

Building a Socially Minded For-Profit Business: Chrysalis Farms

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Personal Story

I thought up the concept of Chrysalis Farms many years ago. At the time, it seemed like a far out-of-reach dream.

When I started the Masters of Social Work program, it seemed as though I kept hearing a few reoccurring themes revolving around governments and nonprofits struggling to create social change because of red tape and/or lack of funding. The solution seemed clear; **a for-profit company with social change as a guiding principle.**

Shortly after that, I learned about **The Center for Entrepreneurship at Monmouth University** and met the director, Alison Gilbert. I shared the idea of Chrysalis Farms and she let me know that not only was this business doable, but it was doable now.



Profitable Urban Farm Model

An **urban farm** is a type of agricultural operation that is located within a city or urban area, typically on vacant lots, rooftops, or other underutilized spaces. They are often smaller than traditional rural farms, and may use techniques such as hydroponics, vertical farming, and aquaponics to maximize space and resources. They allow for locally grown produce and promote sustainable food systems in urban areas.

Urban farms are particularly important in areas known as **food deserts**, which are geographic areas where residents have limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables. Food deserts are often found in low-income areas with social and economic inequalities.

Chrysalis Farms will be an urban farm built in a food desert and will use a mix of hydroponics and traditional growing methods. An assessment of the community will be performed to learn what kinds of produce are most desired; this will influence what will be grown. A large portion of the produce will be sold to other businesses (restaurants, grocers, etc.) as well as directly to consumers. Produce will also be donated to food banks in the community, providing healthy foods for vulnerable populations. In this way, the farm will address food insecurity while remaining profitable.

Vertical Farming Creates Functional and Therapeutic Space



There have been many improvements in vertical farming technology that make the vision of Chrysalis Farms a possibility. While most vertical farms are housed in industrial warehouses like the photo on the left, these technologies can be used in a setting like the photo on the right, **creating a space that is both functional and therapeutic.**



Nature Therapy Center

The aesthetic of Chrysalis Farms is different than that of other vertical and urban farms. This is because **the space will be used not only for growing produce, but also as a therapeutic space.**

Nature therapy, also known as ecotherapy and related to horticulture therapy, is a type of therapy that involves spending time in nature as a way to improve mental, emotional, and physical health.

The theory behind nature therapy is that being in nature can have a positive impact on mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, and increasing feelings of happiness and well-being. Nature therapy can be used to treat a variety of mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). It can also be used as a complementary therapy for conditions like chronic pain, cancer, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Summers and Vivian, 2018).

Like the model for produce, there will be both **paid and free or reduced-price nature therapy options at Chrysalis Farms.** This will allow access to any who need therapy.



Growing a sustainable future focused on people & profit



Vocational Programs

Because of its multiuse structure, Chrysalis Farms can provide **employment in various sectors**, including agriculture, hydroponics, therapy, marketing, accounting, and management. Professionals in each of areas will lead the departments. These professionals will help with our vocational training as well.

Chrysalis Farms will partner with other agencies such as universities, technical schools, and domestic violence shelters to provide **vocational training and internships in each of the business areas.** This way, those who have not received the education or experience that they need to have a sustainable job can get that experience while being paid.

This model will allow Chrysalis Farms to pay our professionals well while saving costs by not hiring as many professionals. It will also benefit the community since many vocational programs and internships are either not paid or low pay.

Schematic of Chrysalis Farms



A profitable, community-oriented business model

Profitable Design	Community Intervention
Produce sold to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restaurants Grocers Direct to Consumer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmer's Markets Produce Stands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of produce donated to local food banks Growing Tech and support donated to schools in the community
Therapy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospital Partnership Insurance Private 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Therapy provided on a sliding scale
Vocational Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interns and vocational students paid less than professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need-based free or reduced therapy Interns and vocational students receive higher pay

Reference

Summers, J. K., & Vivian, D. N. (2018). Ecotherapy - A Forgotten Ecosystem Service: A Review. *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, 1389. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01389>

NEXT STEPS

- Work with an architect
- Secure funding
- Present plans to the city

Thank you

Alison Gilbert and The Center for Entrepreneurship who saw the potential in this business and in me before I did and dedicated time, energy, and whiteboard space to see it happen

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