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Halifax's Urban Orchard Project:  
Results of a Consultation Workshop in Halifax, June  
2014



## **Urban Orchards in Halifax: Results of a Consultation Workshop in Halifax, June 2014**

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### **1. Introduction**

On January 28, 2014, the Halifax Regional Council passed a motion to “develop and implement an urban orchard pilot project plan” as an undertaking within the Healthy Communities Core Priority Area (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2014a). This resulted from a recent public consultation initiative by Mayor Mike Savage, which gathered over 80 stakeholders from various backgrounds to address public and community health issues (Bates, 2013). The motion further specified that the urban orchard pilot project plan should be completed within the scope of Halifax’s Urban Forest Master Plan. This plan aims to ensure a sustainable future for the city’s urban forest, and contains objectives relating to the production of edibles from city trees (HRM Urban Forest Planning Team, 2013).

On June 26, 2014, Halifax Regional Municipality (the municipality) and the School for Resource and Environmental Studies at Dalhousie University held a consultation workshop on the establishment of orchards in the city as a starting point for developing a pilot project. Background information on Halifax’s urban orchard initiative and on successful orchard projects in other cities was compiled in a discussion paper distributed to guests prior to the workshop (Lesko, Roach, and Slapcoff, 2014). Many stakeholders, including Halifax Regional Councillors, advisory committees, and staff, landscape architects and planners, community garden leaders, agriculture professional, health workers, and community and environmental interest groups were invited to attend and share their thoughts and knowledge on the subject.

This report provides a summary of the main thematic outcomes of the consultation workshop. A brief description of workshop objectives and design is followed by a synthesis of the comments and suggestions that the Halifax Urban Forest Planning Team received from workshop participants.

### **2. The Workshop**

#### **2.1 Objective**

The Halifax Urban Orchard Consultation Workshop was a two-hour event held on the evening of Thursday, June 26, 2014, on the Dalhousie University campus. The objective of the consultation workshop was to inform the beginning stages of planning and implementation of urban orchards in Halifax.

## **2.2 Approach and Design**

A total of 95 people were invited to the workshop. Invitees were selected based on their affiliation to local food production, or their experience with project implementation in the public realm. The Urban Forest Planning Team received a total of 28 attendees at the consultation workshop (see Appendix 6.1). Guests were asked to sign in upon arrival. Plenary presentations commenced at 1800 hr (see Appendix 6.2). Once the presentations had finished, guests were asked to separate into one of four pre-determined breakout groups.

Breakout groups were created by separating participants into groups based on their affiliation, to ensure that each breakout group contained diverse backgrounds. Once in their breakout groups, participants discussed three questions:

1. What is the most important purpose that urban orchards in Halifax should serve?
2. What design principles and development guidelines should be applied in the creation of Halifax urban orchards?
3. What are some of the challenges to implementation of urban orchards in Halifax, and how can they be addressed?

## **2.3 Approach to Documentation and Synthesis**

For the breakout group activity, each of the four groups of workshop participants was assigned a facilitator and a note-taker. The facilitator's role was to ask the discussion questions, and ensure all participants were given the opportunity to speak. The note-taker was responsible for recording all comments made by participants during the activity. Edited versions of these transcripts (see Appendix 6.3) were used as a basis to derive the main ideas and concerns expressed by participants in regard to the three questions asked. Although a multitude of suggestions were made during the consultation, the themes presented in this report were recurrent amongst the four groups and repeated by many participants.

## **3. Major Thematic Outcomes**

### **3.1 What is the most important purpose that urban orchards in Halifax should serve?**

#### **Food Security**

At the consultation workshop, it was discussed that Halifax's urban orchards have the potential to generate a substantial amount of food. This food could be distributed to those in need, which would be a step closer to achieving the goal of food security for many Haligonians.

#### **Healthy Eating**

Many workshop participants felt that establishing orchards throughout Halifax would increase the accessibility of fresh and healthy food to citizens. This in turn would begin to build a culture of healthy eating within the city. Furthermore, allowing communities to pick fruit from the trees may create an attitudinal shift towards how people view their food. Additionally, having food-

bearing trees in a community may instill a stronger connection to nature within community members.

### **Strong Communities**

Participants felt that urban orchards in Halifax could be used as a gathering place for community members, ultimately strengthening community relations. However, communities must be consulted regarding their wants and needs before an orchard is implemented. By consulting the community first, an opportunity for community engagement is created, which has the potential to instill a sense of ownership and stewardship in the orchard project.

### **Education and Engagement**

During the workshop, the importance of public education and community engagement was emphasized. Community members could gain hands-on education through caring for the orchard. Workshops regarding traditional skills such as tree pruning and harvesting could be held to ensure that the public remains engaged. Participants felt that education regarding the importance of growing one's own food, as well as all aspects of tree maintenance, could potentially broaden the scope of fruit trees to private properties in addition to public orchards. Social media could prove to be a useful tool for keeping participants engaged and knowledgeable with regard to important events such as harvests. Lastly, it was agreed that youth and schools should be a focus of urban orchard education. Kids' clubs could be created in which youth care for the trees and act as stewards of the orchard. Orchards could be planted around schools, at which point the orchard could serve as an educational tool and contribute food to the school lunches.

