

Proposal for the Elizabeth Dean Fund: Fruit Trees in Leslie Park

This proposed fruit tree installation at Leslie Park would be adjacent to (and an extension of the spirit of) [The Community Food Forest](#) project that is happening there. The Community Food Forest is demonstrating a practical, time tested model for growing more food in less space while simultaneously building habitat and biodiversity, sequestering carbon, and bringing food production closer to home. As an educational demonstration site, we know that expanding integrated fruit tree plantings into Leslie Park will help model how this kind of regenerative food production can be brought into our communities, on public land where everyone benefits. The fruit tree plantings (potentially) offered by EDF would be distinct from the Food Forest and planted along the park path. The thriving community of neighbors and volunteers connected with the Food Forest would be able to both benefit from and lend their support to these new fruit tree plantings.

Trees:

Selection and Placement

We have attached a map of the site that indicates the proposed placement of the fruit trees in the Southern area of Leslie Park. We consulted a wide range of nurseries/possible sources for trees while researching this proposal, and discovered that [Nature and Nurture](#) (a local organic nursery that specializes in edible landscapes) is far above other options. They are a phenomenal resource, and are able and willing to lend their expertise and enthusiasm to the project. In order to prioritize disease resistance, ease of maintenance, and options well-suited to our climate, we are recommending that the majority of these fruit trees be pears and peaches, with a small number of apricots, as we can select specific varieties of these trees that meet these needs very well. The trees available from Nature and Nurture are well-established, healthy, and ready to plant at any time.

Sourcing and Installation

All of the fruit trees for this project can be sourced and installed by Nature and Nurture. As we mentioned above, Mike Levine at Nature and Nurture specializes in organic fruit growing in Michigan and is an amazing resource for this project. He has taught on the subject as part of the Organic Gardener Certificate Program at Washtenaw Community College and has extensive experience with fruit tree installations where resilience is critical. Mike has helped us select the fruit tree varieties from their nursery that are reasonably priced, grow well in Michigan, have the best possible disease resistance and the lowest maintenance needs. Consulting with Nature and Nurture at the onset regarding selection and maintenance will help to ensure the long-term success of these plantings.

Tree Protection:

While the trees are young and still susceptible to damage from deer, rabbits, etc, they can be enclosed in small (approximately 6' diameter and 6' height) deer fences to keep them safe. As a further source of protection, soil amendment, and improved water retention, we would like to plant fruit tree guilds at the bases of the trees. The plants in these guilds work together to increase nitrogen and essential minerals in the soil, confuse and deter potential pests, and protect the soil from erosion and runoff. They will also considerably diminish the overall maintenance of the area around the trees, since the deer fencing will prevent park staff from mowing or weed whacking inside the fences.

Maintenance:

In order to ensure the consistent watering that young trees need, we are recommending using [24" Tree Watering Rings from Steady Spring](#). These rings are distinct from tree gators (which the park has used with limited success for past plantings), as they are replenished with rainwater. After their first thorough soaking and initial placement, they work through reverse osmosis and pull humidity from the air to keep the roots well-watered and cool. Just 1" of rainwater per month will keep them working, and thus save enormous time, money, and effort. If there are exceptional dry spells, the rings can be soaked again to replenish their ability to serve as a consistent water source. We have been using these watering bags at the Community Food Forest this growing season for the young fruit trees there and they have been working very well. Because of the limited maintenance required and the proximity to the Community Food Forest, the Food Forest Coalition is volunteering to monitor these watering rings and replenish them if necessary for the first year.

