LANDBASE:

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY (outline)

Sustainability is an essential public good:
its expression needs invigorating at every level.

Whatever the future might become, sustainability will always have the final say.
We are now under pressure to move beyond the data, to make it a science.

Abstract:

A largely overlooked consequence of big cities is the rise of Big Ag, the world's giant agribusiness monopolies. Licensed by the demand for cheaper food prices their chemically-intensive farming methods continue to cause serious and unsustainable ecological damage, unnoticed by the public. This outline proposes a localised means to foster the approaching changes.

Solving the cascading problems of industrial food production will, sooner or later, require a phase of agrarian resettlement. When that comes a broad understanding of the principles of sustainability, if instilled as a way of living, will help ensure its lasting expression in future social values.

Unlike existing organisations, which present sustainability as a component of economics, *i.e.* of scarcity; the LANDBASE Project emphasises nature's other mode, of diversity and abundance. The project operates as a public education, bio-organic advisory and rural development centre addressing the issues of agrarian resettlement at the home-owner's level. These training programmes need to be set up at suitably-equipped and staffed farmlets. A development budget is required (*see below*).

Background:

A. Some misconceptions about the resilience of the natural world that need to be addressed.

i. The view that nature works as an interconnected 'web of cycles' is appealing but partially incomplete. It suggests that nature recycles: which is not the case.

ii. The notion of a 'balance of nature.' No such certainty exists.

iii. That Darwin's theory of 'natural selection' is the same as 'survival of the fittest'. While one expresses the inner workings of sustainability, the other does not.

iv. That the Third World has had it wrong all this time: we have nothing to learn there. They need to adopt the western economic financial system.

***B*.** Running a city without fossil fuels may be possible, but producing food for cities using industrial methods causes something like 40-60 percent of the world's current atmospheric CO_2 emissions. On the other hand the typical organic small-holder's food production systems are carbon-negative. Thus, although efficient in economic terms cities are unsustainable if assessed in ecological terms[1].

***C*.** Today, worldwide, whatever land is available to be utilised for agriculture is already in production: about 40 percent of all land on Earth. Much of it, especially the land used to feed cities, is chemically and biologically stressed and continually being degraded by intensified food production.

Rural Resettlement:

The way forward - to achieve sustainable food production - is through de-industrialisation of agriculture: towards scaled-down and biologically-invested small-holder farming[2].
A matching de-intensification of cities must also happen: resettlement of people from their cramped suburbs into more agrarian settings. This will provide them with new incentives to develop home economic skills, self-provisioning and socialised food production. Healthier lifestyles and environment will naturally follow.

GOAL: Fully Sustainable Living

The matters being addressed here are complex and take time to absorb. By translating the practicalities of sustainability into ordinary life demonstration this project will encourage its graduates to examine their own circumstances, to adapt them over time, and to share their insights wherever they can. A rural setting for sustainability education is essential. Rural is where the change is

1 www.footprintnetwork.org/2017/02/18/city-footprints-data-action/

2 We gather schools of thought like Permaculture, Biodynamics, Regenerative farming under the term Agroecology.

coming, and a rural setting provides an in-context demonstration for aspects of the training.

Rural Resettlement:

Ignoring the *weekender* and *lifestyler* choices there is a growing trickle of people already leaving the cities, people who have chosen to live permanently in the rural hinterland. Underlying the reasons for this trend is a newfound apprehension about sustainability, and uncertainty about ways to respond. The exit strategies for such *homesteaders* can be mapped more or less along the 'Sell & Go' pathway. Overall this group has little expertise by way of agrarian or community-oriented experience, they cope as they go.

Also interested in vacating the city are large numbers of poorer people, the *would-if*. They would dearly love to settle rurally but are prevented by circumstance and finances. Many among them have valuable practical skills that would readily adapt to rural life.

This project proposes forming, alongside the local communities, a new 'Come & Join' pathway for would-be settlers. It would offer specialised training and targeted assistance to comers from all budgets, tapping into the energy for participating in a common cause that people share: in this case for universal sustainability. LANDBASE Centres, offering education, training and community engagement spaces, would also provide services and planting resources to the local region.

