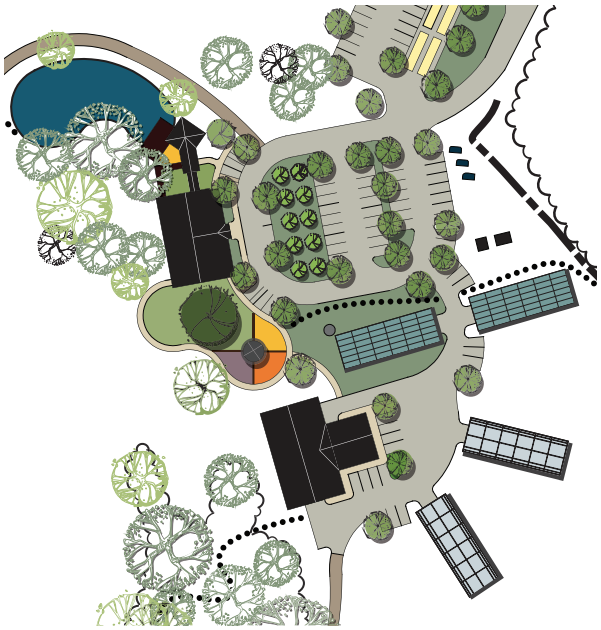


Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm

Development Plan

Summary Report

June 2016

Prepared for:

carolina farm stewardship association

Prepared by:

stopia GROUP

Table of Contents

Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm
Development Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY II

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION........

Purpose & Goals 1

Response to a Crisis........ 2

DEVELOPING PROGRAMS 3

Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm & Farmer-in-Training Program 4

RCCC Class and Workshop Series........ 5-6

Organic Vegetable Production & Research 7

Lo2Max Community Garden 8

Hunger Relief Charity Plot 9

Volunteer Days At Lomax Farm........ 10

4H &and Other Kids Camps 11

Farm Services........ 12

Food Systems & AG Business Development 13

PROPOSED PROGRAMS........ 14

Cabarrus School kids Farm Tour 15

Farm Labor Training Program 16

Mentorship Training Program........ 18

Cabarrus County Agricultural History Exhibit........ 19

Retreat Event Center 20

Renewable Energy Learning Lab 21

Lomax Food Distribution 22

Visiting Studies Program 23

Partnerships 24

Cabarrus County 25

Rowan Cabarrus Community College 26

Cooperative Extension Cabarrus County 27

UNCC........ 28

Central United Methodist Church 29

Cabarrus Health Alliance........ 30

North Carolina Wildlife Federation 31

Cabarrus Home-brewers Society (CABREW) 32

Cabarrus County Beekeepers........ 33

NC Farm School........ 34

STAFF & OPERATIONS........ 35-40

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & NEXT STEPS 41

MASTER PLAN DOCUMENTS

Executive Summary

The Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm was started in 2009 in response to the decreasing number and increasing age of farmers in Cabarrus County and the growing demand for locally grown food. Early in the history of the farm, it became clear that there was a demand for something to serve as much more than just a farmer training facility in our community. The mission of training the next generation of farmers in Cabarrus County expanded to include the support, promotion and revitalization of the local food economy by providing the programming and education being actively sought by the public. Many of our citizens are interested in a healthier, more secure and more economically productive food system and they want to learn more about how to make that a reality.

With stubborn persistence, community support and just a dash of luck, the Lomax Incubator Farm has not only survived but has emerged as a regional leader in the effort to train new farmers and to tackle the issues facing our food system today. The key to the future success of the Lomax Farm will be offering different opportunities that address the different interests shared by citizens who want to engage and learn more about food and agriculture; and the Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm is the place to make that happen.

Guiding Principles

Mission: To train new farmers and educate citizens about the importance of agriculture.

Vision: To support agriculture and our local food economy by providing the training and education necessary to foster a healthier, happier, more secure and more economically productive community in Cabarrus County.

Values:

- **Make it Happen**
- **Set High Standards**
- **Foster Continuous Learning**
- **Support One Another**
- **Have Fun**

The Goal and Purpose

The goal of the Lomax Development Plan is to create a shared vision for the future of the Lomax Farm. This process required an evaluation of current programs and the assessment of future programing opportunities, as well as identifying partnership opportunities and site development needs.

CFSA staff met with current Lomax participants, community partners, citizens and Cabarrus County staff to help inform this Lomax Development Plan. The preliminary results in this document are being shared with the Cabarrus County Board of Commissioners, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association Board of Directors, current partners, stakeholders and other interested citizens in the spring of 2016. Adjustments and amendments to this plan are likely as individuals and institutions review this Summary Report.

CFSA partnered with Cooperative Extension and Topia Group in the development of this plan.

Timeline:

October & November 2015	Lomax Participant Meetings
December 2015	CFSA and Cooperative Extension Plan Development Meetings
January & February 2016	Community Stakeholder Meetings to include: Lomax Advisory Group, Cabarrus County Staff, members of the agricultural community, and citizens of Cabarrus County.
February 2016	CFSA Staff development of preliminary plan
March & April 2016	Planning contractor development of site and programing
May 2016	Lomax Development Plan presented to the BOC and CFSA

A Growing Movement in Response to a Growing Crisis

Everyday more than a million+ people in the Charlotte Region make decisions about what they eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner. While those decisions are personal and particular to the individual, they are not made in a vacuum. One cannot make a choice that is not available or choose that which is not known. Easy access to fresh and healthy food, grown in a manner that will not strain future generations and the knowledge and experience about what to eat and how to eat it is essential to a community that strives to be healthy, happy and productive.