Proposal Budget: Fruit Trees in Leslie Park

8 Trees Total - a mix of well-established, healthy, pear, peach, and apricot: 75.00 each = 600.00

8 Trees - Installation: 8 x 65.00 each = 520.00

Consultation Fee for optimal siting with Nature and Nurture: 2 hours = 200.00

8 Tree Watering Rings: Approximately 30.00 each - 8 x 30.00 = 240.00

Herbaceous perennials for tree guilds: 8 trees x 20.00 = 160.00

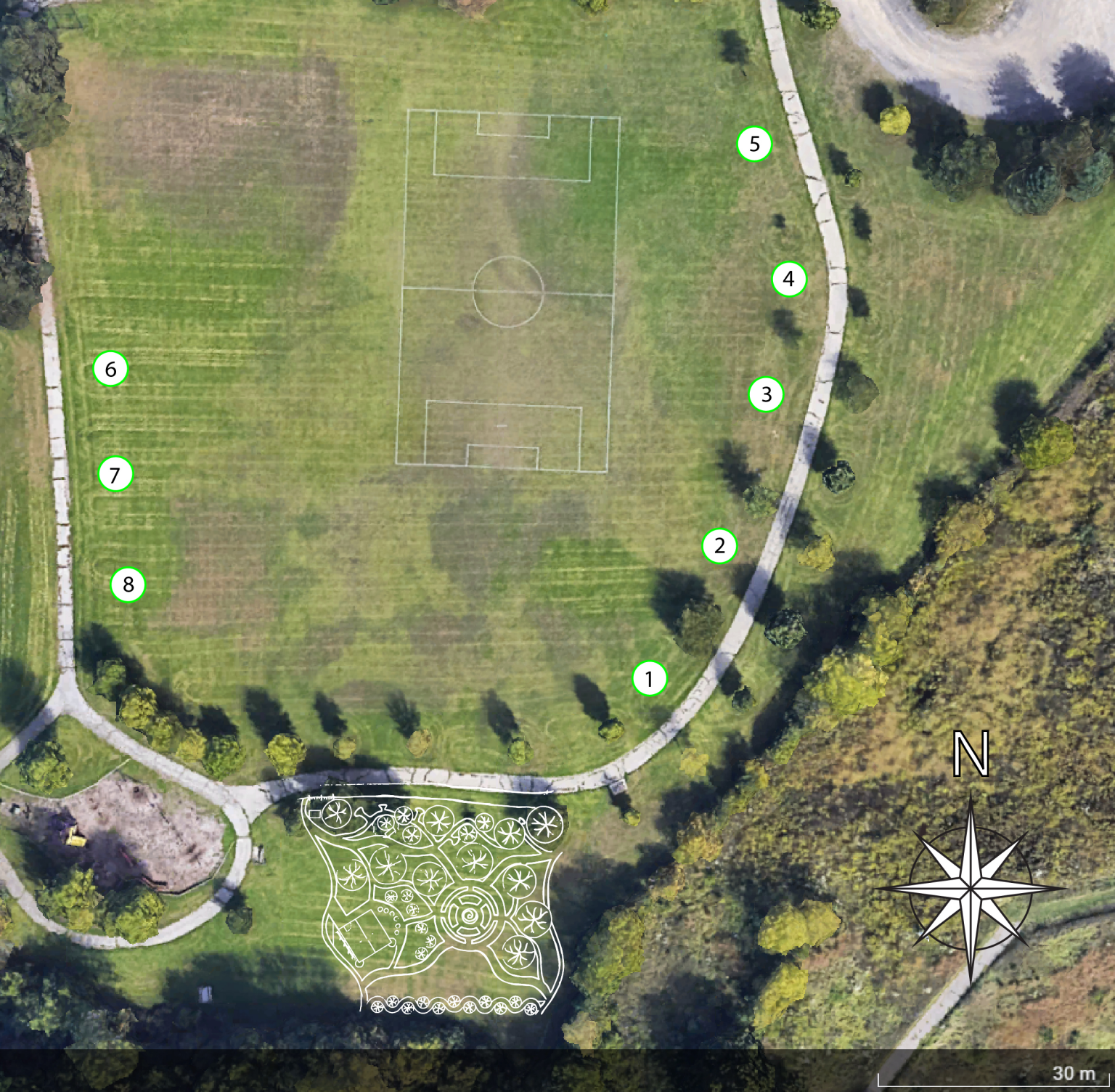
Deer Fencing: 8 trees with:

- 3 t-posts per tree at 6.70 each 20.01 per tree x 8 = 150.96
- 2 100' rolls of 6' welded wire fencing = 291.98

Please note that the prices listed here are based on what is available currently. The exact prices of the t-posts and the welded wire fencing in particular are subject to change, as we have learned that the availability of these supplies has been affected by the pandemic.