Practical Education:

Sustainability tuition | Land settlement | Productivity training

- Media-diverse materials to suit different audiences;
- Crop and soil care, illustrating land-food aspects;
- Post-harvest processing and food crafts, etc.
- Settlement pathway for rural pioneers.

Developing a suitable rural setting is essential, particularly as a walk-in, hands-on expression of the total model of sustainable living in full working detail. The Centre will serve a range of educational purposes: as a public visitor centre, for in-house seminars, and a site for practical training.

A. For public:

Besides running public presentations[3] and workshop seminars the Training Centre would also have;

- A drop-in information office;
- Booked guided tours;
- Open days & events;

B. For graduates/ members:

- Settlement advisory;
- Workshops & speakers;
- Discussion forums.

Community Extension:

The LANDBASE Centre would be located not more than 10 minutes from a local township, and be visible from a public highway. Working with the local townspeople and farmers the project would aim to build regional resilience, foster cooperative arrangements such as CSAs, time-banking[4], and group purchasing. This 'Come & Join' pathway would be especially attractive to new settlers with a community orientation.

Allotment Farming:

In a bid to revitalise homestead farming in Europe certain governments are offering (conditionally) free land to settlers. Considering the situation of the landless poor in New Zealand, and to hasten the stabilisation of agriculture into a state of health-giving, socially-fostered sustainability, LANDBASE advocates similarly allocating 'Self-reliance allotments' to suitably trained and committed applicants, as a later development of this project.

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3 Example Topics:

- The core principles and patterns of sustainable systems;
- Ways that sustainability might be measured and used;
- Sustainable Abundance vs. Economic Scarcity;
- The UN's Sustainable Development Goals, sustainable or not;
- Developing sustainable land use is easy: what about money;
- Universal Basic Agriculture, the sustainable form of UBI;
- Principled critiquing, a technique in social decision making;
- Unleashing the power of participation.

4 Time banking (http://timebanks.nz/)

Later Development: After establishing a Training Centre, the project would further propose clusters of two-hectare farmlets, as allotments for the landless. Supervised and mentored by the Centre the recipients of these allotments would be incentivised towards self-reliance and cooperative enterprise in partnership with each other, by the future prospect of land ownership after a certain period of years.