A decade ago the seeds of a different sort of food system were sown as our community made decisions about the future of development in Cabarrus County. Proud of our agricultural heritage and skeptical of a future that didn't include farming and good food, we have taken steps to protect existing agriculture and foster the understanding of the need for support of our local food system. With a growing recognition of the need to train new farmers and the growing demand for locally grown produce, the Lomax Incubator Farm was born and continues to serve as the center of this movement in our community.

The process of creating this Lomax Development Plan was straightforward: gather input from current participants at the Lomax Farm as well as from and a wide range of stakeholders, community leaders, existing partners, possible partners, and others interested in the future of food in Cabarrus County. All were asked to explore the key concerns surrounding the future of the Lomax Farm. Through large group discussions, small group meetings, and one-on-one conversations, consensus emerged about what would be required to meet the needs of our community and benefit the different segments of our population. The process challenged everyone involved to identify key topics, concepts and goals and how they could be integrated into existing and proposed infrastructure and programming at the Lomax Farm.

DEVELOPING PROGRAMS

Lomax has a number of programs that have developed in its seven-year history. As part of this planning process they have been reviewed and critiqued by staff, participants and other relevant contributors.

This section of the Summary Report highlights those programs that currently operate at Lomax Farm.

Farmer-in-Training Program

Founded primarily as a facility for training new farmers, Lomax Farm remains committed to this task. The recent CONNECT our Food System Assessment Report for the Charlotte Region showed a gap of $663 million between the demand for locally produced fruits and vegetables and the regionally produced supply. Putting more young farmers on the land helps meet this demand and ensures our access to these highly sought after products.

- **30.6 acre training farm**
- **USDA Certified Organic**
- **Shared use facility teaching sustainable agricultural techniques.**
- **Passing knowledge and experience on to the next generation of growers**
- **Meeting the demand for training from new and young would-be farmers.**
- **Helping to increase the supply of locally raised food.**
- **Supporting the local economy through the demand of support industries**
- **Providing the raw product for value-added food businesses and restaurants.**

RCCC Class and Workshop Series

Starting in 2015, RCCC has helped serve the need for classes and workshops at Lomax Farm. These efforts were initially aimed at providing education for Farmers-in-Training, including the Organic Vegetable Production Class, a prerequisite for participation in the Lomax Farmer-in-Training (FIT) program. RCCC is also exploring the likelihood of developing a core curriculum of classes to be used to give increasing structure and depth to the FIT program.

Meanwhile it has become clear that there is a demand from the general public regarding instruction related to food, farming and gardening. RCCC offers continuing education to students who might not become full-time farmers but are nonetheless interested in learning more about food.

2015 and 2016 Classes include:

- Organic Vegetable Production
- REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship Through Action Learning)
- Ag Entrepreneurship Workshop Series
- Fall Gardening Class Series
- Introduction to Beekeeping
- Spring and Fall Mushroom Production Classes
- Native Plant Identification Class
- Seed Starting and other specialty skill classes

RCCC Class and Workshop Series

Classes under consideration for 2017 and beyond include:

- Backyard Chickens
- Greenhouse and High Tunnel Management
- Cut Flower Production
- Farm Management
- Equipment and Small Engine Repair
- Renewable Energy Installation, Management and Repair
- Composting
- Vermiculture
- Landscape Design
- Tractor operation, safety, maintenance and repair
- Growing and using culinary and medical herbs
- Soil Biology
- Food preservation
- Hops Production
- Enology and Viticulture

Organic Vegetable Production Research

In order to better serve the growing demand for locally produced fruits and vegetables, CFSA seeks to increase the amount of research regarding issues important to growers in the Charlotte Region and throughout North and South Carolina.

CFSA has launched an Organic Research Initiative, funded through North and South Carolina Specialty Crop Block Grants. The initiative includes conducting research on organic grafted heirloom tomato production in a high tunnel at the Lomax Incubator Farm.

The initiative also includes direct high tunnel consulting services to farmers in North and South Carolina. Investigation is underway into the utility of the Haney Soil Nutrient Tool to accurately assess soil nutrient availability through demonstrations on three South Carolina Farms. This initiative will also develop resources and conduct on-farm workshops to address high tunnel, irrigation, and soil health information needs of farmers, as well as an annual Field Day at Lomax Farm.

CFSA will continue to seek other opportunities to research issues important to farmers.

- High tunnel and season extension research focused on the Carolinas
- Soil health and fertility research
- Resource development for area farmers
- Workshops and field days to share information
- Varietal trials
- On-farm composting systems
- Biodigestores and other alternative energy systems
- Appropriately scale tool and equipment development

Lo2Max Community Garden

In 2012 a community garden was added to the farm. The participants call themselves the Lo2Max Community Garden and the program has continued to develop as a way for citizens to learn more about producing food for their families. The garden occupies the southeastern corner of the farm. The established infrastructure of the farm, including the irrigation system, deer fence, office and restroom facilities help to make the garden a successful program. Farm tools and equipment are also used to assist the community gardeners.

Cabarrus Health Alliance and Cooperative Extension have worked with the Lo2Max Community Garden, offering equipment, information and teaching sessions. Community Gardeners have also created productive and informative relationships with some of the farmers in training.

- A place for citizens to grow food for themselves
- Shared equipment and resources
- Community-focused approach to healthy food awareness
- Hands-on learning opportunities
- Lomax as a leader within the community garden movement developing in Cabarrus County
- Equipment and resource hub for other gardens

Hunger Relief Charity Plot

In 2012 the congregation of Central United Methodist (CUMC) of Concord, NC developed a 10,000 square foot plot adjacent to the Lo2Max Community Garden. All of the vegetables produced in the plot have been distributed by Cooperative Christian Ministry (CCM) and Concord First Assembly (CFA) as part of an ongoing effort to help make food available to fight hunger.