Estimated Total (barring pandemic chaos) = 2162.94

Soil prep/sheet mulching for tree bases, tree ring, and perennial guild installation: all labor donated by the [Community Food Forest at Leslie Park Coalition](#)



N



30 m

The Community Food Forest at Leslie Park



Who is this project by and who is it for? The Community Food Forest at Leslie Park is founded on a firm commitment to inclusion, ecological restoration, and community care. This public food forest community resilience project was started and is maintained by a diverse coalition of Ann Arbor residents from all across the city. While True Earth serves as a sponsor and liaison with the City of Ann Arbor for this project, we are simply members of this truly amazing coalition, learning together as we grow. Our city-wide coalition brings together a wide range of ages, races, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic circumstances, genders, and skill sets. Our diversity is our strength and what makes the project possible. Together we are:

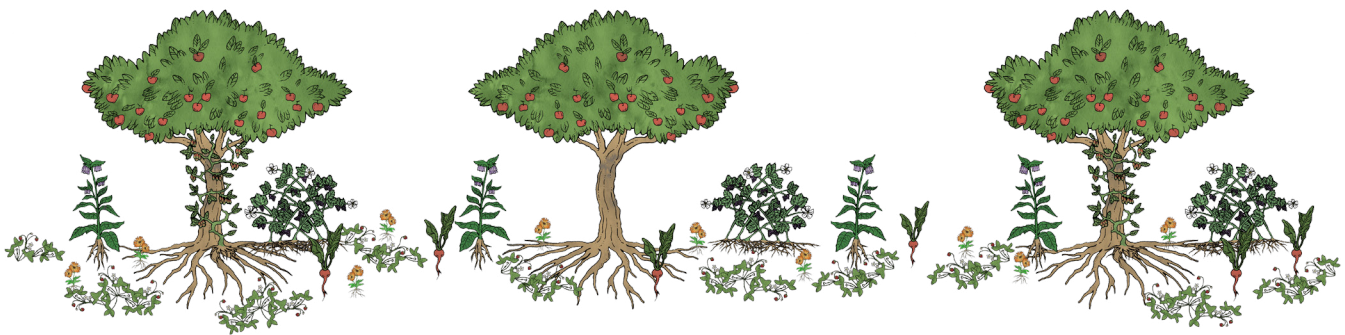
- Volunteering all of the time and effort it takes to get the job done through practical know-how in community organizing, organic farming, engineering, construction, youth empowerment/ community engagement, equity and inclusion, and ecological garden design.
- Supporting ecological restoration through regenerative practices.
- Improving access to food, education, resources, and relationship with the land, especially for those for whom cultural and socioeconomic inequities otherwise limit access.



How does the Community Food Forest differ from a community garden? It's helpful to understand that Food Forests are not just community gardens. While community gardens are also a vibrant and relevant contribution to healing the earth and building resilience through localization of food production, food forests emphasize community engagement in a way that is distinct. Instead of the community garden model with individual plots where people garden for themselves and their own families, a Food Forest is a self-regulating food system that is put in place by the community, for the community and will last for generations to come. In the case of the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park, any and all of the harvest is available to any and all community members. For us, this is an important aspect of equitable distribution of food and resources; we recognize that not all community members who could benefit from access to fresh, organic, local produce can necessarily participate in work days. All of the work is done by whoever is capable, and all of the harvest is available to whoever needs it.



How does a Food Forest work? Once established, a food forest works well as a self-regulating permanent food system because it honors nature's intelligence and is modeled after the ecological structure of naturally occurring forests. Food Forests are not new; they have been around for thousands of years. Indigenous people the world over maintained, and continue to maintain, edible forests and food systems through respectful, and observant relationship with the earth from the 2000 year old food forests of North Africa, to Indigenous traditional food corridors of the Americas, to the ongoing plantings in Southern India. What's most exciting to us is that while Food Forests are an ancient model, they provide a practical solution to our very modern problems of climate crisis and food insecurity.



