

The Fruit Of Restoration

Interrogating Race in the American City: From Legacies to Design Opportunities

Through direct policy and indirect discrimination, minority communities in the United States face disinvestment and injustice. Different social and policy systems intersect creating challenges in achieving **racial equity** and **just food systems**. This project investigates barriers to local food justice in Saint Paul by addressing existing land use policies, and addressing how these barriers affect the **Summit-University** neighborhood. This poster examines some key aspects to institutional inequality concerning race and food access, and how those aspects impact the design of garden and green spaces in Saint Paul.

Land Use & Institutional Racism

Some of the causes, processes, and results of institutional racism in American society include:



Segregation



Urban Renewal



Redlining

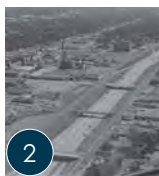


Environmental Injustice



1

David Hoggan, 1942
Source: Library of Congress



2



3



4

These factors have shaped the American city through concrete policy outcomes:

- 1 Segregation**
Policies of explicit disinvestment and discrimination have wide ranging effects on communities of color. One outcome is that little space exists in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods for **open green space** to grow food.
- 2 Urban Renewal**
Destruction of physical and social neighborhood structures in the name of "slum clearance" and interstate highway construction, resulting in the loss of **social, political and economic capital**.
- 3 Redlining, Restrictive Covenants, & Land Ownership**
Limited land use agreements and lack of land ownership lead to a lack of **permanency**: can individuals and the community invest in long-term garden spaces?
- 4 Environmental Injustices & Lack of Open Space**
 - Tainted and contaminated soil brought in from off site for building construction. This contamination is never abated, partially due to lack of support from city government
 - Development tends to favor residential or commercial uses with no green space component
 - These and other factors lead to a lack of uncontaminated green open space for community gardening uses.

Food Policy Inequality

Beyond the impact on access to healthy and affordable food, policy inequality can include:



Absence of Food Education



Need for Community Engagement



Food Justice & Sovereignty



Policy Disparity



1



2



3



4

Map of Saint Paul showing different green space areas among neighborhoods in St. Paul (City)

These factors have influenced the contemporary urban food system:

- 1 Absence of Food Education**
 - Lack of gardening, food, nutritional information and education in schools, particularly at early ages.
 - Reinforces **gap in representation** at higher levels: high school, college, policy makers, and community activists.
- 2 The Need for Community Engagement**
 - Challenge of organizing a **grass-roots, self-sustaining organization** to support the garden site.
 - **Lack of trust** due to failure to acknowledge past community trauma
 - **Rubberstamping** instead of authentic community engagement
- 3 Lack of Food Justice and Sovereignty**
Every community has the right to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, as well as the ability to have **control** and **ownership** over their food system. Disadvantaged communities face many institutional barriers to these rights.
- 4 Disparity in Municipal Policies Concerning Urban Gardening**
 - City has demonstrated will, ability, and buy-in for green and community gardening space with new housing development in other neighborhoods.
 - Historically disadvantaged neighborhoods face past and current hurdles to implement food growing programs with the **support** of local government.

Restoring a Racially Just Food System

A key aspect of a racially just food system is the restoration of a community's **connection to the land**. One way to address racism and food policy inequality is to implement programs that re-establish community members' connections to the land to grow food. This project focuses restoring the connection to the land through site design and community-based programming, based on developing a **Fruit Oasis for education, regeneration, and contemplation**.

The Fruit Of Restoration

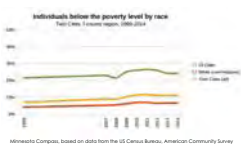
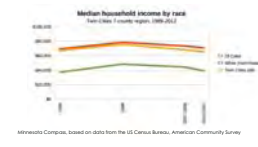
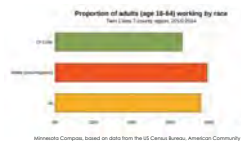
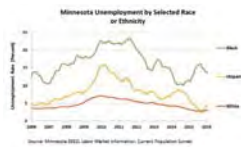
Solutions through Planning and Policy

Governmental and non-profit organizations work throughout the Twin Cities on **food** and **racial justice** projects. Many emphasize **economic competitiveness** as well as equity and health benefits for targeted populations. This poster examines economic and demographic trends in the Twin Cities region, and current public policy in Ramsey county and the city of Saint Paul to determine how they address the challenges of racial equity and food justice.

