Design Narrative Summary:

North Star Grove (NSG) exists on 4.77 acres of land, with about 1 acre in the center of the land cleared for human habitation and a regenerative food forest. The surrounding 3.77 acres of forest is around 40 years old after being clear cut and divided into rectangular property divisions. We are the first human stewards of this land since it was clear cut and previous management has drained much of the biodiversity and health from the land. Oceana and George moved onto the land May 1, 2025, with a third (me) joining them August 24, 2025. We three are the primary decision makers, but we rely on and regularly involve community connections and collaboration across the Olympic Peninsula to get us to where we are today and guide our goals.

One of our primary goals is to feed the current and future residents of NSG and gift the surplus to BIPOC & LGBTQ+ members of our rural community on the Olympic Peninsula through the Nourish Beloved Community (NBC) free weekly CSA program. NBC is a separate program created and ran by Oceana since 2023. This program uses grants and gifts to purchase fresh produce and valued-added products from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ organic farmers and producers, and then distribute these products for free to BIPOC & LGBTQ+ folks in Jefferson County, WA.

NSG is a community space that hosts regular potlucks for BIPOC community members and their families, group discussions, and local organizations. North Star Grove is named after the very star that led so many enslaved Africans to freedom and to new worlds. This legacy drives the mission of NSG to exist as a sanctuary for humans and non-human relatives and to live regeneratively with a light footprint while fostering interdependent and generative relations.

The land is community owned under an LLC, so we have the opportunity to protect this land for generations and witness the regeneration and healing of people, wildlife relatives, and the land we call home. Our design honors permaculture ethics and principles by jump starting the land's recovery and transforming it into regenerative carbon sequestering refuge for all life forms. For Earth care, we are transforming the forest to resemble the lands stewarded by First Nations prior to colonization by restoring the soils, planting natives, and allowing the forest to age into a cherished old growth forest. We prioritize fair share by choosing plants that would attract and feed wildlife and pollinators and create a permanent hospitable home to encourage them to stick around. For people care, we are transforming the cleared land into a community garden, orchard, small camas prairie, and regenerative food forest. To accomplish our goals, our first year focuses on building a solid foundation and infrastructure that we can rely upon to achieve our ultimate dreams. We are building soil, attracting wildlife, and installing irrigation and waste systems. Incorporating biochar into our soils is our key to revitalizing our soils while reducing our dependency on external inputs and supplemental watering.

Site Analysis:

Climate: Plant Hardiness Zone 8b, and heavily influenced by our proximity to the surrounding bodies of water. We live in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains, so we have very wet and cold falls and winters, but summer is dry and sunny with very little rain and a burn ban normally in place for the region. The area's unique microclimates create interesting conditions for residents. For example, we recently had both a fog advisory and a wildfire watch and smoke advisory at the same time.

Soil: Predominantly sandy loam with a thin sliver of land towards the East leaning toward loam. Very low water holding capacity, even in the forested areas. There is no clear soil profile layers and much of the soil across the property, including within the forest, is compacted, slow to drain, pale in color, and lacking insect life.

Water: Average annual precipitation is 1.6 in (4.1 cm) per year. Most rain occurs during fall, winter, and early spring. The land slopes slightly towards the Southeast, where water drains from the land. Water is a precious resource during our summers.

Sectors: An abundance of sun exposure. Animal corridors and habitats surround property and welcomes an eclectic array of wildlife. Noise comes from all directions due the young trees only partially acting as a sound barrier. Running water and electricity from the town available for residents and land stewardship tasks. Driving paths were added around the property to make it more accessible to visitors. Much of the land is compacted due to the

heavy equipment used to develop the property for human habitation.

Zones: Zones start with residents' living dwellings and expand outward to the garden and then the surrounding forest. We follow this pattern when prioritizing land stewardship tasks and creating timelines. We focus inward and expand out as we become more in tune with the land and our needs and acquire more resources and direction.