A food forest is somewhat "top heavy" with regard to labor and investment at the onset of the project. Once a Food Forest is established it takes far less effort, materials, resources, to continue to provide consistent food to the community for many years to come. At the beginning, it asks time, care, and devotion to establish both the plants and the site in a way that makes it easy for people to interact with it easily. In the case of the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park we have opted to go with a "hybrid" design, incorporating both, traditional perennial Food Forest guilds and space for annual vegetable food crops. This decision is based on feedback that we sought from the community and is in a period of evaluation for the first few years as annual plants take more time and water to care for.

Letters of Support for the Community Food Forest

Included here are 28 letters of support for the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park from last Autumn, 2020. These letters with addressed to the Parks Advisory Commission of Ann Arbor in advance of their meeting on October 20th where they voted to approve the Food Forest for the 2021 growing season. The project was originally called the Northside Food Forest, and is referred to as such in some of the letters. Since there is also a Northside Park we decided, in order to avoid avoid confusion, to rename the project the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park.

001

Friday, October 09, 2020 8:58 AM

NFF, an ever-growing and giving heart-based endeavor!

Earth, community, relationship—and the health of these three— are embraced and nurtured through this project.

Volunteers transform a “blank” grassy plot into visuals beauty and a sustainable source of food, while apprenticing as stewards of the Earth.

Those passing daily are drawn to learn, often to participate. All reignite a connection , both to nature and Earth, as well as to one another.

I encourage us all to walk the talk of the values we espouse:

Support and encourage with appreciation the Northside Food Forest. May it inspire the “rippling” of sister projects throughout our city.

From the heart,

Maria Guion

002

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 2:00:49 PM

I write in support of the Food Forest project which I find to be practical, inspiring, and generous. At a time when our world is in great need of concrete ways to cooperate and invest in each other's health, happiness and hope, this project addresses many layers of need.

Thank you- Rosalie Denenfeld

003

Saturday, October 10, 2020 11:52 AM

To whom it may concern:

I have been hearing about the Northside Food Forest project and would love to see it happen. Consider this email a vote of support!

Thank you,

Jessica Goniea

Jessica's Apothecary & Spa

004

Monday, September 21, 2020 4:04:38 AM

We would like to enthusiastically register our approval for the Northside Food Forest Project at Leslie Park.

This well-planned effort can't help but enhance the viability and attractiveness of the park. Using such a small area of a 50 acre site for such worthy goals as outlined in their plan has our full support.

Thank You

Larry Francis and Claudia Myszke

005

Tuesday, October 06, 2020 8:50:57 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to say that I am so grateful and inspired by the work I have seen to create the Food Forest in Leslie Park. The more I learn about it and what it means to the community the more excited I am to see plans move forward. I especially like the idea that it is an educational opportunity for children and others to learn and see real food grown in the park. It is so much more interesting than growing grass. I look forward to watching the project grow and observing the land change to be more productive to help Mother Nature house many of her creatures.

Sincerely,

Damena Karoly

006

Thursday, October 08, 2020 2:20:45 PM

Hello. I am a resident on Hilldale Drive on the north side of Ann Arbor and I want to add my voice to those who support this unique and innovative project. I first heard about it this summer and have been following its development. I understand it is up for a vote on Oct. 20 and want you to know that I wholeheartedly support it.

I think it combines aesthetics, practicality, education, and ecological smarts with a hefty amount of community building. Please approve this project.

Thank you.

Sandra Finkel

007

Tuesday, October 06, 2020 2:01:08 PM

Hi PAC,

I am writing as a community member to encourage the allowance and support of the Food Forest project. Sustainability is a huge concern now and for the future. This is a small part of productive action that will make a big difference. Please support and vote in favor for the Food Forest Project on October 20th 2020.