Why is advocacy needed here in the Twin Cities & Ramsey County?

Jobs, Income and Poverty

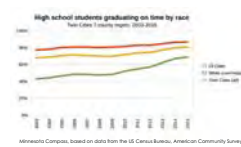
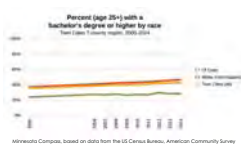
- Link between **income and political power** - perpetuates institutional racism
- Unemployment and poverty lead to adverse effects on education, health, & home ownership



In Ramsey County, poverty rates are **3.7 times higher** for people of color than white residents, and the rate of poverty has grown more among people of color.

Education

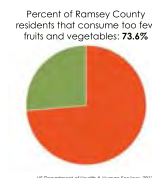
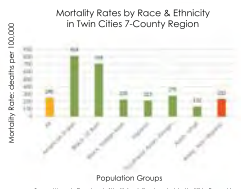
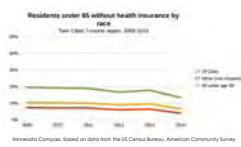
- One result of educational disparities: lack of education in growing, preparing, and consuming healthy food.
- Education on land and food** must start at primary levels for student interest to be nurtured through high school, college, and on to careers.



Ramsey County has the **lowest high school graduation** rate in the region among the group 25 years old and older.

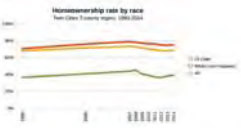
Health

Health of community residents is directly impacted by the **built environment**, from access to healthy foods to bicycle and pedestrian facilities.



Home & Land Ownership

Land ownership is a key component to community gardening and urban agriculture. Without guaranteed long-term tenure, residents face additional hurdles to growing their own food.



59.3% of homes are owner-occupied in Ramsey County. This rate is much lower for people of color.

City Policy



- Areas of Focus**
 Economic Sustainability
 Environmental Sustainability
 Social Sustainability

- Sections of Plan**
 Introduction
 Transportation
 Parks & Recreation
 Housing
 Water Resources
 Historic Preservation
 Implementation

How does the Comprehensive Plan discuss:
 race
 equity
 food
 gardening

- Parks tied to social equity through accessibility and connectedness, including transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access.
- Some discussion of promotion of community gardens under Housing.
- Limited discussion of past racial trauma, policies of equity, or discussion of food access or food justice.
- No discussion on how site design can help solve these problems.

Regional Policy & Programs

Many regional entities and programs address racial and food inequity, but rarely through the lens of **site design**.

- Met Council Thrive MSP 2040 Plan - long range plan for the Twin Cities region encompassing transportation, water resources, regional parks system, and housing. Includes equity evaluation: choice, place, and opportunity.
- Met Council Equity Advisory Committee
- Ramsey County Racial Equity Plan (May 2016)
- Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission
- Local & Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity
- Seeding the City - land use policies to promote urban agriculture (NPlan)

Racial Equity Beyond Data and Policy

Based on an analysis of regional and municipal policy as well as current advocacy needs, the notion of restoring a community's connection to the land must include, but also extend beyond design. The project must also positively influence **community, economic growth, health, and safety**. An analysis of the Summit University neighborhood follows to determine current conditions and need of the community.

The Fruit Of Restoration

Summit-University Neighborhood - Analysis of Existing Conditions

This poster examines demographic data, land uses, transportation networks and the location of public green spaces in the neighborhood. It aims to address the following questions: What is the physical makeup of the neighborhood? What are current community needs in regards to **land and food**?

