FORMAT OF FOOD

SHOULD SOMERVILLE BUILD A FOOD FOREST?
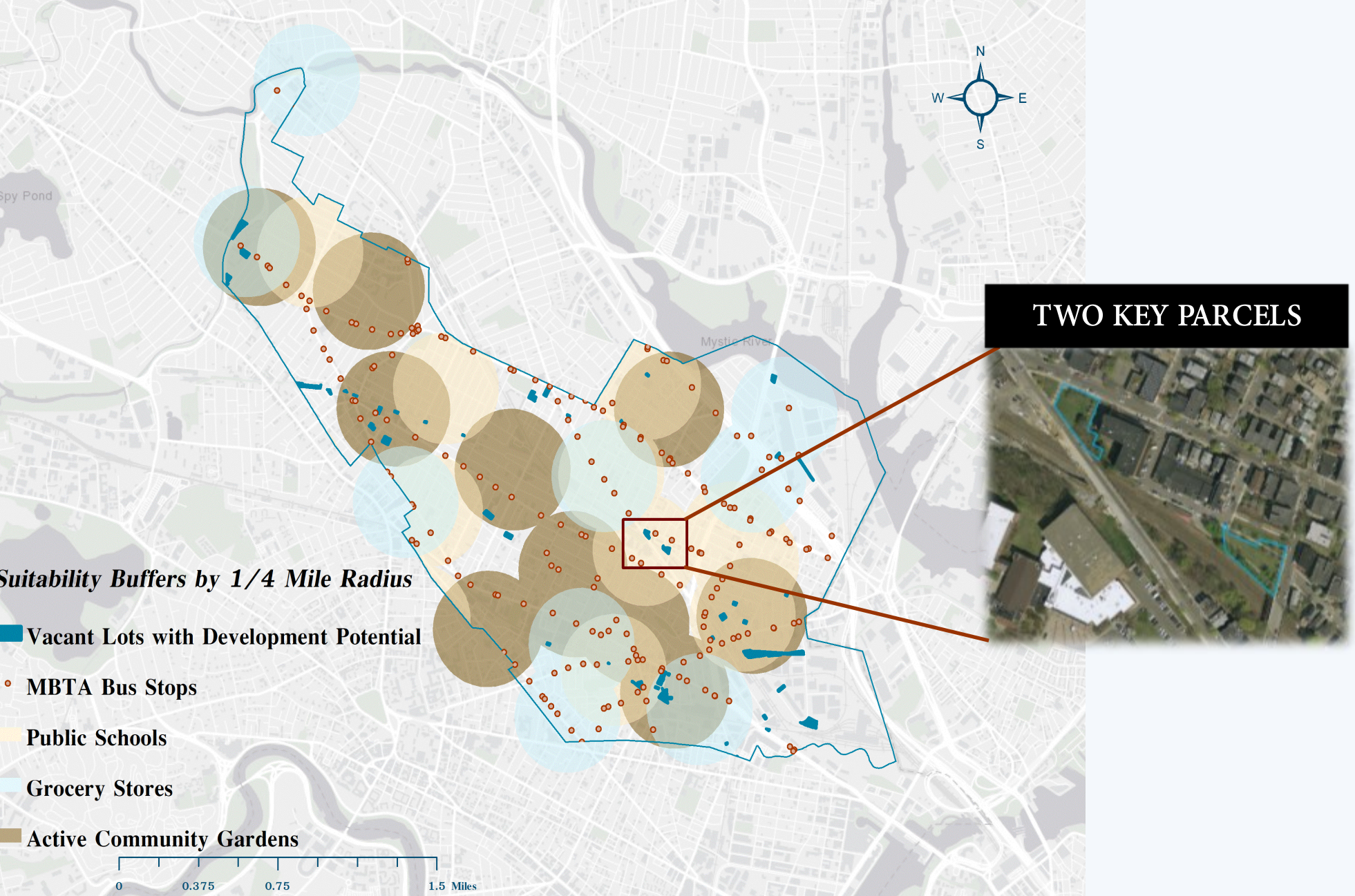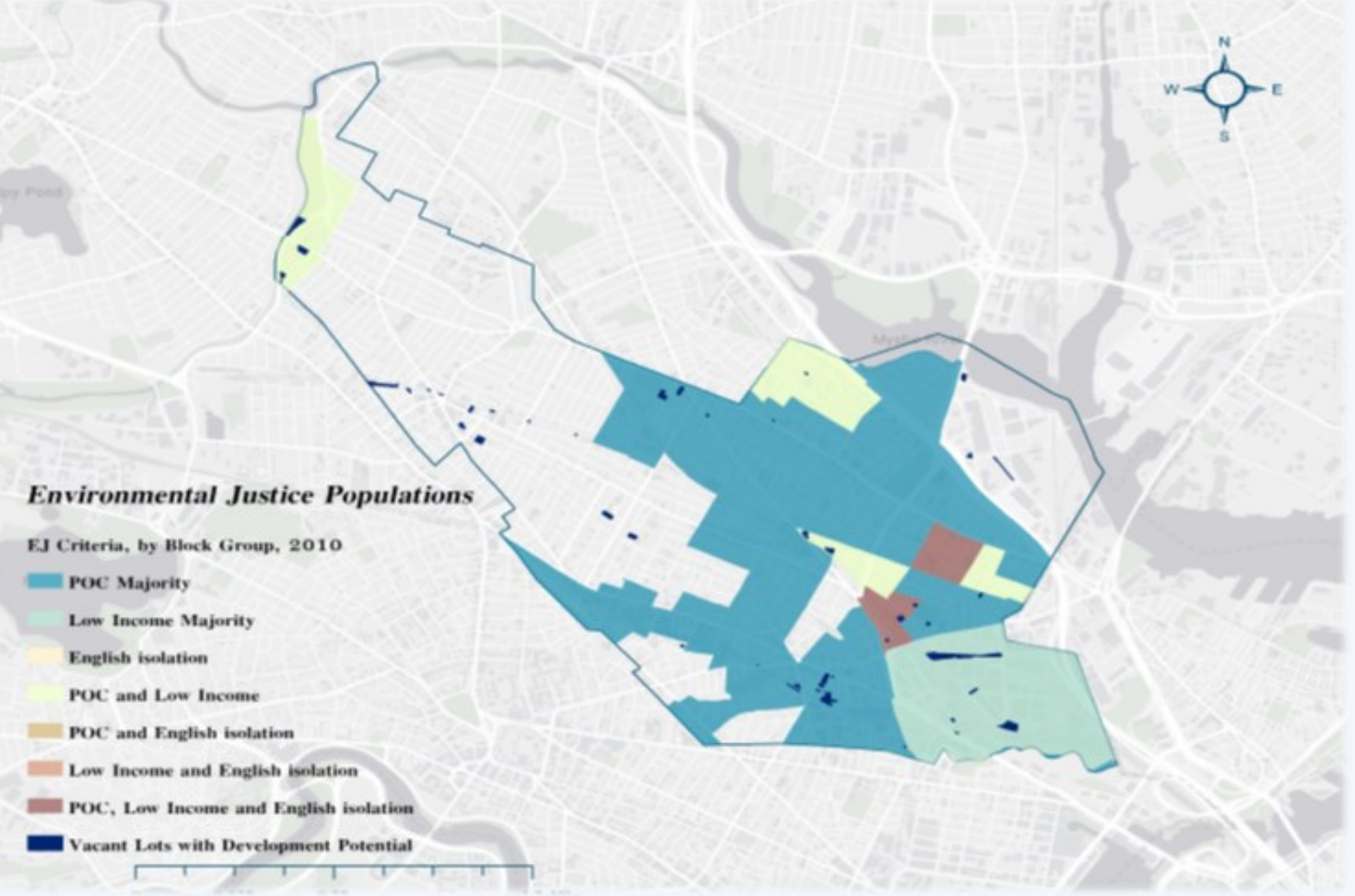
INTRODUCTION

