planted in 2013-2014. Could also pursue fruit tree plantings.</td> <td>\$3,000-\$6,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8. Stone Barn renovation:</td> <td>currently used for tool storage; repair windows and roof</td> <td>\$10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9. Equipment Shed:</td> <td>Storage for tractor, implements, tools, etc.. Potential use as a workshop. Currently using high tunnel for winter tractor storage, stone barn and two sheds for tool storage.</td> <td>\$15,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Priority	Description	MCF Cost Estimate	1. Dairy Barn	Office and bathroom, 1 st floor distribution area, upstairs flooring, complete east end exit (viewing deck);	\$50,000? <i>Construction currently underway, have \$35,000 budget.</i>	2. Tractor Equipment:	Cultivating tractor; toolbar with knives, sweeps, etc.;	\$5,000. <i>Have ~\$3,000 remaining in budget from Werth Foundation grant</i>	3. Learning Garden:	~50' x 50' space in which to host food/farm/garden related education program. Should be handicap accessible.	\$4,000 <i>Received \$6,000 from Gimbel Trust, construction currently underway</i>	4. Tree/Shrub Establishment:	For wind breaks, erosion control, wildlife and beneficial insect habitat, improving aesthetics, etc.. Fruit trees are <i>not</i> eligible for reimbursement in this program.	\$2,500 <i>Have NRCS funding, reimburses up to \$7,000 in 2012-2013.</i>	5. Pollinator planting:	Establish contiguous .25 acre of pollinator friendly habitat. Likely to be located in long north/south strip at eastern edge of Field 4/Field 7 border.	\$5,000 <i>Have NRCS funding, reimburses \$14,500 in 2012-2013.</i>	6. Covered pavilion space:	Space to be used for farm events and education programs	\$15,000	7. Berries:	Blueberry, Raspberry and Blackberry plants: to be planted in 2013-2014. Could also pursue fruit tree plantings.	\$3,000-\$6,000	8. Stone Barn renovation:	currently used for tool storage; repair windows and roof	\$10,000	9. Equipment Shed:	Storage for tractor, implements, tools, etc.. Potential use as a workshop. Currently using high tunnel for winter tractor storage, stone barn and two sheds for tool storage.	\$15,000	
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		Obtain Organic Certification																																
	Create a supportive environment for farm staff and personnel	Minimize resource distraction from strategic priorities/ Empower Farmer Steve to make farming decisions and judgments on executing capital & environment development plan																																
Feed People	Support the local community through donations to organizations focused on hunger relief and homelessness	Continue donating to X, Y, and Z.																																
	Support the community by making fresh produce available for purchase at affordable prices	Continue operating the CSA. CSA initiating a farmstand																																
Build Community	Encourage participation by community members	Engage local organizations for participation at key events/ development activities																																
	Be a destination for community members looking to get involved	Establish identity - branding, signage, and marketing materials																																
		Finish renovation of the barn																																
		Build out hiking/walking trails & community garden																																



Next Steps

Strategic planning is a journey . . . from here the boards can spend time on their agendas:

- Finalizing near term planning;
- Establishing key “measures of success”;
- Outlining more detail on longer-term planning;
- Establishing protocols for governance (board, staff, and volunteer accountabilities & authorities);
- Completing a risk review, assessment, & planning;
- Building overall financial plan (e.g. – from annual budgeting to endowment);
- Establishing board succession & evolution (moving to “pay to play” environment);
- Reviewing this document on a yearly basis and revising as necessary
- Celebrating successes & having some fun!



Move from “Survive” to “Thrive” - establishing high-level priorities, delegating authorities, and allowing volunteers and staff to make decisions using these strategic filters.



Appendix:

- **Resource Capacity Considerations**
- **Development Activities Example**
- **Situation Analysis: Customers**
- **Situation Analysis: Competition**
- **Situation Analysis: Core Competencies**



What is our resource capacity?

As we consider our goals and objectives, we must realistically establish our limitations (while of course looking to expand capabilities).

- **Farming (CSA)** – What things require the farm manager input and support? How do we minimize distraction or interruption of farming?
- **Development** – How much can we actually do each year? What is required to drive more/ faster? What is the “tipping point” for growth?
- **Capital** – What projects are required? How do we evaluate projects?
- **Programs** – What programs make sense? How are they different/ adding unique value? How are they supporting mission as well as development/ capital planning?

**Using our vision & strategies as strategic filters,
what criteria should we use to review and set our priorities?**



Development Activities

Not just bringing in revenue, but establishing *sustainable* sources while continuously *increasing efficiency* of revenue creation . . . strategically planned and informed decision making is imperative.