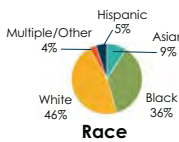
Demographics

Summit-University Neighborhood



Population: 17,260

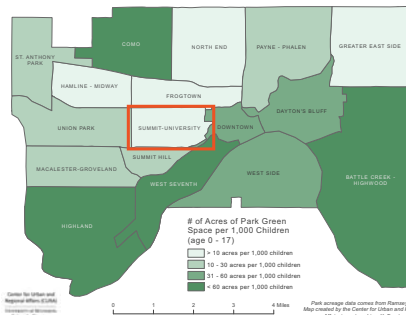
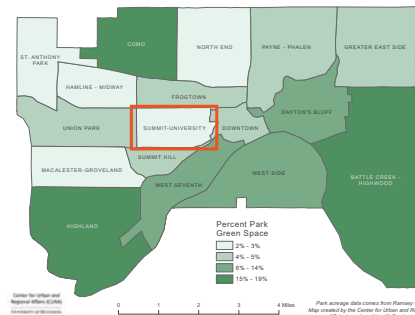
Median Income: \$42,053



Why Demographics Matter:

Successful site design is derived from policy solutions that are appropriate to the residents of a neighborhood. Policy and planning for historically disadvantaged communities must acknowledge historical trauma and past injustices to create plans and spaces that meet the needs of community members now and in the future.

Neighborhood Analysis



Percent Park Green Space Per Acre Park Acres per 1000 Children (CURA)

Compared to other neighborhoods in the City of St. Paul, Summit-University has some of the least green park space and least amount of green park space per child.

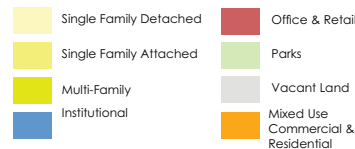


Public green space in neighborhood, with five minute walks shown around parks. Our site would add significant green space access to residents.

Neighborhood Land Use Map



The neighborhood is primarily single family residential, with several large institutional uses and two commercial corridors along University and Selby Avenues. Most of the parcels near and adjacent to the site are **single-family detached**, meaning a small scale community garden and park space is of an appropriate scale for the neighborhood.



Neighborhood Educational Institutions

A key component of the Fruit Oasis project is partnering with local schools and educational centers to engage students in gardening and cultivating connections with the land. Summit-University contains schools and student programs for all ages, including:

- Five public elementary schools
- Two public high schools
- Three private schools
- Oxford Community Center and Loft Teen Center
- Ramsey County Head Start
- and many smaller organizations

Transit Routes



Both the site and the neighborhood have **good transit access**, which allows for greater access for community members who lack cars. The site also sits on a road with a designated bikeway; however the lack of signage, striping, or designated bike paths make bike access to the site less than ideal.



Bikeways



Creating Green Space in the Summit University Neighborhood

Given demographic conditions and the existing physical characteristics of the neighborhood, there is a need for **public green space** and **redevelopment**. The next poster will look at a particular vacant site in the neighborhood and evaluate current challenges and opportunities for redevelopment.

The Fruit Of Restoration

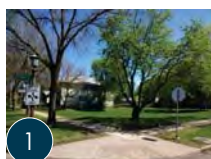
Challenges and Opportunities

This poster will provide an assessment of the site's physical characteristics. Determining site and community assets, physical barriers to construction, and opportunities for redevelopment will lead to designing the Fruit Oasis on the site.



Site Location:
1036 Marshall Ave. on the southeast corner of Marshall Avenue and Oxford Street

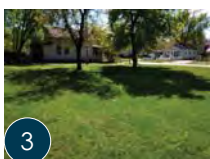
2 Parcels, Total Size: .32 Acres
Property Owner: Housing and Redevelopment Authority of City of St. Paul



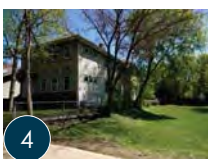
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Corner of Oxford St. and Marshall Ave.



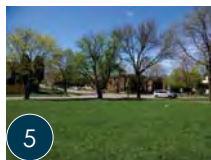
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Oxford St. looking north towards Marshall Ave.