This effort has begun working with the YMCA Share the Harvest Farm to make even more produce available; sharing knowledge, equipment and volunteers. In 2015 alone CUMC was able to grow and donate more than 3,000 lbs of fresh vegetables. In 2016 this effort has combined forces with the RCCC Organic Vegetable Production Class to ensure the vegetables started as a part of that class get put to good use!

- Growing food for hunger relief
- Offering educational opportunities for CUMC congregants
- Promoting volunteerism and community service
- Partnering with CHA, YMCA and other organizations interested in growing food for the hungry

Volunteer Days at Lomax Farm

In 2015 the request for opportunities to volunteer at Lomax Farm reached a tipping point. Without a well-established system in place for managing an increase in the volunteers on-farm, CFSA staff and Farmers-in-Training were reluctant to invite even more people to spend time volunteering at Lomax. The time had come however and Lomax Farm has now developed a monthly Volunteer Day, regularly hosting more than 30 people each month who come to Lomax Farm to work and learn and meet other Lomax participants.

This monthly event serves not only to undertake needed tasks but as a way to introduce people to Lomax Farm and the programs offered on the farm. A continued increase in interest means this program is likely to expand in the near future.

- Monthly volunteer opportunity within the community
- Hands-on learning opportunities
- Making time on a farm available to those who otherwise wouldn't have such access
- A chance to families to meet farmers-in-training, community gardeners and other participants

4H and other Kids Camps

In the summer of 2016 4H offered young people the opportunity to explore the basics of gardening, unique gardening techniques, local foods and environmental effects of landscaping and responsible use of the land for gardening. The kids learned to care for themselves and other living things through farm-based educational programs at Lomax Farm.

Together with Cooperative Extensions agents, young people tasted fresh vegetables straight from the farm, tended and harvested crops, collected seeds, made compost, learned about worms, insects and pollinators and explored our natural environment in a hands-on science based learning environment.

Serving an opportunity to test the capacity to host such camps, Lomax Farm hopes to offer additional kidz campz in coordination with 4H and potentially other organizations.

- **Young people learning about where food comes from**
- **Knowledge about natural systems opportunities to weed, water and harvest vegetables**
- **Kids caring for plants and meeting farmers-in-training**

Farm Services

CFSA has expanded programming and staff support for farmers as part of our flagship Organic Carolinas Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to build on regional assets and successes to establish a world-class organics industry in the Carolinas, and double the size of the organics sector in the region by 2020.

Lomax Farm provides CFSA the opportunity to make Cabarrus County the leader in efforts to more intensely serve the Charlotte Region. Key CFSA staff members work daily from Lomax Farm while others are able to use Lomax Farm as a base while working on specific efforts in the area.

The Farm Services team has three initiatives that provide technical assistance to help farmers use sustainable and organic production practices and get GAPs certified. They include:

Organic Transition Initiative: Provides basic information on different certifying agents that work in the Carolinas, Q & A on National Organic Program regulations, guidance in appropriate record keeping, and a review of farmers your records and certification application materials.

High Tunnel Initiative: Helps farmers implement efficient and sustainable high tunnel management practices including information on planting dates, pest pressure, and variety selection, ways to mitigate soil disturbance during the grading and installation process, as well as changes due to runoff, and issues with irrigation and soil moisture that affect production and plant growth.

Local Produce Safety Initiative: Helps small diversified farmers pass a GAP audit by conducting risk assessments, mock audits, food safety plan review, on-site training.

Food Systems and Ag Business Development

The Carolina Farm Stewardship Association Food Systems Team has helped to create vibrant and sustainable local food systems throughout the Carolinas by building collaborative networks that integrate sustainable food production, safe handling and processing practices, distribution, consumption, and waste management in order to enhance the environmental, economic, and social health of people and places in North and South Carolina.

The Food Systems team at CFSA has a presence at the Lomax Farm where the team will extend its' services to local farmers in training, regional growers, and food businesses across the Charlotte region. Through this program, regional food businesses and suppliers will be able to access assistance with business planning development, capital sourcing, product sourcing, local and regional economic development support, and food systems infrastructure development support.

- Support local and regional governments in accessing the economic impact of local food system development
- Provide business development consulting services for farmers and food businesses
- Collaborate with regional partners to develop better business development packages for all food related businesses
- Assess regional food system infrastructure to identify gaps within intermediary infrastructure and provide insight on how best to capitalize on those gaps
- Educate consumers about the importance of local food system development and how they can support

For more info visit:
https://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/foodsystems/

PROPOSED PROGRAMS

During the development planning process a number of community needs emerged that fit within the scope of possible work at Lomax Farm. Some needs were expressed by those already participating at Lomax, some came from the established farming community while others were communicated by the general public.

This section of the Summary Report highlights those programs that could be developed at the Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm in response to these needs.

Cabarrus Schoolkids Farm Tour

What would it be like to live in a community in which children know where food comes from and the value that food and the people who grow it? Could we overcome the growing childhood obesity crisis and the rising rate of juvenile diabetes if children learned at an early age what healthy eating looks like?

As a part of Cabarrus Schoolkids Farm Tour all sixth grade students would visit Lomax Farm during the course of the school year. It is at this grade level that students already visit the Cabarrus County Fair prior to opening day as part of Agri-Business Days, an existing program of Cooperative Extension. A corresponding trip to the Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm Education during this same year of education would help to reinforce the importance of agriculture, good eating, good health and greater stewardship of our natural resources.

