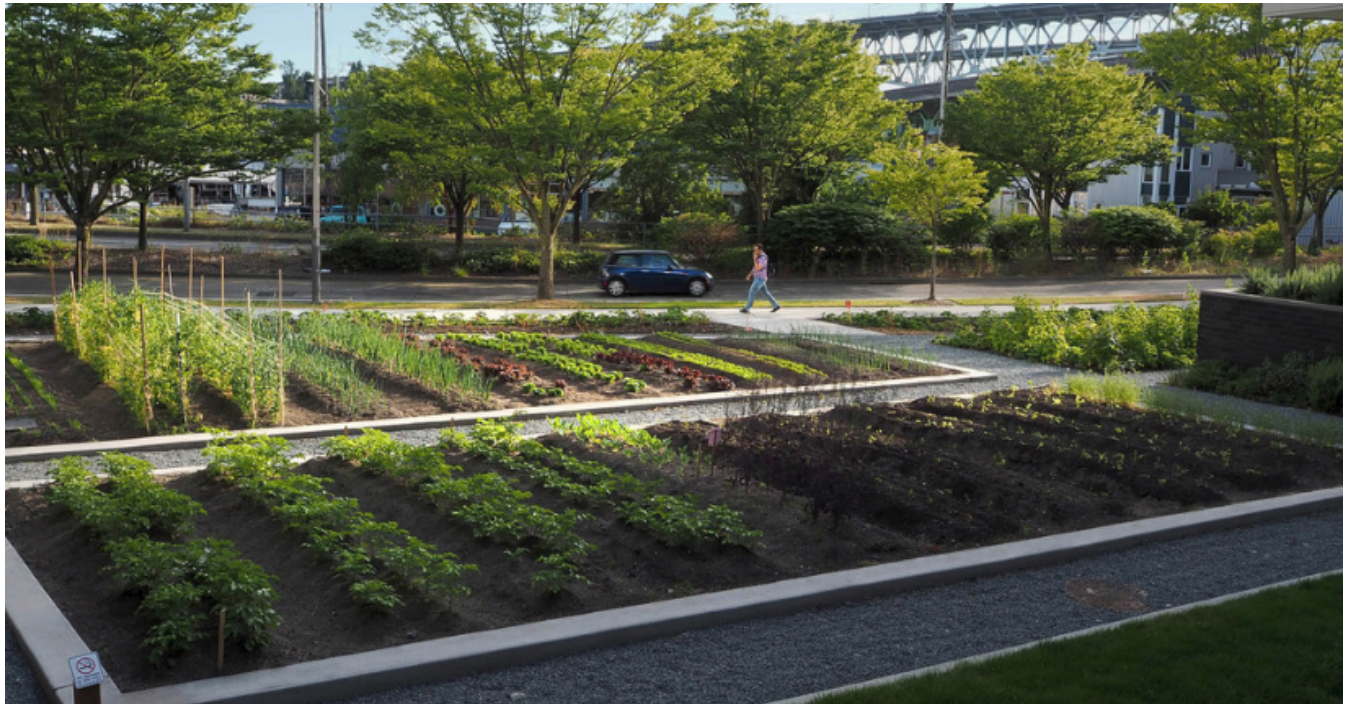


University of Washington Farm Project: Communicating for Future Use.

By Hannah Blaisdell and Matt Sedlacek



Executive Summary:

The Mercer Court Farm Project was part of the class Environmental 480 Sustainability Studio and was designed to look at a sustainable infrastructure project for a client, in this case the UW Farm. In the beginning of January, 2017, our group met with Sarah Geurkink the Farm Manager for the UW Farm who laid out the scope of the project for us. Sarah was concerned with trash in the growing beds, cigarette butts in the growing beds and on walkways, lack of access for anyone with a disability, and recurring pest problems. Through lengthy research and observations over the course the winter quarter 2017 our group was able to make solid suggestions for a plan forward in addressing the primary concerns of the Mercer Court Farm.

The Project's primary objectives were to:

1. Analyze current the problem areas of trash, cigarette butts, Disability Access, and Pests.
2. Research and suggest suitable solutions to the problem areas.
3. Build relationships and establish communication with farm users and volunteers about current situation and needs of the farm.