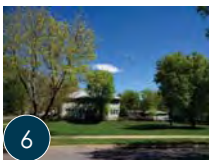
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Depression in middle of site with culvert; this area pools with water from rainwater runoff from the rest of the neighborhood



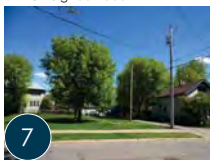
4
Chain link fence along eastern edge of site. Property slopes up at this edge which leads to rainwater pooling in the middle of the site.



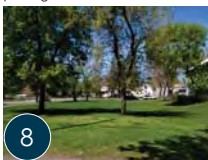
5
Middle of site, looking towards corner of Oxford St. and Marshall Ave.



6
Oxford St. looking east into site.



7
City-owned alley on south side allows for vehicular access of site.



8
South side of site looking north.



9
Marshall Ave. looking south into site

- Tree
- Utility Pole
- Culvert



Evaluation of Site Challenges and Opportunities

Variable	Description	Opportunities vs. Challenges
Current Food & Gardening Regulation	Review based on Urban Agriculture Zoning Study by St. Paul Comprehensive Planning Committee, April 6, 2012	Community gardens lack a clear zoning definition in Saint Paul, but are present throughout the neighborhood. No regulatory hurdles for a food oasis are anticipated. Composting language in comprehensive plan is outdated. There are no rainwater harvesting standards.
Access to Site	Site has access to Marshall Avenue, Oxford Street, and alley in city right of way Sidewalks along Marshall and Oxford	Site has excellent car and pedestrian connectivity to rest of neighborhood. The alley allows for materials drop-off.
Community Centers	Oxford Community Center First Trinity Church of God	Partnership opportunities with offsite community organizations.
Environmental Hazards	Possible soil contamination Water runoff from neighborhood collects on site.	Soil testing is necessary but expensive. Design of site can minimize cost by limiting how much soil area must be abated. Water run-off and collection offers opportunity for low-maintenance water feature.
Frontage & Facade Conditions	No adverse frontage conditions	This site has good visibility and access, which is important for safety as well as community members' ease of use.
Ongoing & Future Development	Tentative plans for the site include low density residential development	Historically, the City has not reserved green space in new or re-development in this area. It is unknown if plans for new housing include public open space.
Permitting for gardening on city property	Usually limited-use permits	These type of permits must be renewed yearly, thus discouraging residents from investing time, money and energy into gardening and urban agriculture.
Zoning - Land Use	RT1 - Two Family Residential District - Zone for low density one-and two-family dwellings. Three story buiding maximum	Challenge - community support for projects could be difficult to obtain, due to low population numbers around site. Opportunity - building size and density requirements means small-scale gardening project will not be overwhelmed by urban context.
Transit Access	Bus 83 runs north-south on Lexington 1 block west Bus 21 runs east-west on Selby 2 blocks south	Transit access is key for community members to access the site
Proximity to Schools	Tres Lund Montessori School Central High School Concordia University	Nearby schools offer easy access for children to use the site, and partnership opportunities with the schools for site maintenance and harvest.
Site Topography	Ground slopes from eastern boundary to natural depression in center of lot; rest of site is relatively flat	Challenge: Slope of site presents some challenges for larger scale planting and may require leveling. Opportunity: Natural depression offers oppportunity for low-cost water feature.

Once the assets of the site and surrounding area are studied, how is it prepared for redevelopment? This site has the potential to become a community green space. The next poster will explain how the site is prepared for redevelopment.

The Fruit Of Restoration

Site Preparation and Initial Design

This poster will explain the overall community engagement process, the main principles behind selection of plants for the site, and some of the physical evaluation of the site that must take place before construction.

Community Engagement

A key component to the success of this project is community buy-in from the earliest planning stages, and continuous community involvement in the maintenance and harvest of the Fruit Oasis.

Layers of Engagement



At the Site:

Formation of a **Steering Committee** for initial planning and operation of the site.