## **3.2 What design principles and development guidelines should be applied in the creation of Halifax urban orchards?**

### **Site Selection**

Participants unanimously agreed that careful site selection was necessary for long-term sustainability of urban orchards in Halifax. Sites for urban orchards should have appropriate soil condition, air quality, wind exposure, sunlight availability, and other relevant environmental conditions. In addition, urban orchards should be adjacent to, and well-received by, surrounding communities. It was suggested that sites already used by communities would be ideal, so long as growing food is compatible with current uses and cultural considerations. Sites chosen should not be in conflict with existing infrastructure, and water should be conveniently accessible. Finally, participants pointed out the importance of having urban orchards in highly social locations, where the orchard's high visibility would increase community involvement and site security.

### **Species Selection**

Similarly to site selection, appropriate species must be chosen for orchard sustainability. Factors such as plant hardiness, ability to self-pollinate, low maintenance requirements, obtaining maximum fruit yield, and frequent harvesting opportunities were repeatedly mentioned. Many

participants emphasized the need to consult with experts on these issues. Ideas from permaculture, including biodiversity, multi-layered vegetation, and chemical-free food production, were also thought to be applicable to the design of urban orchards in Halifax.

### **Easy Maintenance**

Participants highlighted the need for urban orchard maintenance requirements to be minimal, as this would help retain volunteers and keep communities engaged over the long term. Easy maintenance relates to some of the site- and species-selection criteria described above.

### **Citizen Engagement**

Participants pointed out the need for citizens to be engaged in every step of urban orchard design, implementation, and maintenance. This is achieved by effective, timely, and widespread communication with any potentially interested party. It was proposed that a memorandum of understanding be drafted between the city and community organizations that would be responsible for citizen engagement and education. Emphasis was placed on the importance of making urban orchards child-friendly environments, providing educational and playtime opportunities.

### **Food Security**

According to workshop participants, making citizens aware of what can be grown on their own land through educational activities in urban orchards will enhance food security in the long term. Targeting vulnerable communities for pilot orchard sites was also suggested as a way to maximize short-term food security benefits.

### **Partnerships and Collaboration**

There was a consensus that urban orchard governance should be the shared responsibility of multiple parties. The role of the municipality was envisioned differently amongst participants, but generally included the provision of land, funds, expertise in tree planting, species and site selection, and administrative support. Certain participants felt that the municipality also has a role in providing educational opportunities and planning recreation events within urban orchards. The bulk of community outreach efforts, education, and volunteer coordination was thought to be best handled by a non-governmental organization whose vision is closely aligned with urban orchard objectives. Many participants felt that a new organization solely dedicated to urban orchards should partner with the city, following the lead of the LEAF organization in Toronto. Involving schools was also discussed, as they could potentially provide land and a constant flux of volunteers. All in all, participants agreed that clear expectations for all parties from the start of orchard development are instrumental to long-term success.

### **Aesthetics**

Designing urban orchards with beauty and aesthetics in mind was mentioned on a few occasions. Participants pointed out that having visually pleasing orchards would enhance their public acceptability.

### **3.3 What are some of the challenges to implementation of urban orchards in Halifax, and how can they be addressed?**

#### **Time Span**

At the consultation workshop, many participants highlighted that, unlike existing community gardens, orchards consist primarily of trees that live for decades. For this reason, when implementing an orchard, volunteers would need to be committed for the long term; a fluid transfer of orchard knowledge among volunteers would need to be established; and paid staff would likely need to be hired to fill such roles as coordination and administration. Due to the time it takes for trees to produce fruit, participants encouraged the planting of food-producing bushes in the interim. In addition, it was suggested that multiple pilot sites be implemented simultaneously around Halifax. Lastly, maintenance and harvest of orchard trees are episodic, requiring year-round care. For this reason, it may be beneficial to couple urban orchards with established community gardens.

#### **Attitudes and Perceptions**

A difficult challenge to overcome is that of negative attitudes and perceptions towards urban orchards. Negative attitudes have the potential to lead to orchard vandalism. For this reason, it is integral that the community be consulted before implementation, and that an assessment of the existing use of the space be taken into consideration before the orchard is established. Lastly, attitudes and perceptions could be shifted through educational workshops and community engagement activities.

#### **Logistics**

Adequate funding for the orchards was discussed as a major challenge by many participants. Funding would be required for purposes such as: paying staff and coordinators; buying fruit-trees; and purchasing maintenance equipment. Two potential funding solutions were raised in the workshop. The first was the concept of selling fruit to local restaurants to pay for hired staff. This has successfully been done by the non-profit organization City Fruit of Seattle (Lesko, Roach, and Slapcoff, 2014). The second suggestion was to involve the private sector and have orchards be corporately sponsored.

In addition to funding, volunteer burnout was an issue raised by participants. Caring for an orchard is a long-term commitment and it is unrealistic to expect volunteers to stay with the orchard for its lifespan. It was suggested that gathering volunteers of different ages and backgrounds would be beneficial to the orchard. Additionally, ensuring that volunteers and participants remain actively involved in community engagement activities as a way of maintaining interest in the orchard is important. To avoid overexerting volunteers, there may need to be a balance between paid and unpaid workers.

### **Distribution**

During the discussion on the distribution end of urban-orchard produce, participants asked who would be responsible for picking the fruit, and who would be receiving it. It was suggested that volunteers or paid workers would pick the fruit, depending on funding. Furthermore, it was suggested that the fruit could be distributed to local restaurants, social services, food banks, and schools, to name a few.