Every student from Cabarrus County Schools, Kannapolis City Schools as well as private and home schooled six graders will have the opportunity to visit a working farm, learn more about the agricultural heritage of Cabarrus County and meet some of the people training to grow food in their community

- All sixth grade students visit a working farm
- Education regarding agricultural heritage
- Interaction with adults training to become farmers
- Learning opportunities regarding food and healthy eating

Farm Labor Training Program

Established farmers in Cabarrus County and the surrounding area find it extremely challenging to hire well-trained farm workers. The Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm seeks to address this issue by establishing a Farm Labor Training Program (FLTP). The Lomax Farm hopes to provide the location for educational institutions such as Cooperative Extension and RCCC to offer training to those who seek work in the farming industry but lack the necessary skills.

Different from the Farmer-in-Training program, the FLTP would be designed to provide knowledge and practical understanding of farm-related tasks in a rapid manner so that interest individuals could quickly gain employment on area farms. Interested farmers could send current or potential employees to the program for greater skill development.

- Addressing a current problem for area farmers
- Efficiently providing farm-related skills
- Training new or potential employees for farmers
- Putting people to work on area farms.

Mentorship Training Program

The existing Incubator Farm and Farmer-in-Training Program serve those who have the skills necessary to start their own farming operation but lack the affordable access to land and equipment needed to get a farm business started. However many individuals who want to start their own farm do not yet have the skills they need to enter the Farmer-in-Training Program. They first need to spend time on a working farm offering labor in return for experience and appropriately designated compensation.

Meanwhile many established farmers in the area are interested in the opportunity to share their experience with younger farmers who want to take up the profession. These experienced farmers lack the time and resources to seek out such individuals. The Lomax Farm hopes to develop a program that will match prospective Apprentices with Mentors to help with the initial stage of beginning farmer development.

- **Training existing area farmers as Mentors**
- **Vetting interested individuals as ready Apprentices**
- **Creating suitable relationships between Apprentices and Mentors**
- **Developing prepared recruits for Incubator Farm Program**

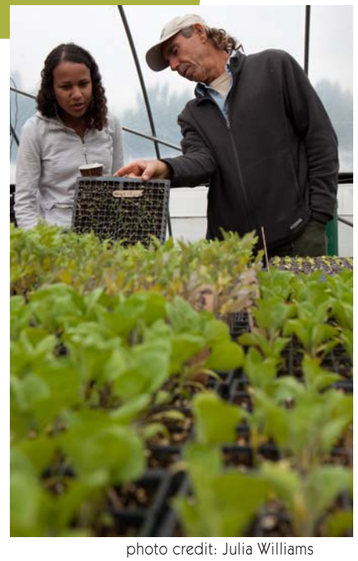


photo credit: Julia Williams

Cabarrus County Agricultural History Exhibit

Did you know that Cabarrus County has one of the longest continuously operating farmers markets in the state of North Carolina? Or that at any time there are on average more than 7,000 head of cattle in Cabarrus County? Where would you go if you wanted to learn more about these topics or about the past and current practices of agriculture in Cabarrus County?

The Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm hopes to develop an exhibit that highlights the history of agriculture in Cabarrus County complete with old tools and farm equipment and a short film documenting those people who have been instrumental in agriculture over the last half century and more. Housed at Lomax Farm, this archive can grow to serve future generations as agricultural technology and practices change.

- **Sharing the history of agriculture in Cabarrus County**
- **Documenting present agricultural development efforts**
- **Remembering those who have farmed and supported farming in our community.**

photo credit: Julia Williams

Retreat Event Center

The Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm hopes to offer working space for organizations and institutions in need of a place to retreat for planning, training, leadership advancement, or other development-related efforts. Lomax Farm could provide this space within the setting of a working farm, offering participating groups the opportunity to learn more about the efforts of agricultural advancement in Cabarrus County as a part of their time at the Lomax Farm.

Offering the Lomax Farm facilities for meetings, retreats and small gatherings will help to better utilize site improvements and a small fee for use will help to offset the costs associated with operating the farm for its many other uses.

- More use of expanded infrastructure
- Expanded exposure to the programs at Lomax Farm
- Recruitment for future participation
- Revenue opportunity

Renewable Energy Learning Lab

A growing interest in renewable energy offers the opportunity to share with the public more information about solar energy. The Renewable Energy learning Lab at the Lomax Farm could facilitate teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) to the growing number of STEM students in the school system of Cabarrus County. Likewise such a lab would offer RCCC and other possible partners a place to train adults seeking a career in the solar energy economy.

With hands-on displays to engage visitors and students and a working "solar farm" learning could produce electricity to help power the other efforts at the Lomax Farm.

- Generating clean, renewable energy
- Teaching kids about solar energy
- Training solar industry professionals
- Powering the farm at reduced cost

Lomax Food Distribution Network

Crucial to the success of many incubator farms across the country is the development of a shared food distribution network. These networks offer farmers-in-training, graduates and other area farmers a way to work together to market their products in a way that benefits each of them.

The idea is to provide a proven strategy that beginning farmers can use to sell their produce. It works by aggregating product grown by Farmers-in-Training at Lomax Farm, increasing output scale and streamlining distribution. In turn this helps meet the needs of restaurants and
institutions like school systems and hospitals that want to buy locally grown goods but can't deal directly with lots of different farmers. The Lomax Farm hopes to create such a program to help both new producers and institutional buyers.