1-2 block radius around site

Door-to-door, face-to-face outreach with residents who will ultimately have ownership of the site.

Summit-University neighborhood

- Meetings with community groups, schools, educators, neighborhood non-profits
- Social media outreach

City of Saint Paul

Relationship building and collaboration with city of Saint Paul for long-term municipal support of the project.

Goals

The Fruit Oasis requires a community engagement process that is iterative, qualitative, and inclusive of residents that have been left out of the traditional planning process. The steering committee will lead a process of continuous feedback and guidance into the official planning process.

This collaborative process requires accommodations for residents:

- Educating residents if they haven't attended previous meetings
- Compensation and meeting time to enable participation

Ultimately the process will lead to a type of **Community Development "Miranda"** to establish rights and norms for public participation in the planning and operation of the Fruit Oasis.

Ecological Programming

Plants will be chosen to support the overall goals of the site, including:

Educational Value: How can the Fruit Oasis teach information and techniques that people can then use in their own gardens - spreading knowledge throughout the community by demonstrating the types of fruit that can be grown by residents

Sustainability is crucial for long-term success of the site. Selection of plants takes into account **environmental** sustainability and **programmatic** sustainability so the fruit oasis will be self-sustained by community members.



Dwarf peach trees are not local to Minnesota, but can be grown and left outside year-round. The Fruit Oasis will demonstrate fruit possibilities beyond what is typically seen in a community garden.



To expand on existing residents' knowledge, lesser known varieties of common plants and fruits will be included in the Fruit Oasis.

- Size and type of plant (tree, dwarf tree, shrub, etc.)
- Soil and sunlight needs
- Water and nutrition needs
- Flowering season and fruiting season
- Required winter care
- Maintenance level
- Native or local plants which require minimum maintenance and support the Fruit Oasis' mission of re-establishing the community's connection to the land.

Physical Evaluation of Site



Site Access - determine sight lines, where people can enter and exit the site and where possible vehicle drop-off points are located

- Tree
- Utility Pole
- Culvert



Shade map - showing the longest shadows in early spring, to determine where certain plants and activities should be located.

- ▨ Shade Zone
- Drainage Area



Planting zones - based on full sun, partial sun, shade, and drainage areas.

- Full Sun
- Partial Sun
- Shade
- Drainage Area

Integrating Project Goals into Site Design

Once the physical site is evaluated and community support is organized, site design can begin. The next poster will explain the physical components of the fruit oasis that support the overall goals of the project.

The Fruit Of Restoration

A year-round space for education, contemplation, and restoration.

The design of the site should support the creation of a Fruit Oasis for education, contemplation, and community connection. The goal is to create an all-purpose public green space that meets a variety of community needs. This poster will detail the goals of the site design and present visual examples of these design principles.

Site Goals



Safety - Need to create a site that models, supports, and reinforces a safe space



Sustainability - maintenance and operation should be low cost



Year-round usage - space needs to have utility and beauty in all seasons



Accessibility - physical access to the site; programmatic access for people with different interests and abilities



Educational partnership opportunities - links with schools, churches, and community organizations



Site Design - stimulus for neighborhood development

Conceptual Site Plan & Features of Design

Variety of plant types with year round coverage



Dwarf fruit trees, flowering shrubs, vegetables, and ground cover with an emphasis on native species and year-round green coverage.



Sedum in winter and summer is one example of a plant that maintains its beauty in all seasons.

Site Perimeter & Paths



The perimeter of the site has low plantings and seating, not high fences. The goal is a welcoming space, with clear lines of sight in and out of the oasis. Paths use woodchips as low cost and low maintenance ground cover. Paths will be unobstructed and at least three feet wide so residents of all physical ability can access the site and help maintain it.



Planters with benches are placed along the sidewalk to provide seating for passerbys and garden users, and to allow for raised bed plantings which help minimize the amount of soil remediation.