Target audiences:

The target audience for this project is Health and Food Services (HFS) from the University of Washington, the student population, the Mercer Court Student (MCS) population, farm volunteers, and the general public. This project and subsequent research is important to both HFS and MCS above the other target groups because they are most impacted by the farm operations/struggles. But we have mentioned the other target audiences because we believe that our message for farm well-being and upkeep can also apply to everyone else as well.

Observations and Research:**Generic Trash:**

- Through multiple observations we inferred that the Mercer Court Farm has both active and passive littering problems because we found the most heavy concentrations of trash in the main walkways and near seating areas.
- There are no trash receptacles near any of the seating areas, and furthermore no trash receptacles in the area period. The nearest trash receptacles open to the public were the residential trash chutes around the west side of the Mercer B building. These chutes do not appear available for public use, and are inconveniently located, tucked where they cannot be seen in any portion of the farm.
- Furthermore, there exists a coffee shop near the farm which sells food and drink wrapped in packaging that has high potential to turn into farm litter. There are no trash cans on the

outside of the shop or anywhere within immediate sight from it.

- Our research turned up literature that suggests that there are two forms of littering, active littering and passive littering. That active littering happens when a person does not wish to hold onto what is perceived as trash and chooses to discard that item onto the ground. Passive littering happens when there is a place to sit and relax such as a bench, if there is no trash receptacle nearby then there is an increased chance that trash will be left behind on the bench by “accident”.

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Cigarette Butts:

- Our literature review and research revealed several studies, with the results showing “no smoking” signs to ironically increase smoking behavior. It suggested that negations do not decrease behavior but have a tendency to increase it. This cigarette littering is a major problem to the garden, and can cause major health risks since the garden produces food. In our research, we found that rather than being benign. Cigarette butts actively leach heavy metals into the environment. In one study, 12 heavy metals were tested, and after 1 day of being in an aqueous solution, all 12 had leached into the soil, which can affect plant growth.
- Our observations of cigarette butts on the premises showed that there were concentrations of discarded butts in the walkways near the residential areas, as well as one under a particular staircase in the last subsection of the farm. We inferred that this was due to students walking to and from their residential halls while smoking and having no place to discard their butts, and cong

Disability Access:

- During our Lit review we found that for a garden to be considered a community garden with Disability access it must meet the following specifications. At least one bed must be 24” to 30” in Height and 48” in Width. The paths must have a turn around width must be at least 60”
- The Mercer Court Farm currently has no raised beds that would allow access for



gardeners with limited mobility, or those who utilize wheelchairs.

Image 1

- Furthermore we observed that all three sections of the Mercer Court Farm are separated into an upper and lower section by stairs (See image 1). Each upper section had terraced beds with concrete pathways and stairs between every terrace. Additionally each lower section had its beds separated by gravel paths which would allow little to no access for people with any kind of mobility related disability.

Pests:

- While investigating the cigarette butt problem, a study in our literature review revealed that animals and nonhuman organisms can become addicted to nicotine similarly to that of humans, and the accidental consumption of cigarette butts, may leave critters harmful to a garden, Additionally, causing them to come back to the site in search for more nicotine. (University Wire, 2014). The study also mentioned that this issue tends to be most problematic in the November/December months, so we recommend future student interns perform further investigation at this time.

Communication strategies:

Our primary means of communication centered around a presentation to our peers, an additional presentation to the Dirty Dozen Farm Volunteers, and Farm Manager Sarah Geurkink. In addition, Executive Summary of the Project is going to be made available to everyone.

Key take-home messages:

- That the food grown on this farm is sold to HFS and goes into the meals that are served to students that live in this complex and elsewhere on campus.
- That this is a community space and keeping it clean requires everyone's input.

Desired changes in behavior:

- We would like to see less littering taking place on the farm.
- We would like to see more care and respect for the space because it is a farm that is producing food.

Challenges:

One major challenge we ran across while completing this project was the lack of pests on the farm. Because this project occurred during the winter quarter there were a distinct lack of pests because nothing being grown in the beds.

Action plan and recommendations:

Our recommendations are as follows:

- First, our recommendation for trash prevention in the future is to install four trash/recycle/compost bins at the following locations (green circles, Image 1) to provide much need access to residents and passers by for disposing of garbage.

