

# VCFC

VASHON COMMUNITY FOOD CENTER

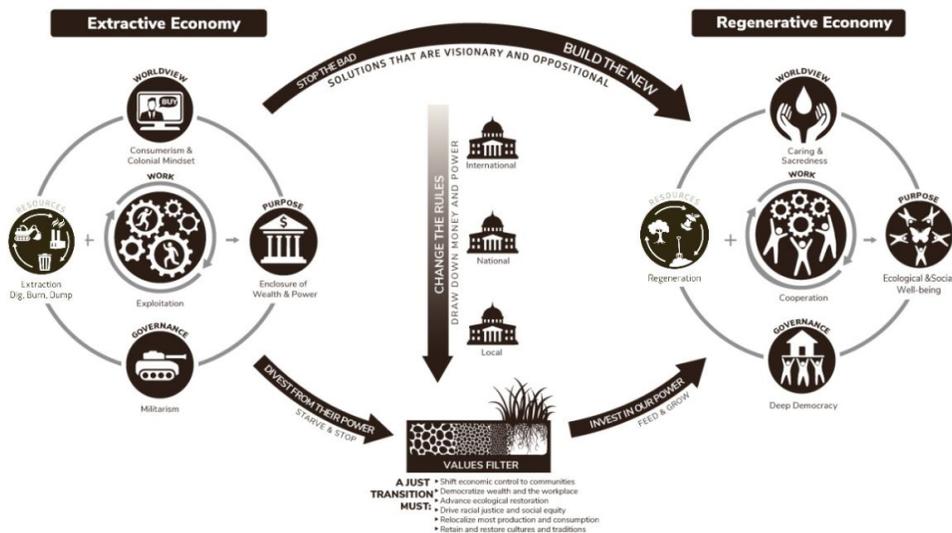
Dear Islanders,

We propose that a Community Food Center is crucial to the future of our island because it is a key part of a vibrant local food system and a circular economy on Vashon. Both of which are necessary for sustainability on our island.

The future is here and there is no more waiting. Climate change and the transition away from fossil fuels are driving Vashon towards a new tomorrow. Let us embrace this change and work to have our future serve our needs and values. It is that or be run over by change as we cling to old patterns.

Vashon Island should be a model for how a community proactively addresses the challenges of the future in order to provide the highest quality of life for all of us. Let us actively pursue the transition from an extractive to a regenerative economy by creating the infrastructure for a vibrant local food system based on a circular economic model right here on Vashon.

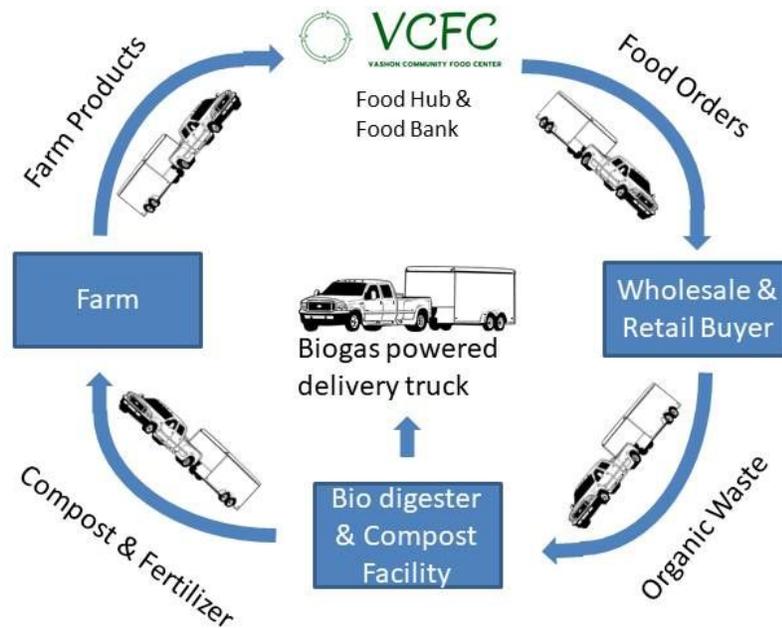
## JUST TRANSITION



Credit: Just Transition

The Vashon Community Food Center will provide the necessary infrastructure to

1. stimulate and support growth in our local food system
2. create a circular economic model for our island to close resource loops for increased sustainability