- **Connecting area farmers with institutional buyers**
- **New farmers easier access to markets**
- **Building the reputation of Cabarrus County growers**
- **Serving the aggregation and distribution needs of specialty crops farmers in Cabarrus County**

Photo credit: Emma Hauser

Visiting Studies Program

Many individuals and several organizations have approached Lomax Farm in the past about establishing a relationship whereby participants in their programs could come and train for a time at Lomax Farm.
The Lomax Development Plan seeks to make this opportunity available. Visitors would have assigned schedules and tasks at the farm and would work directly with Lomax staff and farmers-in-training.

Temporarily residency at the farm would make these opportunities more attractive but would also help by providing assistance outside of normal business hours. Work on the farm doesn't end at 5pm on Friday. Having visitors in residence would benefit not only the participants but also the Lomax Farm as well.

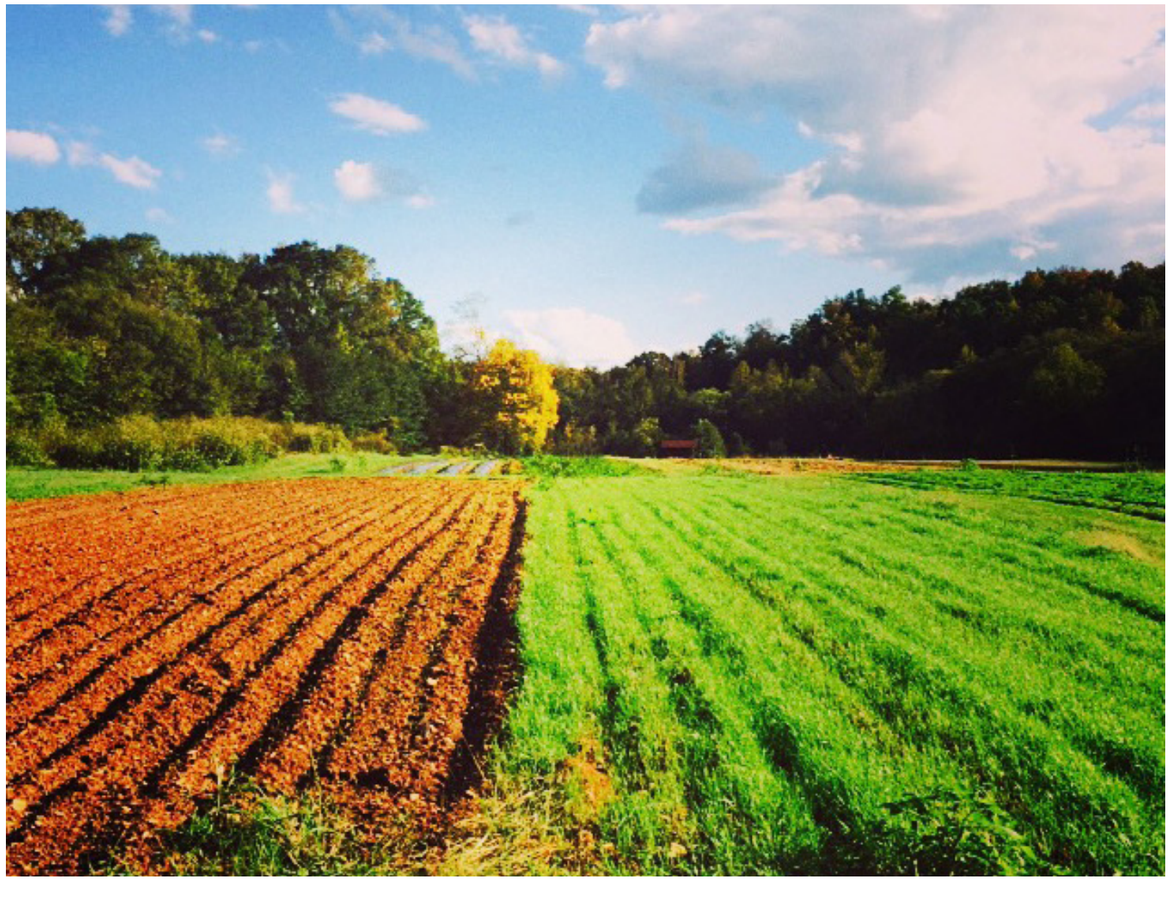
- **Farmer Veteran Coalition**
- **World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms**
- **Internships**
- **Fifth Year @ Lomax Program**
- **Farmer-in-Residence Program**

Partnerships

From day one, the Lomax Farm has been a collaborative effort between multiple organizations. The future of the Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm will depend on continued cooperation between existing partners and the willingness of the Lomax Farm to explore other partnership opportunities.

The current farm campus is used by many different organizations and will no doubt be used by others in the future to further the efforts of those who share its vision:

To support agriculture and our local food economy by providing the training and education necessary to foster a healthier, happier, more secure and more economically productive community in Cabarrus County.



Cabarrus County

The Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm was established on land donated to Cabarrus County by the family of Mrs. Elma C. Lomax. The county worked closely with Cooperative Extension to develop the existing infrastructure and supported the program with operational funding and staff support until July 2014. Carolina Farm Stewardship Association took over operational management soon after and continues to run the farm and oversee its development. However, Cabarrus County has continued to fund a portion of the operational budget and has helped in many other ways. The County continues to own the land and leases it to CFSA for the purpose of operating the farm.

