

To: Snohomish County Planning and Development
From: Humanity First Worldwide
Subject: Project Proposal
Date: 1 October 2007

The Talent Farm of Snohomish County

The Talent Farm is a proposal to develop a Snohomish County property into a rural-suburban demonstration site for sustainable agriculture, community-based economics, and healthful ways of living. The key to the successful realization of all these activities is the thoughtful and harmonious integration of the human enterprise into the natural world, thus enhancing Nature whenever and wherever possible. Human beings thrive when the natural world that supports them is thriving. The Talent Farm will demonstrate this mutual receptivity as a relatively self-contained, self-reliant, and self-regenerating 5-acre unit, cooperatively networking with similar projects in the area.

Sustainable agriculture is the foundation for sustainable society. Sustainable agriculture is organic, is localized for nearby markets, and uses the processes of Nature over machines whenever and wherever possible. The Talent Farm will demonstrate that a rural-suburban 5-acre parcel can become a bountiful production center of food, medicine, and fiber for localized markets. The practice here will be a diversified and integrated agriculture of orchards, animals, perennials, and production beds of annuals. A permaculture demonstration site will be created as an educational resource. Greenhouses (including one attached to the south side of the existing dwelling, as a passive solar-gain generator) will permit year-round production of some crops. One area of the property will be set aside to demonstrate how native populations cultivated indigenous foodstuffs.

Community-based economics will be evidenced through the sale of the organic produce (primarily fruits and vegetables, but also including herbs, nuts, flowers, honey, berries, and eggs) at a roadside farm stand, to specialized local restaurants, at farmer's markets, and through subscription CSAs. A Farm Product Processing structure of approximately 3000 sq. ft. – housing at its center a certified farm kitchen – will be constructed to convert produce from the farm into value-added products for sale. Such products could include pesto, salsas, kim chee, jams and jellies, cheeses – or whatever a market analysis deems as profitable. A relatively large-scale canning operation using traditional mason jars will extend the harvest way into the winter months. Also processed will be medicinal herbs like Echinacea, Milk Thistle, Oregon Grape, and Arnica into tinctures and salves – and these can be marketed regionally or, via the internet, even nationally.

Also contributing to the economic support base of the Talent Farm will be a sustainable forestry practice, including a modest storage and maintenance facility. The forestry practice will begin with selective cutting of existing trees followed by extensive replanting with an agroforestry strategy. The harvested timber, which may be of many varieties, both hardwoods and softwoods, will then be processed into value-added products like furniture, utensils, musical instruments, garden statuary, decks and hot tubs, etc.

Additional economic support will come from an on-site nursery – and indeed, the nursery infrastructure will be the first system to be made operational. The first species to move through the nursery will be those used to populate the agroforestry system and the edible landscaping of the site, for both humans and birds. Once the overall site has been covered with useful plants, the nursery can concentrate on high-end specialty cultivars for sale, the exact species of which will once again depend on market analysis. Most certain to be included at this stage will be selected choices of bamboo, a plant that can be sold as is or processed into a variety of useful products.

The whole business strategy here calls for creating a profit by rapidly and intensively augmenting the productivity of the land-base – beginning with amended soil fertility and then, subsequently, generating biomass with abundant growth of marketable plant species. Increasing returns can then be gained by processing the biomass – tree, shrub, herb, plant and vegetable species – into value-added by-products. Instead of relying on a monoculture that can experience wide fluctuations of boom or bust, this strategy calls for a diversified selection of useful species, many of them perennial, so that financial risk can be tempered horizontally. The creation of integrated systems of plants, animals, trees, shrubs and native species produces an ‘agro-ecology’ that becomes resilient to variations in seasonal and/or climate change. By concentrating on local markets and face-to-face neighborly exchange, an economics is created that is community-based and people-centered – and for that reason carries with it the seeds of its own long-term sustainability.

The completed building infrastructure of the site will include the existing single-family dwelling with detached private accessory garage, the farm product processing center, and the modest forestry storage and maintenance facility. Accessory storage of up to 3000 sq. ft. will be located as the first floor of the farm product processing center. The second floor will be the actual processing center with certified kitchen. Situated as the third floor of this 3000 sq. ft. footprint multi-use structure will be a guest house, a small boarding house, and office space. The whole built environment will be aesthetically arranged as an enclave around a central courtyard. Due to the slope of the land and the position of existing structures, the new construction will be barely visible from the road. Likewise, thick plantings on both sides of the property will ensure privacy and detachment for neighbors. The rear of the property is currently completely forested.

The Talent Farm project is being described as a Demonstration Site because there people will be able to come see and learn how sustainable systems may be thoughtfully integrated to form a productive economic base on a 5-acre parcel. Since the productive parcel is already contained within an established neighborhood, then the principal market is there close at hand. This will be neighbors exchanging with neighbors, just as in more community-oriented times. The Talent Farm will become the economic hub of the community – *this* community, *our* community. With the development of such a hub, residents will find that they don’t always need to drive outside the community to get everything they need, for a productive resource base will be growing right within their midst.

The Talent Farm

- a Nature Sanctuary -



LEGEND

- 1. Eagle Totem
- 2. Pond System
- 3. Medicine Wheel

- 4. Main House
- 5. Glass House
- 6. Workshop/Office
- 7. Yurt

- 8. Storage
- 9. Fire Pit
- 10. Herb Spiral
- 11. Outdoor Kitchen

- 12. Chicken Yard
- 13. Tipi
- 14. Vegetable Gardens
- 15. Barn

- 16. Orchard
- 17. Animal Pen
- 18. Bamboo Grove
- 19. Grazing

Proposal and Site Plan prepared for Humanity First Worldwide

by Village Design Institute – October 2007