### **Climate Change**

In the face of climate change, ideal planting conditions are going to change over time. Rather than be reactive and remediate the problem once it has occurred, workshop participants suggested taking a proactive approach. This would include choosing more resilient species and cultivars for the area, identified through expert consultation.

### **Site Conditions**

An issue of concern for planting orchards in Halifax is that of poor air and soil quality. It was suggested that clear guidelines be created, outlining which tree species and cultivars would flourish in the city, so communities could refer to them prior to planting their orchard.

### **Public Space**

Being aware of the existing use of public space is important. It was suggested that the orchard project be phased in gradually. The issue of public safety and orchard design was discussed, bringing to light the issue of understory planting and the implications it may have on safety due to limited visibility within the orchard.

### **Pests**

The fruit trees in an orchard have the potential to attract pests and diseases. However, legally no trees can be sprayed with chemical pesticides in Halifax for pest control. Therefore, a natural solution for pests would need to be determined. In order to rectify the problem, expert consultation would be ideal for pest identification and remediation.

### **Policy**

Participants noted that any sort of social enterprise on municipal land is not legal. Therefore, municipal policy would need to be changed to move forward with economic ventures. However, as of June 24, 2014, as an Order of the Council of the municipality, produce may be sold from a community garden, so long as the money is reinvested in community ventures (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2014b). This administrative order could apply to urban orchards growing within community gardens. It also provides a useful model for how to proceed with the sale of produce from standalone urban orchards in the future.

## **4. Conclusion**

The Halifax Urban Forest Planning Team thanks all workshop participants for their generous and valuable input. The event has made it clear that Halifax communities are enthusiastic and

committed to the implementation of urban orchards throughout the city. The feedback received and synthesized in this report will hopefully push the concept forward. This will allow the Team to work with the Halifax Regional Council on materializing an urban orchard pilot project strategy in the near future, collaborating with stakeholders every step along the way.

## 5. References

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- HRM Urban Forest Planning Team. (2013). *Halifax Regional Municipality Urban Forest Master Plan*. Halifax, NS: Halifax Regional Municipality.
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## 6. Appendices

### 6.1 List of Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Aimee Carson	Ecology Action Centre
Ali Shaver	Capital District Health Authority
Ange Dean	Land Studio East
Brooke Neily	Community Recreation Services
Charlynn Robertson	Clean Nova Scotia
David Foster	Sierra Club Atlantic
Ed Versteeg	Ed Versteeg Ltd.
Elizabeth Corser	Cole Harbour Heritage Farm
Gary Young	Halifax Planning & Infrastructure
Gretchen Fitzgerald	Sierra Club Atlantic
Jacob Ritchie	Ekistics Planning & Design
Jayne Melrose	Common Roots Urban Farm
Jennifer Watts	Halifax Regional Council
John Simmons	Urban Forester Halifax
Joshua Bates	Halifax
Katherine Kitching	Outdoor Active Fitness Halifax
Kemp MacDonald	Halifax Development Services
Kevin Osmond	Supervisor of Urban Forestry Halifax
Larissa Holman	Rope Works Community Garden
Leticia Smilie	Halifax Planning & Infrastructure
Linda Mosher	Halifax Regional Council
Marjorie Willison	Chebucto Connections
Michael Creighton	Fall River Vision Committee
Paige Farah	Progress in the Park
Rob Veinott	Ecology Action Centre
Rob MacNeish	Dalhousie Community Garden
Rochelle Owen	Dalhousie University
Samuel McGill	AMEC Environment & Infrastructure Dartmouth
Tim Fletcher	Park Avenue Community Oven

## **6.2 Workshop Agenda**

**5:30 – 6:00** Sign in and enjoy a light meal

**6:00 – 6:15** Welcome and introductions

**6:15 – 6:45** Plenary presentation and Q&A

**6:45 – 7:30** Breakout into workshop groups for roundtable discussions

**7:30 – 7:50** Discussion group reports and next steps

**7:50 – 8:00** Closing comments

**8:00** – End of workshop, thank you for joining us

## 6.3 Working-Group Reports

### 6.3.1 Working Group 1 - Facilitator = Sydney Toni; Recorder = Kendra Marshman

#### Question #1: What is the most important purpose that urban orchards in Halifax should serve?

- Education, getting people to learn
- Engagement. Getting people to physically be a part of something makes them care more. That idea of stewardship
- It's a good community exercise.
- Excitement. Growing food. When people finally get to take that apple off the tree it's a connection to food and growing food.
- Do you see anything as related to food security and supplying food to community/food banks?
- You have to look at it as all of these (referring to the board, where there is a list of things that were just talked about). You expect to see parks and greenbelts, so people should expect to see urban orchards.
- It involves all of those, but all of those may not apply to every situation. So I said education and community building, and a by-product of that is edible fruit, first dibs to neighbours but we want to connect too. There's a Halifax organization that collects and harvests fruit to pass it out; I had their name but I lost it. They harvest fruits and pass it on to Feed NS and other organizations.
- I think it's like Not Far From the Tree.
- Like active in Halifax now?
- Yes, at least a few months ago.
- So I wonder if it would eventually support a social enterprise, like Not Far From the Tree, allowing people to harvest.
- To spawn on generate one of these enterprises?
- All of these could at some point apply to every urban orchard. The notion of an attitudinal shift is crucial in this city right now, so education is paramount to me especially in the beginning, and the others will follow.
- If we can get the kids now and get them interested
- Yes yes
- We grew up with it and accepted it and always knew it was there.
- I think engagement and education are where these things will have the most impact. Food production won't be the greatest part. We have a growing population - 400,000 - an urban orchard will never feed the whole city. A great park is all about engagement, and an urban orchard is a type of park. It is about spaces where you can meet new people.
- That sparked an idea about engagement and I feel like yea it would produce food, minimal, it's not going to be a massive scale, but it is a good pilot to teach people to grow food. During the Cuba embargo, people were forced to grow gardens. We don't have that necessity, but using the food bank and getting food to people who need it might be good. In Toronto I lived in the Italian district and every second house had a pear tree. It was just what everyone did. It's a paradigm shift in a way and this could start that.