- **Member of the Lomax Advisory Group**
- **Land owner**
- **Provides some operational funds**
- **Assists with equipment and facilities issues**
- **Offers outreach opportunities**
- **Has the opportunity to use the new facility to attract businesses to Cabarrus County**
- **Has the opportunity to use the new facility to hold meetings, retreats and other gatherings**

For More Information:
https://www.cabarruscounty.us/government/departments/sustainability/local%20food/Pages/Elma-C.-Lomax-Incubator-Farm.aspx

Rowan Cabarrus Community College

Rowan Cabarrus Community College serves specific instructional needs as identified by RCCC, the Lomax Farm and the general public regarding agricultural education and in the future, perhaps renewable energy. RCCC offers continuing education to students, faculty, industry, and other organizations regarding sustainable agriculture and when appropriate participates in relevant local, regional, national and international forums on this topic. Classes include the annual Organic Vegetable Production Class, a prerequisite for participation in the Lomax Farmer-in-Training
program. RCCC will also help to develop a core curriculum of classes to be used to give increasing structure and depth to the FIT program.

- **Organic Vegetable Production Class**
- **REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship Through Action Learning) Ag Entrepreneurship Workshop Series**
- **Fall Gardening Class Series**
- **Spring and Fall Mushroom Production Classes**
- **Native Plant Identification Class**
- **Seed Starting and other specialty skill classes**

For More Information:
https://www.rccc.edu/

Cooperative Extension Cabarrus County

Cooperative Extension continues to offer focused learning opportunities to the general public, including but not limited to lectures, kids camps, workshops and other shorter session teaching opportunities and when appropriate participates in relevant local, regional, national and international forums on this topic. They can also provide technical assistance to the Land Manager, Training Coordinator and the participants in the Farmer-in-Training Program. This includes regular meetings with Lomax staff and FITs.

The opportunity exists to provide workspace for Cooperative Extension agents. This could include regular office hours. Lomax participants would benefit from the close proximity to Extension agents. In turn Cooperative Extension could use the Lomax Farm for programing including but not limited to field space, equipment, demonstrations, classroom/auditorium presentations and more. Flexible office space for regional agents based in Cabarrus County is also a possibility.

In 2015 and 2016 the Master Gardeners of Cabarrus County used the Lomax greenhouse to grow plants, the sales of which support grants to local schools and other organizations that want to start gardens. This is a great example of the interconnectedness of the Lomax Farm and organizations within the community who benefit from use of the farm.

- **Founding partner of Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm**
- **One-on-one technical assistance**
- **Focused learning opportunities**
- **On-site workspace for Extension Agents**
- **Master Gardener Program assistance**
- **Plant sales supporting local school gardens**

For More Information:
https://cabarrus.ces.ncsu.edu/

University of North Carolina Charlotte

University of North Carolina Charlotte IDEAS Center hopes to continue conducting research in support of the sharing of scientific and technological findings and procedures relevant to sustainable farming and the development of monitoring and assessment mechanisms pertaining to sustainable agriculture. UNCC will offer continuing education to students, faculty, industry, and other appropriate organizations regarding sustainable agriculture and when appropriate participate in relevant local, regional, national and international forums on this topic. There is a push within the university system for inter-university collaboration. UNCC hopes to create a relationship with the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) which is a collaborative effort between NCSU, NC A&T and NCDACS. The Lomax Farm could help provide a platform for this collaboration between universities within our region of North Carolina.

The opportunity exists to work with the UNCC College of Arts + Architecture on concepts for the buildings shown in this Development Plan. Students would have the prospect **of working on real-world design strategies for multi-user spaces at Lomax Farm.**

UNCC will work with partnering organizations in the development of educational programs, research, development and policies related to sustainability and farming to include:

- **Implementation of major collaborative educational projects**
- **New or improved farming methods and technologies**
- **Holistic planning, design, and construction for sustainable communities including integrated building and sites**
- **Implementation of major collaborative research projects**

For More Information:
http://ideas.uncc.edu/

Central United Methodist Church

In 2012 the congregation of Central United Methodist (CUMC) of Concord, NC developed a 10,000 square foot plot adjacent to the Lo2Max Community Garden. All of the vegetables produced in the plot have been distributed by Cooperative Christian Ministry (CCM) and Concord First Assembly (CFDA) as part of their ongoing effort to help make food available to fight hunger. In 2015 alone CUMC able to grow and donate more than 3,000 lbs of fresh vegetables.

In 2016 this effort will combine forces with the RCCC Organic Vegetable Production Class to ensure the food started as a part of that class gets put to good use!

- **Growing food for local hunger relief efforts**
- **Partnering with RCCC food grown as part of workshops and classes is put to good use!**
- **Opportunity for CUMC congregants to volunteer, exercise and learn**
- **Developing leadership capacity for other groups interested in growing food for hunger relief**

For More Information:
http://concordcentral.org/

Cabarrus Health Alliance

Cabarrus Health Alliance is a public health authority created by the Cabarrus County Board of Commissioners. It works to promote high levels of individual and community health through collaborations and innovative partnerships.

In 2016 as part of the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) Grant, Cabarrus Health Alliance is assisting the Lo2Max Community Garden at Lomax Farm with equipment and tool purchases and with technical assistance. It is our hope that we can continue to partner in ways that empower citizens to develop healthy strategies for eating well and being active.

- Cooking Classes in demonstration kitchen
- Collaborative initiatives aimed at bring together the many groups eager to learn more about growing food
- Use of the Lomax Event Retreat Center to host seminars, workshops, and other community oriented learning opportunities
- Gardening equipment storage, staging and seed starting.

For More Information:
http://www.cabarrushealth.org/336/2438/REACH

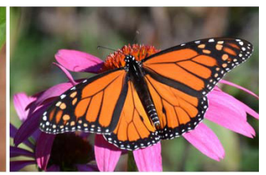
North Carolina Wildlife Federation

"Since 1945 North Carolina Wildlife Federation has been one of the most effective conservation organizations bringing together citizens, outdoor enthusiasts, hunters & anglers, government and industry to protect North Carolina's wildlife and its habitat."