- **Number:** How many can we handle each year/ How many can our stakeholders handle?;
- **Value:** what value do we create against the vision/ strategies;
- **Type/ variety:** how are they reaching people of means . . . and different interests?;
- **Frequency:** how often and when can we support, given competing priorities at the farm?;
- **Competition:** how do we balance our efforts to fit will against competing stakeholder priorities?;
- **Targets:** How much do we need to make each year to deliver capital and general program goals?

Revenue generation activities must fit through the strategic filters – most importantly “building quality of life for generations”!

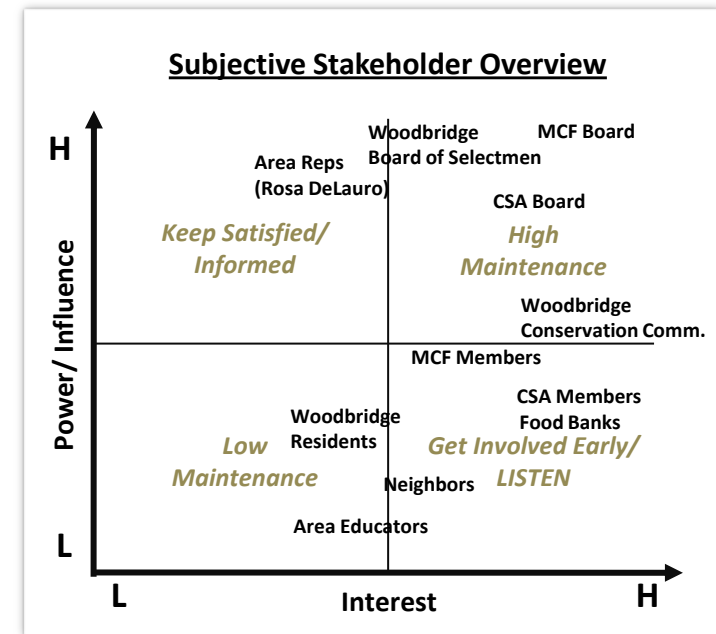


Customer

Understanding and assessing what the customers/ stakeholders are looking for . . .



- Listed several key categories
 - Organizations
 - Political/ Government
 - People
 - Funding Sources
- Engaged MCF & CSA members in a simple survey – asked them directly
- Overtly considered all stakeholders, but recognize their “position” via a subjective assessment



Various stakeholders have various interests, but the established goodwill clearly results in a common interest to sustain/ better leverage the land.



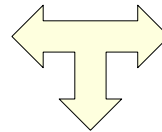
Competition

Recognizing what is already available . . .



The Review Process

- **Defining:** keeping a broad scope, ANY entity (individual or organization) that competes for discretionary money or time;
- **Identifying & Categorizing:** listing out all potential competitors and putting them into buckets;
- **Prioritizing:** focusing on those that represent the greatest threats and/or are meeting the needs of our prospective customers;
- **Highlighting gaps:** identifying where the customers are not being met . . .



Categories/ Examples

- **Food providers:** Supermarkets/ public & private CSAs/ personal gardens/ corner stores/ etc.;
- **Land Use:** sports leagues (sports fields)/ gun clubs/ housing/ fossil fuel (drilling)/ etc.;
- **Educators:** local schools & colleges/ Ansonia Nature Center/ Girl & Boy Scouts/ Museums/ etc.;
- **Non profits:** any other 501(c)3/ fire department/ etc.;
- **Environmental:** parks/ protected space/ open space/ etc.

Potential Responses

- **Partnership:** align to create opportunities to work together to meet mutual needs;
- **Direct competition:** going head to head to steal share;
- **Avoidance:** not worth engaging - either very low impact at present or the effort involved is not likely to result in a meaningful benefit to us.
- **Education/ Outreach:** support efforts to grow overall market and capture some incremental share (e.g. backyard gardeners – teach to can so they need more produce and buy from us).

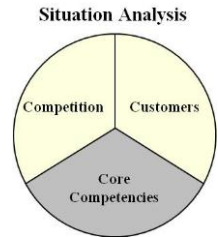
Competition is everywhere . . . but not always “bad”.



Core Competencies

We've got a LOT going for us – brut force effort brought us great strength . . .

- **Capital** – land, facilities, excellent location & natural resources and ability and relative freedom to determine how it should be used;
- **Good will** – the community appreciates the intent and, although not always clear on what's going on, is appreciative;
- **Trust** – strength from the good will provides the organization' a high degree of credibility;
- **Organization** – non-profit status, team of passionate volunteers, momentum.



**Aspirations for more competencies are large,
but so are current strengths.**