Entries on Oxford & Marshall with identifying signage



Wish Youth Community Garden



Signage should be aesthetically pleasing, representative of the neighborhood and its residents, and encourage passerbys to enter the oasis. The oasis entryways are also a place for art installations and neighborhood placemaking.

Fruit Trees



Dwarf fruit trees are planted in pairs to be self-pollinating. Their smaller size makes them appropriate for this small site, and residents can apply knowledge and techniques learned in the Fruit Oasis in their own homes.

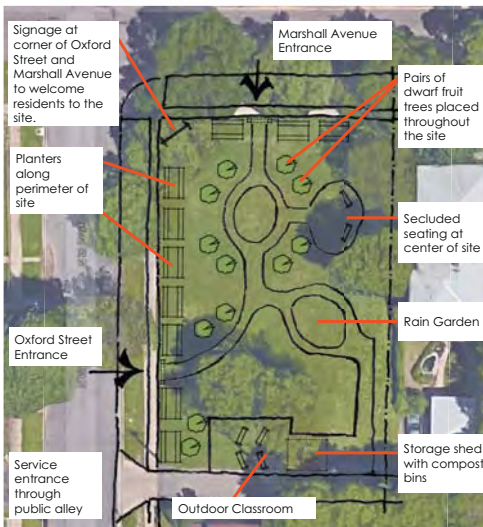
Rain Garden



Utilizing the natural slope of the site to demonstrate a rain garden design that can be implemented by residents in their own homes. Saint Paul has programs and regulations supporting residential rain gardens, and the Fruit Oasis offers an opportunity to assist residents in creating their own rain gardens.



Example of a rain garden installation



Outdoor Classroom



The Fruit Oasis provides an informal outdoor classroom space for local schools and clubs to use. This space will be utilized by local educators who are part of the planning process of the site and integrate their curriculums into the physical space of the Fruit Oasis.

Continuous Education



Lyndale Community Rain Garden

Signage, plaques, plant markers, and kiosks describe plants, seasonal changes, and the different functions of the Fruit Oasis. Signs with diagrams in all the languages found in the community explain concepts like the rain garden and compost bins to residents, so this knowledge can spread back into the community.

Composting & Storage Building



Storage shed and compost bin accessible by alley. Composting is an important part of the site's environmental sustainability, and is another concept that residents can take from the site and implement in their own homes.

From Physical Design to Community Regeneration

The physical site design reinforces and supports the community organizational goals. The next board explains the programming of the fruit oasis and how to create a regenerative community space.