A vibrant local food system and circular economic model will

1. improve health by providing better access to fresher products (nutrition & access)
2. create economic benefits by generating jobs and retaining dollars locally (jobs & \$)
3. positively impact the environment through increased stewardship, reducing "food miles" and turning waste into a resource (environment)
4. decrease food and waste logistics costs

Increasing the quality of life and generating economic opportunities on Vashon will help us maintain our resilience in the face of gentrification and keep Vashon a "whole" community instead of a "bedroom" community. (community)

## **Proposal**

We propose the creation of a Community Food Center. It provides the specific necessary infrastructure Vashon needs to face the challenges ahead. This facility could include

- A central location for aggregating and distributing farm products
- Cold and dry storage
- Commercial kitchen - USDA certified
- Washing and packing facilities
- Farm to market processing and marketing capabilities
- A marketplace for island products with room to grow
- Intern housing to stabilize the labor pool to support various production cycles across multiple farms
- Education facilities
- Space to house multiple organizations
- Sufficient parking and ada access
- A seed bank
- Event space
- Demonstration/education garden

The Food Center will be designed to meet the unique needs of our island with adequate room to keep ahead of our growing circular economy for years to come.

At this time we see it as being structured as a self sustaining public - private partnership overseen by a new island organizational entity that would oversee the project for the greater good. The power of this vision comes from the ability to diversify revenue options and share overhead costs. By doing this we can overcome the current barriers to action while simultaneously offering greater value to the island.

## **History**

This project is the culmination of almost a decade of work including the Re-Imagine the Village Green project which looked at how we could help the Farmers Market continue to grow through redesigning the Village Green and the Food Hub Feasibility study which began looking specifically at our community's need for a food hub (see attached). These efforts resulted in VIGA launching Vashon Fresh, an online store for island farmers that offered weekly aggregation and delivery.

The Re-Imagine the Village Green Project by the UW Storefront Studio culminated in a "europeanized" model for the village green that would include two cantilevered roof promenades, a new storage building and stage and a green space in the middle. While a beautiful improvement to the existing market the proposed changes don't significantly increase the vendor capacity and doesn't address the parking issue which customer polls determine is a primary deterrent for customers. Considering larger structures was dismissed after significant

community feedback was received that the Village Green remain a green space. This leads VIGA to the conclusion that long term growth and support of the Farmers Market must include considerations of new locations.

The Vashon Island Food Hub Feasibility Study completed in 2016 by The Northwest Agriculture Business Center determined that demand for Vashon product significantly exceeded supply, but island agriculture lacked sufficient collaboration and production volume to make a pure food hub model financially viable at that time.

The work on the Food Hub directly contributed to the creation of Vashon Fresh in 2017. Vashon Fresh is a weekly CSA aggregation and distribution model based on an online marketplace. Vashon Fresh has grown each of the years in operation, but is not yet self sustaining. Also, Vashon Fresh at this time doesn't handle wholesale. Sharing operational space would reduce the overhead and significantly increase the viability of Vashon Fresh.

These efforts lead to inclusion in the 2017 Vashon-Maury Island CSA Subarea Plan. See below.

Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands	R-9	King County will support the Vashon Island Grower's Association's goal to create a food hub to serve and assist island growers with marketing, distribution, and other services that can leverage the capacities of small and medium size farms.	<p>a. Depending upon results of the Vashon Island Grower's Association feasibility study and identification of a potential location, King County staff will coordinate with the community on permitting and infrastructure needs.</p> <p>b. Where feasible, King County will help to identify capital and/or operations funding for the food hub.</p>	VIGA	DPER DNRP/ WLRD
	R-10	King County will support the work of the Vashon Island Grower's Association and similar island organizations to secure a more permanent location and to expand and redevelop the Vashon Farmer's Market in a safe, compatible and accessible manner.	<p>a. King County staff will coordinate with the community on permitting and infrastructure needs for the farmer's market.</p> <p>b. Where feasible, King County will help to identify capital and/or operations funding for the farmer's market.</p>	VIGA	DPER DNRP/ WLRD

### Why Now

We are making this proposal now for three reasons.