Sincerely, Claire Elise Broderick

008

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 3:39:46 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I live in Arrowwood and am writing in support of the Food Forest Project in Leslie Park. I have walked this park daily since 2006 because I have a day care and we use the park daily. I have helped clean up the park after fireworks, cleaned up dog poo and weeds around the playground equipment. I take the children to walk in Leslie Park Woods and also made trips to the Science Center. I believe that the walk into the woods is magical for the children and so healthy and the fact that the Food Forest is near the entrance and exit of the woods makes it even more interesting for a wonderful sensory experience for the children. As we walk by now the children are having a sensory experience smelling the herbs and feeling the different textures. I am a certified teacher in Early Childhood and the Waldorf Methods, so outdoor play is a big part of my program. I know that the Rudolf Steiner High School makes use of the park as well as a learning station for biology class, gymnastics, and they are interested in gardening and permaculture ideas. I am excited that the Food Forest will be used as a learning place for children to be educated about nature and food and life skills needed for us all. As I understand it the possibilities are endless for afterschool programs for Arrowwood Community as well as so many other organizations. I find this exciting and am in full support.

I met ShuNahSii in the 1990's well before I moved to Arrowwood and I have only known her to create places of beauty and she has an eye for aesthetic if you walked in her yard that would be a testimony in itself! I look forward to watching this project grow and create possibilities of more hope and inspiration as it has done for me thus far.

Sincerely,

Damena Karoly

009

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 2:22:09 PM

Hello Park Advisory Commission Members,

I live in Arrowwood and love the parks on the North side. I encountered the Food Forest on one of my walks in the woods near Leslie Park.

I fully support this project and am proud Ann Arbor is home to this leading edge project that helps promote sustainable systems.

The project enhances my experience in the park and allows plenty of room for me and my dog to walk.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Terrie DeBonis

010

Thursday, October 08, 2020 8:43:09 AM

To whom it may concern,
Please approve if the Leslie Park gardens project. I think it will make valuable contribution to AA. I live up here and would greatly appreciate something like this, especially now w covid.
Thanks for your consideration.
Katherine Brown

011

Monday, October 12, 2020 12:28 PM

Dear Parks Advisory Commission,
I am writing to express my support for The Northside Food Forest Project. I am a resident of the Arrowwood Hills Co-op and a mother of an 18-month-old toddler. We take our child to the Food Forest in Leslie Park almost every day. For our little family, the Food Forest is not only a beautiful addition to the landscape but also a wonderful place to show our child where food comes from and how these plants relate to human beings and other types of animals and insects. More importantly, I can teach our child to appreciate nature and respect the work done by a group of diverse and hardworking people. I believe that these values and experiences are also important for other community members and AA residents.
I really look forward to seeing The Northside Food Forest Project come to fruition and continue to develop as my child grows up. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,
Ying-Jen Lin

012

Monday, October 05, 2020 9:46 AM

Please approve the request for the Northside Food Forest. It is a wonderful opportunity to bring the community together to care for our local land, grow food and connect with each other and nature. The group spearheading this project is a wise and committed steward of sustainability and healing. This project is a visionary one and one that the entire Ann Arbor community will be proud of with its inclusivity and impact.
Please feel free to reach out to me with questions or let me know how else I might express support for this project.
Elaine

013

Wednesday, September 23, 2020 8:29 AM

Parks Advisory Commission:

I strongly support the idea for the Northside Food Forest Community Resilience Project, and it behooves the Commission to allow the Project to go forward and see its fruition.

There has been much planning by the people on the Project's Team, and it will be an addition to the Ann Arbor Community that has not been seen to this date.

The Project is strongly needed by the community, the climate, and the land. The area proposed has always been wasted area since I have lived here over the last forty years.

There is no reason to impede or interfere with the commencement of the Project.

June Smedley

014

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 1:38 PM

Hello PAC team,

I am writing to express my support for the food forest project in Leslie Park. I have lived in Ann Arbor all my life and I have lived in my unit in Arrowwood for over seven years. I grew up playing in Leslie Park, and it often felt like a neglected area. Right now the play structure closest to Arrowwood is overgrown with thistle (very pokey) and ragweed (Fall allergy culprit). I walk in Leslie Park most days, now more than ever since I am working remotely. I have loved seeing the beginning of what could be a beautiful community space. Though the Food Forest is in such a small part of the overall park, it beautifies the area so much!