- There could be a couple orchards in Dartmouth, on the peninsula, different sizes, with signage. I've also heard the idea of having everyone planting a fruit tree in their backyard, people say this is how fruit grows in an urban setting, building something that is moving more towards food security and moving more towards social enterprise. Like Not Far From the Tree does collecting. What do these other models do?
- Maybe the urban orchard is going to be the place for a food distribution model where people can give away food they grow and don't need (refers to how when people plant zucchini they have way more than they want so they give it away).
- Does the orchard need to be in a park, can it be in a neighbourhood?
- The orchard in Fall River was planned as a destination, because it is the top end of a creek, the outflow of that creek has two schools, a high school and a junior high. What prompted this was the band kids went out on a nature-walk field trip, and saw some old growth vegetation, flora and fauna along the creek. The idea was to build a nature interpretation trail along the trail through the marsh where the destination is the orchard, so students can see where food comes from. The idea was to have it as an educational program.
- What do you think Halifax citizens want out of an urban orchard?
- People want something that is unique, that might be what's in mind, what we are talking about may be more valuable than what people say.
- We haven't been talking about small fruits, ornamental, that don't take up much room. Why not plant raspberries and blueberries?
- We are putting blueberries in the North End. People have mentioned an urban orchard at Fort Needham Park. It's already bubbling, people have this feedback.
- To be able to fruit- and vegetable-pick in my own neighbourhood would be great.

**Question #2: What design principles and development guidelines should be applied in the creation of Halifax urban orchards?**

- An orchard is more than just trees, it's like a layered system.
- Halifax has a strong network of community gardens - leverage the two. Why not put urban orchards where there are already urban gardens and people are already doing the work?
- Right now, they aren't allowed to plant trees.
- Changing policy in HRM is no problem.
- Site security, illegal activity is an issue, they should be in places that feel populated where homes overlook the trees.
- HRM likes to clear out the bottom of the trees for visibility.
- Fun, kids can climb on apple trees.
- Easy maintenance is a critical factor to design.
- It's a destination in a way.
- Integrate it with parks that are already well-travelled and well-cared for.
- When community gardens look run down you start to see vandalism and that's when you see volunteers dropping out. You should look at the private schools. Halifax Independent, Shambala, etc.
- If you properly maintain, they should be able to be left alone through July and August.

- I think if ISIS or service providers where they want to engage clients, Immigrant Services, settlement and integration. That is an example that could take care of or find people to take care of an urban orchard
- Where does the orchard go, what are the features of the site?
- Pick hardy, self-pollinating species. The species you pick have to be geared towards how active the organization is who is going to be handling them, there should be easy stuff planted for the groups who don't want to do much work.
- But the planting needs to be done in early spring, this time of year they are on their own.
- Development guidelines, what kind of model of higher paid and trained staff who run the volunteers, what do we think of as an ideal model of who is looking after it and where those people come from?
- Don't want the city to look after it.
- In London there are five trained volunteers.
- It almost has to be ongoing training and recruiting and I think that's where the city can do more.
- That's my only question in Halifax is where does that trainer lie, Not Far From the Tree is ideal but how far away are we from that??
- Common Roots is not a bad model to look at.
- They are a great model.
- CDHA enjoys the idea of people part of the community, and funds urban farmers, let the people who are responsible for our health take care of it.
- CDHA is moving towards more edible landscapes.
- Programs for parks should revolve around growing food in parks.
- Part of funding, including having an arborists show how to prune fruit trees.
- HRM buys through John Simmons and he gets a good price because he buys a LOT OF tree so maybe we can latch on to that (UFMP connection).
- Tree Canada funded our urban orchard.
- Important to get bigger trees for an urban orchard.
- That's what happens when you have a small budget and all you can get are seedlings.
- So that's something we need to decide, do we have an ideal caliper?
- There are experts to consult.
- The trees need to be big enough but not too big, get the advice first and then set the guidelines. An interesting note for design: if there is a bunch of diversity, then maybe nothing thrives and you don't have an urban orchard but you only have one apple tree, so maybe in each orchard you zone in on one fruit?
- So you have to decide if you want a single species or a mix.
- Are these orchards in places where a community is saying we want to do this, and then the city gives them guidelines, OR is this city trying to find that community?
- It would work better with the city being the assistant. There needs to be a memorandum of understanding, the same thing as with the community gardens.
- HRM is probably the most dysfunctional organization.
- We have EAC and Halifax garden network, so often people will apply with the city. It's like partnerships that the city established with community organization in different neighbourhoods, as long as that network is built.
- It's important to have a conversation with all the groups you can think of. You don't want to step on people's toes. It's good to open it up to the community.