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association is an official member of the NCWF and is excited about the burgeoning partnerships made possible by the Lomax Farm. The Great Outdoors University, a program of NCWF, connects kids with nature and has visited the Lomax Farm with the hopes of developing it as one of the many sites used to meet this mission.

NCWF has already provide material support for the development of one of six beneficial habitats that will serve to develop their Butterfly Highway Initiative.

- Developing a network of learning-focused organizations
- Offering educational experiences for kids
- Developing pollinator habitats
- Developing forest learning lab



For More Information:
http://www.ncwf.org/programs/gou

http://www.ncwf.org/programs/butterfly-highway

Cabarrus Homebrewers Society (CABREW)

In 2013 the Cabarrus Homebrewers Society established a trial of hops production at Lomax. This unique crop is increasingly in demand due to the rapidly growing interest in the home brewing of beer and the craft brewing industry taking root right here in Cabarrus County, the Charlotte Region and throughout the state of North Carolina. This project is currently serving as a trial to see if this crop can be raised in an economically viable way, adding yet another option for a diversified farming operation. CABREW hopes to partner with Cooperative Extension and NCSU to expand this project.

- **Six hops towers**
- **Five varieties being tested**
- **Weekly CABREW meetings at Lomax Farm during the warm season to trim vines, weed, water and talk hops.**

For More Information:
https://cabrew.wordpress.com/

Cabarrus County Beekeepers

The Cabarrus County Beekeepers have maintained at least one hive at Lomax since the farm originally opened. This has helped with pollination efforts at the farm. It has also helped inspire and educate several farmers-in-training to become beekeepers and learn the skills they need to successfully keep bees as part of their farming operations. Lomax Farm continues to serve as a place for citizens to raise bees when doing so at home isn't an option. The Lomax Farm hopes to offer more structured opportunities for the public to learn more about bees, raising them and the challenges bees face today.

- **Pollinators helping to assist with vegetable production**
- **Six beneficial habitats under development at Lomax Farm**
- **Official partner with North Carolina Wildlife Federation's Butterfly Highway Initiative**

For More Information:
http://www.cabarrusbees.com/

NC Farm School

"With the goal of teaching sound business principles to those wishing to start or add a new agricultural venture," NC Farm School enters into its fourth year in 2016 at locations throughout NC.
The Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm hopes to capitalize on the shared mission of offering individuals the resources they need to develop new businesses in agriculture by joining forces with NC Farm School in the future. This program offers eight business-planning seminars, one each month for eight months and includes field trips to working farms.
The Lomax Farm hopes to offer on-the-ground resources that NC Farm School can use year after year, while providing potential recruits for the Lomax Incubator Farm program.

- **Potential Lomax Farm partner, teaching sound business principles to those wishing to start or add a new agricultural venture**
- **Evaluation of agricultural business planning, marketing, production systems, and business startup.**
- **One on one time with NC State University specialists**
- **Evaluation of agricultural business planning, marketing, production systems, and business startup.**

NC FARM SCHOOL

Check out 2016 NC Farm School

For More Information:
https://ncfarmschool.ces.ncsu.edu/about/

STAFF AND OPERATIONS

Aaron Newton, Lomax Farm Coordinator, aaron@carolinafarmstewards.org
Gena Moore, Organic Research Coordinator, gena@carolinafarmstewards,org
Karen McSwain, Farm Services and Food Systems Director, karen@carolinafarmstewards.org
Elizabeth Read, Communications and Development Director, elizabeth@carolinafarmstewards.org

For more information about Lomax Farm operations, events and current programs please visit https://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/lomax-farm/

The **Lomax Farm Advisory Group** will be made up of seven volunteer members as described below. The Board will meet as necessary with CFSA and Lomax staff to help plan, manage and monitor the direction of the farm.

- **1 Representative of Cabarrus County Government**
  Kelly Sifford — Planning and Development Director
- **1 Representative of Cabarrus County Cooperative Extension**
  Christine Barrier — Administrative Assistant
- **1 Representative of Rowan Cabarrus Community College**
  Ann Morris — Dean, Corporate and Continuing Education RCCC
- **1 Representative of University of North Carolina Charlotte**
  Mike Lizotte — UNCC Sustainability Officer
- **3 At-Large Representatives**
  Susan Otteni — Cabarrus County Resident
  Vicky Porter — Porter Farms
  Dr. John Turner — Turner Orthodontics

Lomax Farm Staff

The **Program Director** will be responsible for the overall operation of the farm. Duties will include budgeting, overseeing the collaborative network of individuals, institutions and organizations at the farm. This person will work with the Lomax Advisory Group to plan, manage and monitor the future direction of the farm as well as provide relevant program outcome information to Cabarrus County staff, RCCC, UNCC, Cooperative Extension, public officials, and the general public.

Key Activities

- Strategic and program planning: facilitating a strategic planning process for the organization, gathering stakeholder input, and shaping annual work plans and budgets; maintaining the Farm's focus on mission-driven outcomes; developing key programmatic objectives, goals, and work plans including staff tasks/activities and evaluation metrics

- Program Budget development: developing staffing plan for program activities, supplies and materials and programmatic costs for all program areas; incorporate budget needs into all funding requests and allocate proportionally all overhead/ administrative costs

- Grants management and reporting: tracking and maintaining monthly report of program activities by all staff and developing financial and program reports to funders; conduct funder meetings, site visits.

- Building and maintaining key community partnerships: represent project at events, workshops, panel presentations, meetings, etc.; participate in working groups for collaborative projects; engage in local, regional, and national policy and advocacy work.