I have talked with other park-goers admiring the area and expressing gratitude that the park is being used in such a wonderful way. Bikers easily cruise by, dog-walkers and parents with little kids stroll past, it's lovely. I attended the public meeting last week and was delighted to learn of the possible environmental benefits as well, in addition to the community benefits. This project seems perfect for Ann Arbor, and I am so excited that it's in my backyard. I can't wait for it to grow and I hope to volunteer my time to help!

I would be happy to share more of my thoughts if any of you want to reach out!

Best,

Sara

015

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 1:11 PM

Hello

I'm writing to voice my support for the Northside food forest. Supporting community-led projects that increase the diversity of uses of our city parks is a way to encourage more engagement and creative interaction with these beautiful community resources.

There is space for more than grass, paths, and playgrounds, and facilitating the exploration of that space is a way to build the vitality, enjoyment, and individual character of a park.

My children and I enjoy participating in and visiting the food forest area and will be excited to see it grow and change over time.

-Evan Daywell

016

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 1:17 PM

Dear Parks Advisory Commission Members,

We are writing as part of this Food Forest community. This unique project was started as a way to show our love and protection for the earth. This one-fifth of one acre that is planted with great hope for the future is a benefit for all without admission requirements. We realize this public park is for the public, and this is of course our intent for these offered resources of food, aesthetic beauty and environmental education.

In our planning and helping to create this, we could not imagine that there would be serious objection to this. We knew we were and are taking thousands of affecting details into consideration, and have always been confident that we are growing a first quality effort which will be a benefit for the future. This is an educated, personal, cooperative and community project which we believe answers our needs to stay local, fix what we can, and help fulfill the Sustainability Goals of the City.

Thank you for your time and effort on this park project.

Kathleen and Michael Peabody

017

Monday, October 12, 2020 9:03 PM

Hello,

I'm writing in support of the Food Forest initiative. I think it's a great idea and a promising location.

I'm an Ann Arbor native, having grown up in the Eberwhite/Slauson/Pioneer area and raising my three daughters here as well.

Thank you for making Ann Arbor a beacon of hope in our sustainable future.

john.

018

Wednesday, September 16, 2020 7:55 AM

Dear Parks Advisory Commission,
I am writing to share my enthusiastic support for the Northside Food Forest. I am a PhD student in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UM. I have lived on the Northside for 3 years (707 Moore St).
The Northside Food Forest is an important opportunity for our community to learn and practice building sustainable food systems. I look forward to participating, and know many other people do too.
Thank you,
Chau

019

Thursday, October 08, 2020 8:30 PM

To Whom It May Concern -
I write on behalf of my family in support of the Northside Food Forest. My sons attend daycare in the neighborhood and have seen firsthand the benefit of the food forest. We need more of these green community centers in our neighborhoods. They serve multiple purposes, providing much needed nutritious foods to the community and as a community gathering and building space. Spaces like this help us bond as neighbors and friends and strengthen communities in Ann Arbor.
We urge you and the commission to vote in favor of the Northside Food Forest. If you have any questions about my support, please do not hesitate to contact me here or at 202-290-6779.
Sincerely,
Bonsitu Kitaba-Gaviglio, Esq.

020

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 1:13 PM

Ladies and Gentlemen:
I write in support of the Northside Food Forest. It will be a valuable addition to the AA community. Thank you,
Kris Parnicky

021

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 2:00 PM

Hi there,

I'm just emailing to express my absolute support of the Food Forest project beginning on the Northside of town.

I believe this project will provide invaluable educational and economic equity opportunities as well as provide a tremendous revolutionary model for essential constructive environmental regenerative processes.

The benefit of this project to model new forms of community activism and engagement is huge and exponential.

I believe firmly that this project represents the exact type of investment the city of Ann Arbor needs to be creating, supporting, and championing.

In great support,
Laura Trumbull

022

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 1:44 PM

Hello!