Existing Plants: Because of our dry summers, conifers and broadleaf evergreens thrive and make up the majority of our forest, with Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and Pacific Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) being the most common trees. Bushes of salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) carpet the entire forest floor floor, which fruit in abundance in the summer.

There are many other non-native pioneer plants, which we transformed from a perceived problem into a solution. These plants aid in building the soil and accumulating nutrients, and are added to our compost before they can reproduce and spread.

We have a joyful selection of native plants. However, many of the native plants in the understory of the forest are struggling. They receive plenty of light, but after observing the land and soil tests results, we found that the soil's water and nutrient holding capacity are the main limiting factors.

Social conditions: This is community owned land in a town and region with a mix of many types of people, including First Nation communities and reservations. Some people are aligned with regenerative land stewardship and others actively work against it. Socioeconomic classes range from those with generational wealth to those in poverty and experiencing food insecurity. This dynamic mix of people does create opportunities to foster new types of relationships and build new worlds radically different from the ones we exist in today.

Deforestation has been a highly charged personal and political topic, especially recently where companies are trying to clear cut old growth forests. The region has a long lumber history that is ingrained in the current dominant culture and influences the beliefs and actions pertaining to our forests.

NSG can serve as a pillar for change and spread to the surrounding areas, raising awareness and consciousness about new ways of living, like those taught through permaculture. Through community engagement, our neighbors can witness our land as a model and participate in trainings to prepare them to make fundamental shifts in their lifestyles.

Full Design Narrative and Scope:

North Star Grove Design Overview:

We are growing food using no-till, dryland farming techniques in order to uphold food sovereignty, tend to the relational field, practice culturally appropriate regenerative methodologies and develop emerging ways of being and living post-capitalist. Our plant selection prioritizes native plant communities that have co-evolved alongside each other for countless years and we also prioritize climate adapted species. NSG will maintain the land for the sustenance of a multi-generational community, maintaining an ethos of healing justice, regenerative land practices, and cultural restoration while building capacity to thrive in these shifting times.

Design Components:

1. Community Garden & Mini-Prairie

- Inspired by the permaculture principle of slow and small solutions, we are starting with 7 crops we know we'll eat and can that can teach us about the land's needs as we become more rooted in place.
- Set aside space to grow a small but mighty camas prairie (*Camassia quamash*) honoring the First Nation stewarded prairies that existed in abundance on these lands before colonialism displaced the plants, the humans, and their cultural practices.

2. Orchard

Plant beloved fruit trees with beneficial guilds around their base consisting of as ground covers, root zone occupying plants, dynamic nutrient accumulators, and other companions.

3. Perennial Food Forest

Transition our community garden that is primarily annuals to a community perennial food forest.

4. Stewarding a forest towards old growth in our own backyard

- Plant native species mimicking successful coevolved relations found throughout the forests around us.
- Consult with community and experts to develop and execute a fire defense plan to benefit the forests as a whole beyond property lines. Educate the community about the importance of fire safety and appropriate forest stewardship.
- We actively blur the arbitrary lines of separation between cultivated garden spaces and the surrounding forest. Instead we view them as one connected system and many of our strategies we use for our gardens will also apply to the forest.

5. Communal Relations

All land practices ultimately support welcoming community to our land, so we can:
- Grow community through gatherings.
- Have generative conversations and connections.
- Provide educational and skill share offerings.
- Host community potlucks (at least one per month).
- Provide volunteer and work party opportunities.
- Build a permanent community center to replace our current temporary pavilion tent.