1. An island land owner has stepped forward interested in working to make this reality come true with a desirable property.
2. Zero Waste Vashon and Impact Bioenergy are currently developing the other infrastructure necessary for a circular economic model on Vashon

### 3. Potential synergy with rehoming the Vashon Food Bank and Vashon Farmers Market

#### Property

Islanders Dan and Trevi Housholder purchased the property north of Dig on Vashon Highway two years ago and shortly after approached VIGA to see if said property would be desirable as a new location for the Farmers Market. After refurbishing the existing farm house on the property they reached out to Caleb Johns and VIGA again in February of 2019 with continued interest in seeing the property support the island's agricultural economy.

The property is 9.25 acres with 3 water shares and a working well. The previous owner put in significant infrastructure including commercial power and a high-capacity sewer lift station. The property is currently zoned R1, although most of the property around it south of 188<sup>th</sup> is zoned for neighborhood or community business.

This property is large enough to provide space for the VCFC, additional organizations, greenspace and sufficient parking. It is centrally located on Vashon Highway halfway between Vashon Town and Center and near a current bus stop. It is ideally located for a food hub as it is close to Matsuda Farm, the Biodigester, schools, K2 (for possible future collaboration) and town.



### Zero Waste Vashon and Impact Bioenergy

In the past decade ZWV has made significant progress in addressing our waste process with the addition of green material collections at the transfer station and the construction, in collaboration with Impact Bioenergy, of the bio digester located at Island Springs Tofu.

Zero Waste Vashon is now working with King County Solid Waste to build off the highly successful pilot project to collect organic material at the transfer station. They are planning a feasibility study for a compost facility on the island.

The Bio digester is scheduled to begin operations this fall and will need organic materials as input and will generate fertilizer and biogas as outputs. Impact Bioenergy is working on a pilot circular economy model here on Vashon. They have begun the first step by writing a grant to purchase a natural gas truck that would operate on biogas and deliver fertilizer.

### Local Synergy

At this time the Vashon Island Food bank is looking for a new location that would include aggregation, processing, storage and distribution facilities at an easily accessible location. The food bank's needs are very similar to the Food Hub and Vashon Fresh.

The Vashon Farmers Market is also considering new locations as the current space limits the growth necessary to support the local food production growth necessary for our sustainable future. Weekly farm donations to the food bank would likely increase with proximity as would engagement with the food hub.

### **Organizational Structure**

We (Caleb Johns and Dan Housholder) are currently operating as a sub-committee of VIGA who has agreed to be the fiscal sponsor of this exploration process (June 2019 Board Meeting).

VIGA believes that to succeed the project will need to grow into its own entity at a future date.

### **Next Steps**

1. Engage island stakeholders through the creation of an advisory committee
2. Conduct a feasibility study
3. Create a business plan

### **Partners to date**

Vashon Island Growers Association & Vashon Fresh & Vashon Farmers Market

Zero Waste Vashon

Mike Lufkin - King County Local Foods Initiative

### **Potential future partners**

Vashon Land Trust & Matsuda Farm

Vashon School District

Vashon Food Bank

Vashon Chamber of Commerce

Vashon Park District

King County Solid Waste

USDA

King County Department of Local Services

Sen. Joe Nguyen

King Conservation District

The purpose of this letter is to share our vision, begin conversations and demonstrate community wide support for continuing work on this topic.

By signing this letter you agree that we need to work towards a regenerative island economy and you support the VIGA Vashon Community Food Center sub-committee to move forward by taking our next steps.

Sincerely,

Caleb Johns - Treasurer, VIGA

Dan Housholder - Board Member, VIGA

_____	_____	_____	_____
Name	Title	Organization	Date