- It should be a social spot like the Dartmouth oven. Even people who aren't part of the orchard group should feel like they can be a part of it.

**Question #3: What are some of the challenges to implementation of urban orchards in Halifax, and how can they be addressed?**

- Changing the policy of not being able to plant trees in urban gardens. What will it take to ensure sustainability? Keep the kids engaged. Keep different generations engaged.
- The gap between planting the trees and waiting for fruits.
- That's why we should plant a variety of things.
- Some trees come into production early, but still takes a couple years.
- I think the attitudes are key. Citizens harassed councillors in Ben Nobleman saying that the food would be wasted or that an orchard would create violence, less open spaces and more enclosed spaces. We have to get past these attitudes.
- Funding, maybe, if you want to have people hired, if you have to pay staff.
- Maybe we could brainstorm all the things that would need funding or volunteers?
- Mostly the labour, getting the trees.
- We can get trees free from all over the place, Tree Canada, Evergreen, either inexpensive or free, the problem is post-installation maintenance - things like watering.
- Managing the understorey, you don't want people mowing. Protection is a huge thing.
- Funding needs to be on the agenda.
- Is distribution a concern yet?
- Not Far From the Tree seemed to be doing it manually at a small scale. Is a lot of fruit going to be produced at harvest time?
- How do we decide who gets the fruit?
- The fruit comes at different times, different varieties, food is important to us as humans. In the last 50 years we ignored it, in the last 10 we started to care about it, it is happening a lot in the North End now.
- There are chefs, citizens, social services, cider press, food banks, etc.
- I think organizing strategically, setting up partnerships.
- Even now, on city land you can't sell food. That could be something to think about. Do we want to get into social enterprise? Do we want to sell the fruit?

### 6.3.2 Working Group 2 - Facilitator = Valerie Francella; Recorder = Lara Slapcoff

#### Question #1: What is the most important purpose that urban orchards in Halifax should serve?

- One thing that hasn't come up explicitly would be changing attitudes toward food. Help people change their attitudes in terms of being less picky about the quality or appearance. It's not the worm that's gonna kill you, it's the chocolate bar.
- We plant trees but not fruit trees in the city for cleanliness purposes. Other municipalities do it, something I've been reading about lately online. Changing people's attitudes is important. We should be able to drive down the street and not just see fruit trees tucked away in the park, but directly visible by the road.
- We got a small grant to plant trees in the fall in the Dartmouth Commons. One thing for us as a small group is education. Even though I garden, I don't have a fruit tree. One of the main things would be the educational piece. Hopefully the homes around the garden would start planting fruit trees too. We're hoping to learn how to plant and care for fruit trees.
- The most important purpose is food access, connecting the orchard to the people who really need the food the most.
- All in all, access to food, community building, connection to nature, importance of locally grown food, part of a cultural change towards healthier eating, beauty component as well.

#### What do you think Halifax Citizens want out of urban orchards?

- They would want food.
- They would want a connection to nature. Fruit trees would give you that extra connection because you can eat the product.
- They would want to be involved in the orchard, maybe use social media as a community engagement to make sure fruit is picked on time and it is accessible to citizens.
- They want their money's worth, and that has to be communicated in some way. It has a natural appeal to it but that will be a piece, how many people in the community around the orchard will be engaged, that is a big piece. If it's public land, how it is being used and benefitting families need to be communicated.

#### Question #2: What design principles and development guidelines should be applied in the creation of Halifax urban orchards?

- I'd like to see them designed to be chemical and pesticide free, companion planting, diverse planting. If the tree has pest, it's probably a sick tree anyway. These are permaculture principles.
- Also important to have smaller plants as well as trees because trees take time to mature enough to bear fruit. We need something the community can deal with in the meantime.

Community gardens in Holland did this, work on plots while trees are maturing for 7-10 years.

- Effective siting. You don't want to put a fruit tree in front of a sidewalk which is an entrance to a building, why set yourself up for aggravation. On campus, there is conflict over locations. Location with respect to soil condition, buildings, walkways, air quality. We need to emphasize air quality concerns especially in Halifax ships since come in. Access to water too. Getting it right will really help the process and avoid conflict.
- Site should be accessible to volunteers. Like the Park Avenue oven. The orchard needs to be near a community that is using the site, or would use it because it is close to where they live.
- Sun, wind, and other environmental conditions need to be considered.
- Should orchards be near existing urban gardens??
- I would think so because you already have community and people taking care of the garden, might also have a water supply.
- Design with a capital D. A lot of time public parks have things happen to them, they can become junked up, even though they are carefully designed. What you do should complement the larger whole. The whole public space should be a designed entity, how it looks, feels operates, so it's not impingent on other ideas or values. If there's a park dedicated to recreation, maybe that's not the best spot, make sure siting is integrated in with current use.
- Urban orchards could be a catalyst to make community happen and to educate. Take the orchards to school yards, senior homes; maybe it's got a social mission. Needed for community building.
- Having them in those locations could help longevity in terms of real estate, and lots of volunteers.