- Staff management: hiring, managing and evaluating staff performance; ongoing coaching and supervisory "check ins" to assess progress toward goals; facilitate staff cohesion and team building.

- Program Evaluation: evaluating project performance and impacts either via data collection, discussions with participants, through participant surveys, focus groups, partner feedback, etc.

Lomax Farm Staff

The **Land Manager** will manage and monitor farming operations at the Lomax Farm including production and non-production areas and will be responsible for the physical assets of the facility.

The Land Manager will be in charge of seasonal interns and work with them to create duty rosters, sign up sheets, schedules, mechanical diagrams and technical reports, soil testing, standard operating procedures and other organizational aspects of the farm. The Land Manager will work with Cooperative Extension, RCCC and UNCC to ensure that the facility meets their needs and the needs of their students. This individual will also attend meetings as required or assigned. The Land Manager is a full time position and will report to the Program Director.

Key Activities

- Maintain all equipment, land, and buildings
- Small repairs on all power equipment (tractors, etc.)
- Winterize equipment and irrigation
- Mow/weed trim all grasses (except for cultivated field edges. That is the farmers' responsibility)
- Maintain forest edges (mow back brush, remove fallen trees, etc.)
- Supervise interns who assists with all tasks
- Cultivate cover crops
- Plow fields for farmers when appropriate
- Help train farmers on the safe and proper use of farm equipment
- Care for all equipment and infrastructure carefully and make sure that farmers are trained at the beginning of the season to do so as well.

Lomax Farm Staff

The **Training Coordinator** will be in charge of the development and maintenance of the instructional platform for the Farmer-in-Training (FIT) Program. This instructional platform will be based on annual production plans created by FITs in concert with a Lomax Food Distribution Network.

The Lomax Food Distribution Network will seek to connect Farmers-in-Training, program graduates and area farmers with institutional buyers of fresh and locally grown vegetables. This contract purchasing will necessitate
corresponding production plans by the FIT, program graduates and other area farmers and the Training Coordinator will oversee the development of these plans.

The Training Coordinator will be responsible for the marketing of the Lomax Food Distribution Network as well as coordination with the Land Manager and the educational institutions at Lomax Farm to ensure the success of this program.

Key Activities

- Coordinate on-farm training.
- Community gardener training.
- Workshop development and oversight.
- Develop, market and sell support of a Food Distribution Program.
- Use the Distribution Program's scheduled food deliveries to develop a multi-year production plan for the Lomax collaboratively managed farm fields.
- Maintain financial resources and support needed to operate programs effectively.

Lomax Farm Staff

The **Research Coordinator** will conduct on-farm research that supports the needs of organic farmers in the Carolinas; conduct on-farm demonstrations at to validate the effectiveness of organic production practices; and collaborate with research and education providers to assist in gathering and disseminating information on organic production practices and organic transition. S/he will work with the Farm Services Director to prepare internal reports, compliance reports, grant billings, and other tasks necessary to meet program goals.

The Organic Research Coordinator will report directly to the Farm Services Director, and may supervise staff in the future. This position will be based out of the Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm and will require travel throughout the Carolinas.

Key Activities

- Assist financial and programmatic monitoring to ensure compliance, progress towards objectives and expected results, and work plan and budget adherence.
- Oversee purchasing in accordance with approved budget; maintain account and transaction records as needed for program implementation; ensure compliance with CFSA expenditure control protocols.
- Conduct on-farm demonstrations at Lomax Farm and other farms in the Carolinas to validate the effectiveness of organic production practices.
- Provide on-sit training to producers growing in seasonal high tunnels.
- Research and document successful business models for organic, small scale, and diversified farms and support producers' adoption of those models.
- Develop resources and provide education on how to build successful organic farming operations.
- Collaborate with research and education providers to assist in gathering and disseminating information on organic production practices and organic transition.
- Conduct research at the Lomax Farm that supports the needs of organic farmers in the Carolinas.
- Offer workshops in the Carolinas on organic production practices.
- Organize and host field days.

Lomax Farm Staff

The **Outreach Coordinator** will be in charge of the development and maintenance of the Event Retreat Center. This will include marketing, scheduling and accommodating on-farm guests using the facility to further their organization's needs.

The Outreach Coordinator will develop the Cabarrus County Agricultural History Exhibit. This position will also facilitate on-farm fundraising and friend-raiser events and will be responsible for the development of programing aimed at bringing the general public onto the farm to learn and enjoy.

This position will work with the Land Manager and the Program Director to ensure that multiple visitors to the Lomax Farm successfully use the facility at the same time.

Key Activities

- Manage the Event Retreat Center
- Coordinate on-farm visitation
- Develop and maintain Cabarrus County AG History Exhibit
- Media relationships
- Workshop development and oversight.
- Assistance with fundraising, marketing and recruitment

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & NEXT STEPS

Thank you! The creation of this Development Plan would not have been possible without funds made available by the Cabarrus County Board of Commissioners.

Cooperative Extension Cabarrus County, most notably Director Robbie Furr, was instrumental in building this Development Plan.

Topia Group far exceeded expectations given the resources provided in putting together the site plans, master plan, and other aspects of the overall Lomax Development Plan.

Crucial to putting this plan together was the input from so many interested and engaged citizens of Cabarrus County. Thank you for your time and effort!

Next Steps:

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association and the Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm will seek input from existing partners on this Development Plan and make changes when appropriate.

CFSA and Lomax staff will work to develop relationships with potential partners and explore opportunities that could assist in making this plan a reality. This includes examining resources within the community that could help develop programs and infrastructure

Meanwhile CFSA is committed to promoting the vision of the Lomax Farm through the continued service of its mission.