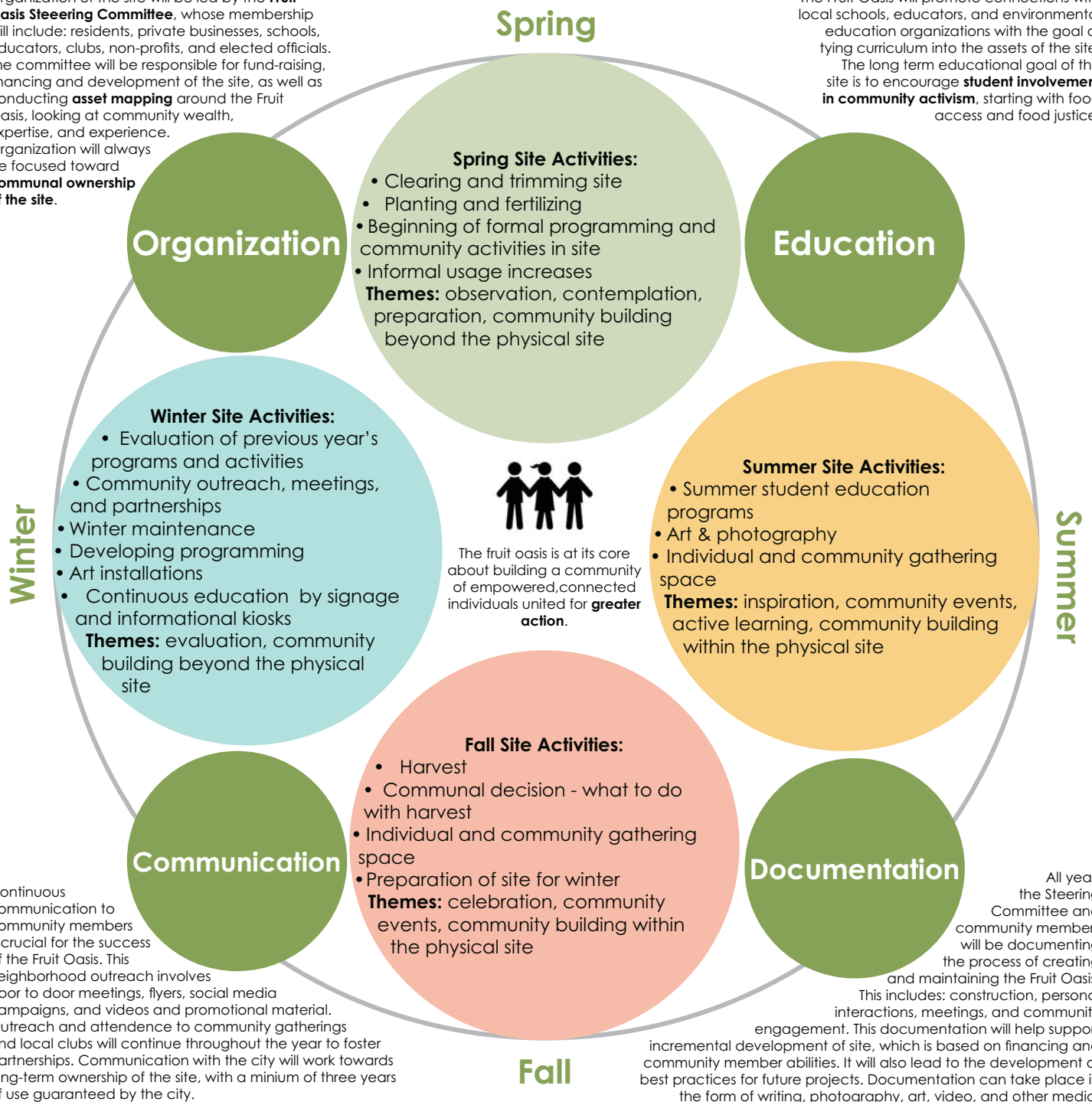
The Fruit Of Restoration

A year-round space for education, contemplation, and restoration

Based on the themes of **regenerative learning** and re-establishing **connections to the land**, programming for the site includes: seasonal activities that maintain the site and involve the community; and year-round planning and organization to create a framework for community members to come together for civic engagement and to advocate for their community. The overall short-term goal is for residents to participate in growing and learning about fruit in their homes and community.

Organization of the site will be led by the **Fruit Oasis Steering Committee**, whose membership will include: residents, private businesses, schools, educators, clubs, non-profits, and elected officials. The committee will be responsible for fund-raising, financing and development of the site, as well as conducting **asset mapping** around the Fruit Oasis, looking at community wealth, expertise, and experience. Organization will always be focused toward **communal ownership of the site**.

The Fruit Oasis will promote connections with local schools, educators, and environmental education organizations with the goal of tying curriculum into the assets of the site. The long term educational goal of the site is to encourage **student involvement in community activism**, starting with food access and food justice.



Continuous communication to community members is crucial for the success of the Fruit Oasis. This neighborhood outreach involves door to door meetings, flyers, social media campaigns, and videos and promotional material. Outreach and attendance to community gatherings and local clubs will continue throughout the year to foster partnerships. Communication with the city will work towards long-term ownership of the site, with a minimum of three years of use guaranteed by the city.

The Fruit of Restoration

Like growing peaches versus apples, different neighborhoods require different policy solutions to address historic inequity. The Fruit Oasis model provides community-based education and reconnection to the land through site design and authentic community engagement. Projects like the Fruit Oasis should complement current community assets and aid future development, as well as lay framework for civic organization and engagement at all levels of government.