### **Who are the main players in urban orchard development and what are their roles?**

- People that know trees and fruit trees, landscape architects, people who know how to plant the right species for the right soil.
- Or just people with an interest, that could learn and help.
- Multiple people in charge, that are willing to share responsibilities.
- What is HRM thinking?
- We would like to latch on to community gardens but would ideally like to see... We are prepared to help with tree-planting, species and site selection. We'd educate too. And there are a lot of people that could educate as well.
- An organized community group whose vision is in line with urban orchards is necessary.
- Community-based champions, custodians... is that sustainable?
- For community garden approvals, people have to submit a plot plan and proof that they can actually sustain it. We are figuring out how many community gardens are on HRM property. Currently a list of 15-20 that we know of. We don't know if they are all still in existence.
- I was involved in Dartmouth gardens about 20 years ago and I know there was some ups and downs.
- We clear expectations, we to actually think about it and give it to the community group.

- We were impressed with the enthusiasm in the community with regards to Sierra Club's orchard initiative, but not much expertise in the community.

### **Question #3: What are some of the challenges to implementation of urban orchards in Halifax, and how can they be addressed?**

- Long-term commitment of volunteer groups, to be there when the trees actually bear fruit.
- In the UK, and LEAF in Toronto are umbrella groups for smaller orchards.
- LEAF has paid staff.
- A non-profit organization given a grant, reliable funding, that would help.
- It's going to be really episodic, especially in the fall for fruit picking. Pairing with community garden would be better because it would help for continuity in care throughout the year.
- The bridge to food distribution to people who need it could be challenging.
- That has to be thought through. Think about making preserves. Think about food poisoning. We need to think of the whole cycle of getting a piece of fruit to a person who needs it and thinking of all associated risks.
- Maybe one of the development guidelines could be starting in the most vulnerable neighborhoods.
- Give back. Not just growing for yourself.
- In the Ben Nobleman video, fruit is available to anyone at any time. That could happen in our urban orchards. But that is not how community gardens are functioning now.
- Should a plan for the food be set in place before trees go in the ground?
- Ask communities what they want. Maybe some communities would prefer different fruit, such as blueberries for baking. It depends on how people use food.
- Good point. Even some community garden we bike by in school yards, nobody is eating the food.
- Type of fruit and uses should be thought through.
- Climate change will be a challenge. Temperature changes, ideal planting conditions are going to change.
- That is why we need experts.
- New Brunswick nursery with emphasis on heritage apples, they are interested in preserving cultivars and keeping them in circulation.
- Air quality and soil quality could be a challenge.
- Changes in public spaces, goes hand in hand with proactive engagement and communication, like when we put oven in the Dartmouth commons, there was a bit of a backlash because many people didn't know, and it's 'their' common. They asked us what we were doing there.
- Pests. Some people wouldn't appreciate more creatures in the urban space.
- We don't spray trees in HRM!
- Having clear guidelines for planting tree species in advance.
- We always get faced with security principles. For example, we can't have understory because people hide in it, we always face that.

- There's a new pocket park in Sackville, they have to remove all the understory so you can see the road!
- It's a challenge, especially when thinking of companion planting.
- We long-term funding, linking to a reliable funding source, thoughtful planning, expertise.
- It doesn't necessarily need a lot of money, the process could be simple.

### 6.3.3 Working Group 3 - Facilitator = John Charles; Recorder = Brynn Roach

#### Question #1: What is the most important purpose that urban orchards in Halifax should serve?

- 1 in 5 families in Halifax are food insecure, we can change that by having better access to food, not just in parks and alleyways but also in schools, hospitals – food security
- Reservoir for carbon, planting trees to collect and store carbon
- Education, we need to educate the public, to educate them on the proper process, how easy it really is etc. potential for everyone who owns their properties to plant their own
- Teaching people how to do it “if you feed someone with fish, you fed them for a day, if you teach them how to fish...etc.”, urban orchard not just trees, its understanding trees
- Application stock, food is important, knowledge but also then the physical things needed to do it
- Short and long term, connecting with your food, the pleasure of eating something, a sense of community, and then maybe later food security, strange thing to focus on food security at first because hard to picture in short term
- Building & relationships, keep it sustainable in long term

#### What do you think Halifax Citizens want out of urban orchards?

- Community engagement
- Nibble gardens at common roots, free access to just come and pick
- People love a place to be known at, work and feel useful “let me teach you how to prune”
- I relish the idea as a citizen, thinking of my grandson, that to be able to walk along and pick some fruit and eat it as you go would be just wonderful
- I don’t know that the average citizen of Halifax would have one theme that they value; everyone brings their own perspective. I definitely think the experience is a positive one.
- Encourage them to want it and know it’s important. In Africa, the taste is completely different from the fruit in the tree than the fruit from the store. In Africa we only plant trees that we can pick something from- plum, coconut, etc. So when we come home people don’t have x-box, etc. So we pick coconuts.
- Less stress. People in the city are scared about what the future holds, people have trouble paying for their bills/ paying for bills, and they want to buy that local organic food but they can’t.

#### Question #2: What design principles and development guidelines should be applied in the creation of Halifax urban orchards?

- Not sure if this is exactly a design principle, but I found myself taking issue with the assumption that NGO’s would do it all- oh yes the city will offer infrastructure etc. But I like the idea where community developers have a role to play- maybe that’s something we should consider.