Implementation:

1. Build a Solid Foundation for Success

a. Soil Stewardship:

Soil Profile and Microbiome Regeneration and Support:

- Composting: Practice a hot compost method throughout our dormant season to produce an abundant supply of compost.
- Weekly pick up of free donated biomass and amendments (e.g. coffee grounds from coffee shops, horse manure from a nearby farm, food scraps from the food bank, etc.)
- Beginning in the fall, apply compost to the soil along with other amendments and mulching techniques to build and fortify the soil ecosystems to improve soils in time for spring planting.
- Brew compost tea to serve as a soil drench and plant foliar spray to benefit overall health and boost microbial vitality and biodiversity.
- Plant nitrogen fixing crops, such as fava beans (*Vicia faba)* and various clovers (*Trifolium sp.*), and taproot plants to aid in breaking up compact soils.
- Worm bin: Source native earthworms that are in harmony with our local ecosystems to create a reliable source of nutritious worm castings.
- Add the 10 gallon bucket of community donated biochar to the compost bins to aid in the process and then spread the finished compost over high priority food growing areas.
- Create our own biochar on site to increase access to greater amounts of biochar by transmuting the excess woody material left behind from the clear cutting and property development into biochar.
- Charge and incorporate biochar throughout the land to increase nutrient availability and water retention, and reduce the need for supplemental water and external nutrient inputs.

- Continue to plant cover crops and develop a cover crop rotation plan for the upcoming year.
- Mulch as needed to restore soil, protect topsoil from harmful elements, retain water, and keep out undesirable plants.

b. Water Stewardship:

- Irrigation: Plan out spring garden layout and then install irrigation lines to efficiently water crops and aid the establishment of trees and shrubs.
- By fall, set up rain water collecting barrels where we can use gravity to supply the garden with water during dry periods.
- Install greywater system to redirect the water back to the land where it's needed the most.
- Install a retention pond to capture excess water draining from the land.

2. Wildlife Homecoming Part 1

a. Construct and place bird houses, perches and bat homes around the land:

- Use locally sourced materials and collaborate with local artisans to build community and raise awareness of best stewardship practices and the importance of supporting birds and bats.

b. Install a retention pond and additional water features:

- The pond will slow, sink, and store overflowing water on site and provide a much needed water source for wildlife (and to appease our robust Pacific chorus frog population).
- Set up birds baths and other sources of water for wildlife throughout the land.

c. Plant pollinator sanctuaries throughout the land and garden areas:

- Plant a variety of plants with staggered bloom times for a year round pollinator food source and plants with different flower shapes and sizes to provide food for a diverse range of pollinators.
- Plant trees and shrubs during the wet season throughout the land and allow fallen leaves to decompose in place to provide wildlife services such as food, habitat, and overwintering refuges.

3. Build on our Foundation to Feed the People

a. Continue to plant fall, winter, overwintering crops, and cover crops:

- Allow our plant helpers to aid us in soil building, increasing our land's biomass, attracting pollinators, and providing food and joy to our residents during the less active times of the year.

- Include cover crops that can produce a yield for humans and animals, be chopped and dropped, and/or added to our composting systems.

b. Create the next stage of the Community Garden:

Come spring, plant the the chosen 7 plants in the Community Garden space. We chose 7 plants we would love as residents, would benefit wildlife, had different growing niches, and could support one another. As we become more grounded and expand our team and capacity, we will expand our growing selection.

- Collect cuttings and seedlings from community members and friends, and transplant at appropriate times during the wet season to reduce supplemental watering.
- Plant deciduous trees, such as fig (*Ficus carica*), to provide yield and protect Oceana and George's home from the summer sun that shines directly on their house.
- Begin the transition and establishment of the perennial food forest. Our heavily wood chip and sawdust mulched land is perfect for creating the fungally prominent soils that woody perennials thrive in.
- Continue to apply compost and compost tea seasonally and when needed.