I'm writing to voice my support for the Northside Food Forest Community Resilience Project that will be presented at today's meeting. I am a resident of the Arrowwood Hills housing cooperative and live near the proposed project site. I also attended the previous public meeting centering on this project. The Coalition representing this project has done a fabulous job researching the environmental issues caused by current agricultural practices and food forestry is an excellent solution to many of these issues. My neighbors and I have been already been enjoying the fruits of the team's labor on the site, with our local kids having a blast interacting with the plants and learning about gardening. I believe the Food Forest is an invaluable addition to the Northside community and would be a great step forward for Ann Arbor in addressing environmental impact. Many major cities already have their own food forests, famously including Ron Finley in Los Angeles, and Ann Arbor ought to join the ranks.

Thank you!

Maro Beauchamp

023

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 6:22 PM

Dear Parks Advisory Commission,

I am writing to voice my enthusiastic support for the Northside Food Forest. I co-own Sassafras Tech Collective, an Ann Arbor business with 5 full time employees. I have lived on the Northside (707 Moore St) for 3 years, and have worked in Ann Arbor for 5 years.

The Food Forest is in easy biking distance for me. I am very hopeful that you will allow this project to move forward. Being able to bike to a join in a community food effort (more collaborative than gardens where each person has their own plot, though those are also wonderful) is a huge hope for me in a very trying time. I look forward to learning more about permaculture, while building community and growing food together. As many indoor community engagement opportunities are no longer accessible, the Northside Food Forest would fill a large gap in my life, and I believe, many of my neighbors' lives as well. When I share about the Northside Food Forest with friends, the response is always positive and curious.

I did not learn about the PAC meeting today until I was home from work; otherwise I would have attended. Please accept my enthusiastic support for the Northside Food Forest.

Thank you,

Devney Hamilton

Worker-Owner, Sassafras Tech Collective

024

Monday, October 05, 2020 9:42 AM

Hello and thanks for reading!

I am writing to ask and encourage you to vote in favor of the amazing Food Forest project led by ShuNahSii Rose and other wonderful community members who are creating and re-imagining culture together. The food forest asks only 1/5 of one acre in one of Ann Arbor's 150 parks and holds a long-term vision of creating a thriving, self-regulating, small scale food source that serves as an educational hub and inspirational pilot project for the immediate community as well as the city at large. It is a beautiful project with a beautiful vision that can and does meet sustainability goals. The food forest is also a wonderful way in these uncertain times to take care and support one another both with food but also as a sustained community working together!

Please consider the benefit this brings to those leading this project but those that will be touched by it far and wide in the community! And vote to approve!

Thank you so much for taking the time to read and consider this!

Thanks,

Jess K.

025

Thursday, October 08, 2020 8:47 AM

I am writing to ask that you approve the request to use an area in Leslie Park to establish a food forest.

Now is the time to bring a project such as this to our community. Our world seems rather unpredictable. A project such as this will bring the community together, teach us how to create and maintain a food source.

Thank you for your consideration.

Christine Minderovic

026

Saturday, October 10, 2020 8:26 AM

As a long time resident of Ann Arbor, I would LOVE to see this project happen.

Thank you

~Robin Krienke

027

Wednesday, October 14, 2020 10:28 AM

Hello,

As a Northside resident, I'm emailing in support of the proposed Northside Food Forest. What is a more foundational element of resilience than the food system? Demonstrating, and hopefully later expanding, the concept of sustainable/self-sustaining food systems that are accessible to the immediate community will help Ann Arbor move toward a sustainable model and be more resilient to climate change or economic disasters in the coming years. This is of course most important to the lower income populations most susceptible to climate and economic consequences. Trying to address climate change or general environmental sustainability without majorly modifying our food systems and our relationship with them is a fool's errand. Not only will the food forest supply actual food, but will educate the community on how we can move towards a sustainable future.

Best regards,

Brian Lydic

028

Tuesday, October 06, 2020 12:25:37 PM

Hello,

I am writing as an Ann Arbor resident to voice my support for the proposed food forest project in Leslie park. I look forward to supporting this project as a volunteer. I am also excited to learn from this project and apply what I have learned in my own yard.

Thanks for your consideration,

Kevin Neaton