- I definitely like the understory - great design principle. A combination of multiple sectors is needed - community organizations need to be backed in some ways with some sort of institutional structure, in order for the community organizations to grow, especially in terms of governance, they need the support.
- In my experience with the urban farm, when the things look nice, it's more publically acceptable- developing and maintaining the aesthetics is important.
- Partnerships are important (not just community groups), understory is important, so is making it a four-season edible space (3 seasons of berries). For example, spruce trees could be used for tea in the winter.
- I feel pretty confident that this could be successful; it would be disappointing if we are only doing the one pilot. We should do multiple pilots because of confidence in the project
- I think we do need the institution as well. Schools are a great opportunity, as far as getting people/students engaged. We would have that constant influx. There are already many school community gardens, and trees could be added as part of those ecosystems. We should focus on multi-functional plants, not just to provide fruit- why not cut and dry wood for Dartmouth community oven to use in that specific project? We need to focus on relationships between orchards/community/land/people around etc.
- We need to look at access to water and irrigation. We have to prepare for that and have proper irrigation usage with ponds/swales/burns. Also a lot of the soils in the city are degraded and we have to enrich the soils with nutrients because a lot of people have problems with planting trees that won't grow.
- We can mimic nature to modify the sites, but also use nature and modify plans

### **How should sites for urban orchards to be chosen?**

- There's always subdivision, so if we can encourage the planners in the subdivision planning where they have 10% green space, some percentage of that green space should be used so we can plant maybe apple trees, etc. The city could make that a requirement (% of green space where you're planting fruit/nut trees), and then they would be all over the city.
- Full spectrum- annuals/trees/fruit berries/mushrooms, a whole spectrum of how it can grow within the garden setting, most of the soils we'll look at will be slightly tainted, as far as the garden what aspect- there is such a broad spectrum of plant material of what you can plant in Halifax- the reality is we can grow trees here.

### **Question #3: Challenges- how can they be addressed & what will it take to ensure success?**

- Changing climate, warming atmosphere, diversity of plants and cultivars and as far as the people aspect of being involved we need to have a supporting body- the Dartmouth community gardens have been a success because it's held together by a small body of volunteers, we're trying to build it up but we need more people involved and more

funding. We're trying to get more people of different background involved. It comes down to relationships and bringing people together.

- A lot of volunteer groups I work for are struggling - they need more money and people, the idea of an animator/coordinator and ongoing funds are needed. Maybe spend slightly less on other things, if this is a priority HRM needs to put money in it in the long run.
- I don't know the magic of what keeps a committed group of people working on it for years. I'm working on incorporating social enterprises into the farm- when there are opportunities to make a little bit of money it helps and fuels engagement- selling jam is an example. Doing any sort of social enterprise on municipal land is not legal- this is a policy change that could be made.
- Two points to emphasis: need for well-ordered coordinating/animating body/person in neighborhoods, and 2) I really liked City Fruits selling some of the fruit to generate money/ help support the people who are taking care of the trees.
- Where does it sit and how long does it sit there is a priority. When we plant orchards, usually we plant trees within an aspect of 5-10 years and how long can we maintain.... Food security becoming more of an issue as time goes by- I've been around the financial sector of the municipality.
- The willingness of people to participate- it requires full participation of the community, the private sector, etc. The only way you can keep all the sectors involved is keeping them aware, go to the schools, knock on the doors, etc. If that awareness is there we can convince people to participate.
- Stewards of the orchards: consistent group of people for maintenance. An example is the Boston Tree Party, over-night 37 orchards in Boston were started from orchard "stewards". Having a group of orchards working together under a framework. Another problem is mentality; some people don't want to see food being grown in the city. We can solve those problems through education and time.
- Reasons people might dislike urban orchards: unsightly, people think there are pests, people think you need to have a divide between urban and rural.

### 6.3.4 Working Group 4 –Facilitator= Stephen Cushing; Recorder = Melissa Lesko

#### Question #1: What is the most important purpose that urban orchards in Halifax should serve?

- We're looking to put an urban orchard in Dartmouth Commons. We (Sierra Club) want to put it there due to the sense of community. We want to build on that and use the urban orchard as a discussion point. We want to understand how we can learn from it. I think an important purpose is education and engagement, so it can become a meaningful project.
- Food security is important and making it a norm that people are connected to their food. Engaging people, as well as sharing food and practices is important.
- Education is important. People have told me it's difficult for them to get healthy food on a limited budget. I think working together as a community and educating people on the importance of growing their own food is key. There should be education on the full benefits of trees in the city, with the added benefit from fruit-trees that you can eat the fruit.
- It's important that we not only implement the project but ensure we have a way to care for the trees.
- The urban orchard has a potential to be a gathering space. This may snowball into other things the communities can do together.
- Everyone can appreciate a tree. Education is important and could allow the project to go anywhere.

#### What would Halifax's residents say?

- When we say education, we need to make the distinction between participants and passers-by. Participants won't vandalize the orchard because they're gaining hands-on education. It's engaging the passers-by that aren't directly involved that could be a challenge. How do we educate them and get them involved so they don't vandalize the orchard?
- The participants could act as ambassadors of the orchards, and spread the word to others.
- It's difficult engaging the people that don't usually participate in these types of projects. However, we need these people because they bring a fresh perspective.

#### What do we need to do moving forward?

- We need to think of it as ownership. The more people who are present and aware of the orchard, the lower likelihood that vandalism will take place because people can see a direct benefit.
- Engagement and education can ignite interest.
- We need to explain to people the intention of the urban orchard and have the community explain what they want. For example, we could involve them by asking what kind of fruit trees they would like to see planted.