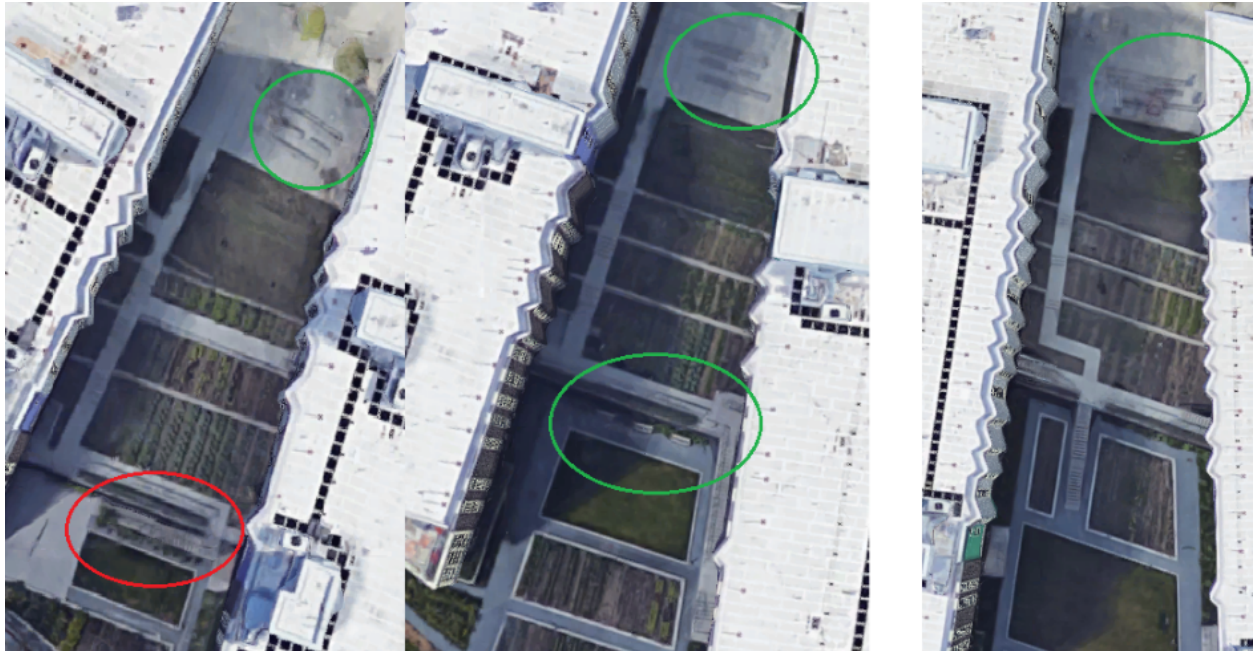


Image 2

- Secondly, our recommendation for curbing cigarette butts in the growing beds and on the walkways of the Mercer Court Farm is to install a Designated Smoking Area (red circle, Image 1. Yellow circle, Image 2). This is our recommendation because there are already 14 stand alone signs about a smoke free campus and we believe and the evidence suggests that smokers will find a way to smoke anyway. By having a Designated Smoking Area on the Mercer Court Farm we theorize that cigarette litter will be kept in check.



Image 3

- For disability access we recommend the installation of a bed or set of beds like the example in 3d model rendering that we provided. This design would meet all of the specifications required by Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make this area ADA accessible, therefore truly making this a community garden open to all who would like to volunteer their time. Our rough estimate is that it would require about 600 dollars to pave the suggested area and another 400 dollars for the supplies to build each one of the seven new raised beds. The labor cost of the project would be mitigated by using the volunteers that already help out on this farm.
- The design that we created features 7 raised garden beds that could be gardened from a wheelchair. The beds would have main access from the sidewalk and road south of the farm, and direct access to the farm clubhouse from the location.



Image 4

- For our action plan we suggest that all three of our recommendations be implemented as soon as possible to make the Mercer Court Farm more community friendly by providing better access to all ability types, providing a smoking area that can limit how much cigarette litter goes into the growing beds, and by providing a easy means to disposing of trash throughout the entirety of the farm. Once these recommendations are completed we suggest contacting another Environmental 480 class to see about having further research done on pest control for the farm.

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