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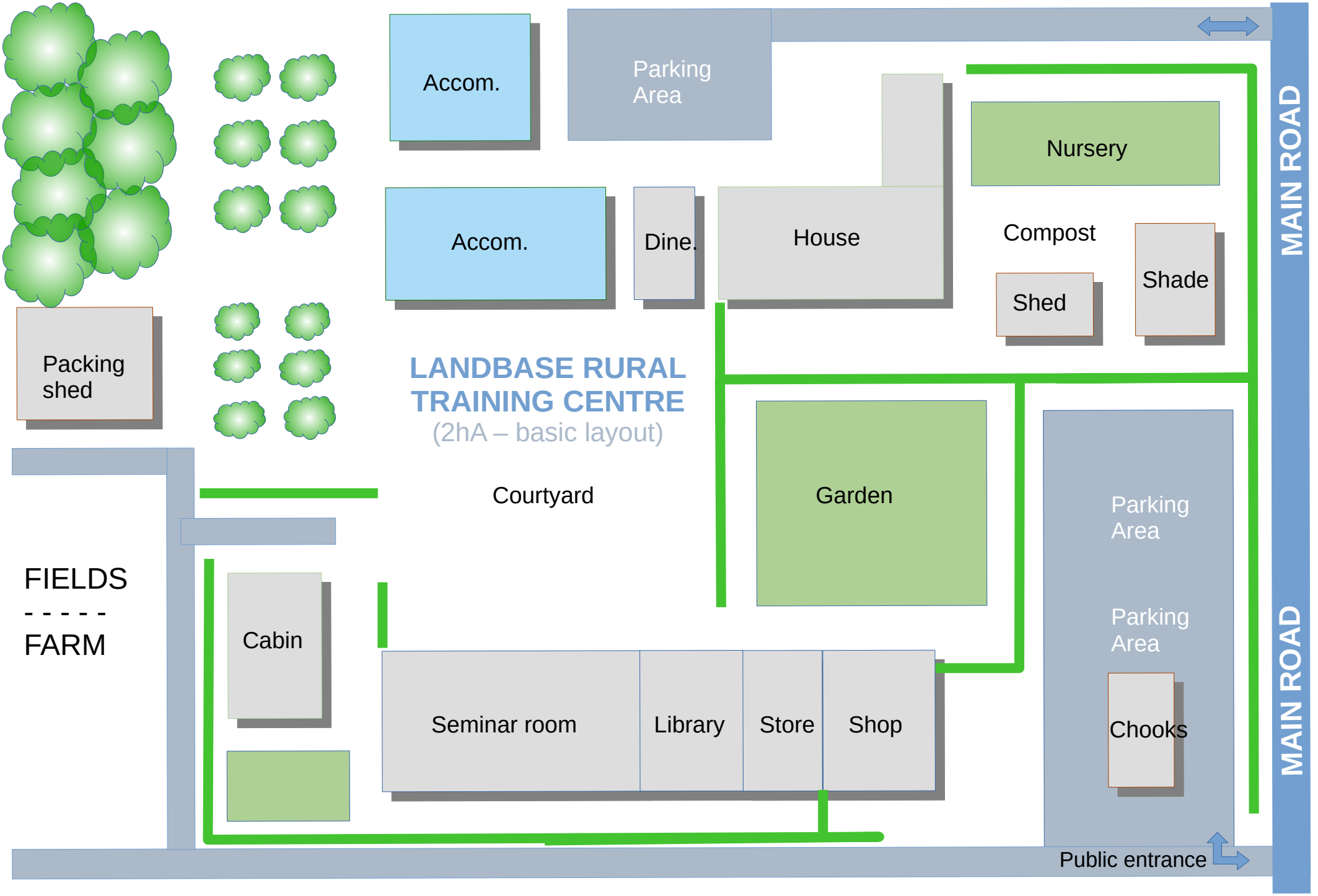
Estimated Set-up Costs: (NZD)

For high quality, best practice facilities. The setup is expected to take 1.5 - 2 years.

1	Property with house and some outbuildings, if suitable to develop as a rural Education Centre (5-8 hectares) is expected to cost in the range	$1.6 to $2.0M
2	Public spaces to be added: kitchen, seminar room, information office, etc.	$0.5M
3	Operational facilities; crèche, library, lunch-room, IT setup	$0.05M
4	Horticultural facilities: tunnel house, propagation house, packing shed, etc.	$0.2M
5	Earthworks, sealing, footpaths, car parks and extra fencing	$0.3M
6	Livestock with housing & supplies, orchard trees, hedging	$0.08M
7	Soil & biomass management, seeds, planting materials, etc.	
8	Water management, tools & equipment	$0.04M
9	Vehicle + trailer & costs	$0.04M
10	Bunkhouse accommodation	$0.2M
11	Wages: 5 staff for 2 years	$0.5M
12	Publicity: research, marketing, advertising, signage, printing	$0.18M
	Sub-Total	$3.7M
	Contingencies; legal fees, insurance, subscriptions (~12%)	$0.5M
	ESTIMATE	$4.5M

Creating education materials, online resources, and the land-use practices to be managed by the waged staff.


Accom.
Parking Area
Nursery
MAIN ROAD
Accom.
Dine.
House
Compost
Shade
Shed
Packing shed
LANDBASE RURAL TRAINING CENTRE
(2hA – basic layout)
Courtyard
Garden
Parking Area
FIELDS
- - - - -
FARM
Cabin
Parking Area
Seminar room
Library
Store
Shop
Chooks
MAIN ROAD
Public entrance