- We need to engage people on the regular to keep people interested, for example, annual celebrations. Events could occur when it's time to harvest. You want to make sure you're not imposing on the people that use the space.

### **Question #2: What design principles and development guidelines should be applied in the creation of Halifax urban orchards?**

- We have to ask, who's responsible for these orchards? This can directly influence the results. I'm just curious, once the trees are planted, who will be responsible for them?
- Taking outdoor ice rinks as an example, residents are completely responsible. But the government has roles too. We could have recreation staff that plan events.
- The type of support that community gardens get from the government is access to land, but there is a (financial) cost for anyone who takes on a community garden. I feel a design principle should be access to water, since the movie said trees need about five buckets of water on hot days. Is that a long-term requirement?
- Trees need water for about the first three years of growth.
- And then Mother Nature takes over. If it was in my area, I would want to pay for the trees. If you want volunteers to take stewardship, HRM should pay for the infrastructure.
- You don't want it to go too big too soon. Make sure you have diverse representation in the group or committee. Divide it into stages and make sure your support-system is there for the long-term.
- So a phased approach.
- Exactly. I also think it's important to involve the schools.
- I've seen it as a requirement within a curriculum.
- You could have the school or community help build the infrastructure. I've worked with a community where we sat down and designed the infrastructure together, built it, and it developed a sense of ownership, which helped reduce vandalism.

### **Who are the key players?**

- Government to community organizations to volunteers. Administration support is important. For example, the government could be in charge of administration and paperwork. Rather than use an existing NGO like the EAC who has tons of work of their own, an independent organization should be created that can do community outreach and attract volunteers.
- LEAF is very successful because they partner with the city of Toronto.

### **How should sites be chosen?**

- I have a couple of sites in mind that would work. I say Bayers Westwood because they have a resource center, a food bank, and access to funding. Dingle Park is a 136 acre

HRM-owned park. Chain Lake field, which is a large flat field below Chain of Lakes trail, would work. Halifax Water has a water station at this location too.

- We are looking at Dartmouth Commons for the pilot project. We have funding from Tree Canada to put food-bearing plants in the space, most likely shrubs. Unless we can get compliance by the fall from the city to put trees there.
- I would suggest Gorsebrooke Park and community garden.
- Mulgrave Park because there is lots of space, a family resource center, and the community players are already there.
- I think it's important to place it where there is an existing community structure.
- Dartmouth North, they have the infrastructure.
- Citadel Hill, I've met with a group called 'Grow the Hill'.
- Fruit trees don't necessarily need full light. Fruit trees suitable for this climate are apples, plums, pears, apricots. Peaches grow poorly. Temperature is not a barrier.
- Look at what the existing use of the site is. Make the idea public before you just do it. Consultation is important.
- Access to water.
- Past use.
- Accessibility.
- High visibility of the orchard to increase awareness and acceptance.
- You could place an orchard in Africville, but make sure the idea exists before implementing the project.
- Not on busy streets where there is lots of pollution. Think of drainage issues as well.
- Look at choosing sites that may have been a farm. It can act as a cultural nod to the past and the soil may be less contaminated too.
- Traditional skills could be taught on the orchard too, like growing, grafting, and bee keeping; even bringing back the use of root cellars. The community could learn old or lost techniques.
- On the opposite end, you could put them on the busiest streets because fruit trees have low uptake of contaminants. You could place them in pocket parks downtown. Put them in small, busy parks that people will see on their way home from work, and will start a discussion about their importance.
- They could look at streets with no trees and empty green space and place trees on people's front yards or on medians.
- Like in the Hydrostone.
- A challenge with orchards is that people don't know what they don't know. Education is important for reconnecting people with where their food comes from. We can show people that their food has a connection to the local environment. Soon you get to the point where you can actually supply a lot of food. But this may not realistically contribute to food security. It would at least make people aware.
- You have to be aware of what language you're using as well. People may not respond well if your 'classic environmentalist' comes into their community and tells them about the orchard. You may want to have a local community member do it instead.
- Hope Blooms is a good example because the members are young and can involve their family.
- There could even be kid's clubs where the kids take care of trees.

- Under site consideration we need to have flexibility. We can't always predict certain factors, and we need to be able to modify the program if need-be.

**Question #3: What are some of the challenges to implementation of urban orchards in Halifax, and how can they be addressed?**

- Volunteer burn-out is a big issue, especially when we're talking about something as long-term as trees.
- Yes, the time span. These are trees, so we're talking decades.
- The existing use of space is an issue. Change is hard. Phase the program in gradually. It has to exist as an idea publicly and then build community buy-in.
- You have to make sure you don't anger the wrong people.
- Finding expertise to work with groups is a challenge, for example someone who can identify pests.
- Commitment- it's easy to be excited about something in the beginning.
- Commitment from the City, community organizations, and funding. Funding is a huge challenge.
- Choosing hardier species and education for urban planting, knowing what you can and can't eat.
- People think Superstore food is safer.
- People are skeptical to eat things they're not familiar with. You could place orchards away from where people are directly active. For example, don't place them where people go for a jog.
- Yes, build around the existing use.
- You could promote the project once it's implemented. For example, L.A. has edible walking maps in neighborhoods.
- Orchards could become an activity for people to see and do.
- You could have corporate sponsorship of orchards.