5. Forest Stewardship (Wildlife Homecoming Part 2)

- The Soil Stewardship and Water Stewardship strategies and resources produced and outlined in step #1 for our cultivated gardens are transferable to step #5 Forest Stewardship for the most part because of the overlap between the two spaces and our goals.
- As we work towards tending to the surrounding forest, we are starting slow within the zones connected to our home and community gardens before expanding outwards. This allows us to take care of our needs while simultaneously building the capacity, wisdom and knowledge, and resources needed to steward the surrounding forest earnestly.

a. Carry out Fire Defense Activities:

-Stewardship activities include thinning out the stands of trees, reducing fuel loads, and creating breaks around and throughout the property, such as our road breaks separating the forest stand from the tiny homes.

b. Care for what's already there:

Tend to the understory and trees that are alive but struggling. Activities include removing overgrown undesirable non-native plants that are depriving native plants of sunlight, soil nutrients and water.

c. Towards an Old Growth Forest:

Plant a range of native plants to create guilds conducive to increasing biodiversity while fostering a resilient and highly specialized community.

d. Terra Preta Origins:

Inspired by the terra preta soils found in the Amazon forests, we will charge biochar and incorporate biochar into the soil of the entire forest.

e. Neighborly Connection:

Allow neighbors to witness and interact with an example of a thriving forest that one day will be an old growth forest. Raise awareness of the plight of our local forests and what we can do to support them and each other.

Biochar Gameplan Summary:

I attended a biochar creation workshop hosted by a member of the Black Farmers collective in Seattle a few years ago where we created biochar using an oven constructed by the instructor. We would love to locally salvage materials and build a biochar oven on our land. The Port Townsend Paper Company (PTPC) nearby us produces biochar as a byproduct and sells it. Unfortunately, this biochar is not made in a way that balances out the carbon released in the process, is only made available to the public through a private company that has exclusive distribution rights, and is not certified organic. We have the huge opportunity to create a carbon sequestering, organic, easily accessible source of biochar and educational opportunity for our rural community. Our land is covered in woody debris that was chipped and chopped in place during land development that can be transformed into biochar. In collaboration with our larger community, the possibilities of what we can create for our region are truly infinite.

In summary, biochar will be incorporated into our design and mission by:

- Using it as an an additive to our composting system.
- Hosting biochar creation workshops similar to the one I attended that allowed me to experience the history, creation, and distribution of this resource firsthand.
- Locally sourcing kelp & seaweed (taking advantage of our local marine environment) and other charging agents to introduce a variety of microbes to our biochar. We will then incorporate the biochar into our soils, including our entire forested area.

$7,500 Budget Allocation

NSG has chosen to focus and hone in on our goals and strategies, and so we will wisely allocate the funds received to building a strong foundation and infrastructure to ensure our dreams become reality.

Tapping into our community relationships, the prize money will go towards locally sourcing the amendments, equipment, and materials we need. We intend to spend as

much of the funds as possible locally so we can circulate funds within our community and local economy.

The $7,500 will be used to:
- Purchase much needed garden tools to aid in our work.
- Purchase a wood chipper to create closed loop systems and source needed resources on site, such as mulch materials and materials for biochar.
- Create our own biochar producing infrastructure and system.
- Install an irrigation system that uses water efficiently.
- Create a closed loop waste stewardship systems, which involves setting up a greywater system, worm bins, and improving our composting system.
- Rent equipment needed for earthwork projects like building our retention pond.
- Construct wildlife infrastructure like bird houses, bat houses, and bird perches.
- Produce educational opportunities and improve our community outreach capacity.

Holistic Monitoring and Long-term Resilience Building:

To track changes and ensure we are meeting our goals while staying aligned with our values, we will practice holistic stewardship and monitoring. We are also interested in fostering ways of living resiliently.
What this looks like:
– Periodically gathering and checking-in as a resident community to ensure every practice implemented aligns with our holistic goals.
- Inviting members of the greater community to share their dreams for the land, provide feedback, hear updates from NSG residents, and develop collaborative opportunities to work together on the land and beyond.
- Conducting seasonal soil tests at the same time each year to track changes across the land.
- Observing the land as we steward to identify new species and changes caused by our stewardship practices.
- Listen to and observe the land to guide us in creating best practices.
- Selecting and saving seeds from plants with desirable qualities such as high yield production, drought resistance, and climate adaptability.
- Breed new varieties of plants unique to our region to share with our neighbors.
- Continue to outreach and foster community relations.