With its eleven active community gardens and the implementation of the Urban Agriculture Ordinance, Somerville has shown its interest in creating space to grow food in the city. However, the city still faces challenges when it comes to serving all the residents who want access to their own garden plot.

In search of solutions, this project has identified eligible vacant parcels for the construction of a future community garden.

Further, this project proposes a food forest incorporating wild edibles that are already prevalent in the Somerville area as the form this future garden should take.

11 Active Community Gardens

225 Individual Plots

>200 Names on Waiting List

2 Years Average Wait Time

SUITABLE PARCELS BY PROXIMITY

TWO KEY PARCELS

Suitability Buffers by 1/4 Mile Radius

- Vacant Lots with Development Potential
- MBTA Bus Stops
- Public Schools
- Grocery Stores
- Active Community Gardens

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ZONES

Environmental Justice Populations
EJ Criteria, by Block Group, 2010
- POC Majority
- Low Income Majority
- English Isolation
- POC and Low Income
- POC and English Isolation
- Low Income and English Isolation
- POC, Low Income and English Isolation
- Vacant Lots with Development Potential

Of the limited vacant parcels in Somerville, only two were identified as most suitable from this analysis. These areas are in environmental justice zones, within walking distance to public schools and public transit while outside of the buffer zones surrounding existing community gardens and grocery stores. As these areas are very close to each other, the city might consider utilizing both of these lots as connected growing space, similar to how South Street farm sites 1 and 2 are used.

IMAGINING A FUTURE FOOD FOREST

A food forest is a type of a garden that mimics a forest in that it consists of layers of food-producing and medicinal plants. With thoughtful planning, this type of garden can be highly productive and require less continual maintenance than an annually planted garden.

An important piece of this research seeks to explore the possibility of integrating plants that are already prevalent and growing wild around Somerville. Although spreading information on wild edibles is no quick solution to food insecurity, reframing our perspective on these plants has potential to better connect us to our neighborhoods and natural surroundings, even in a city so urbanized as Somerville.

WILD EDIBLES AND COMMON GROCERY STORE PRODUCE

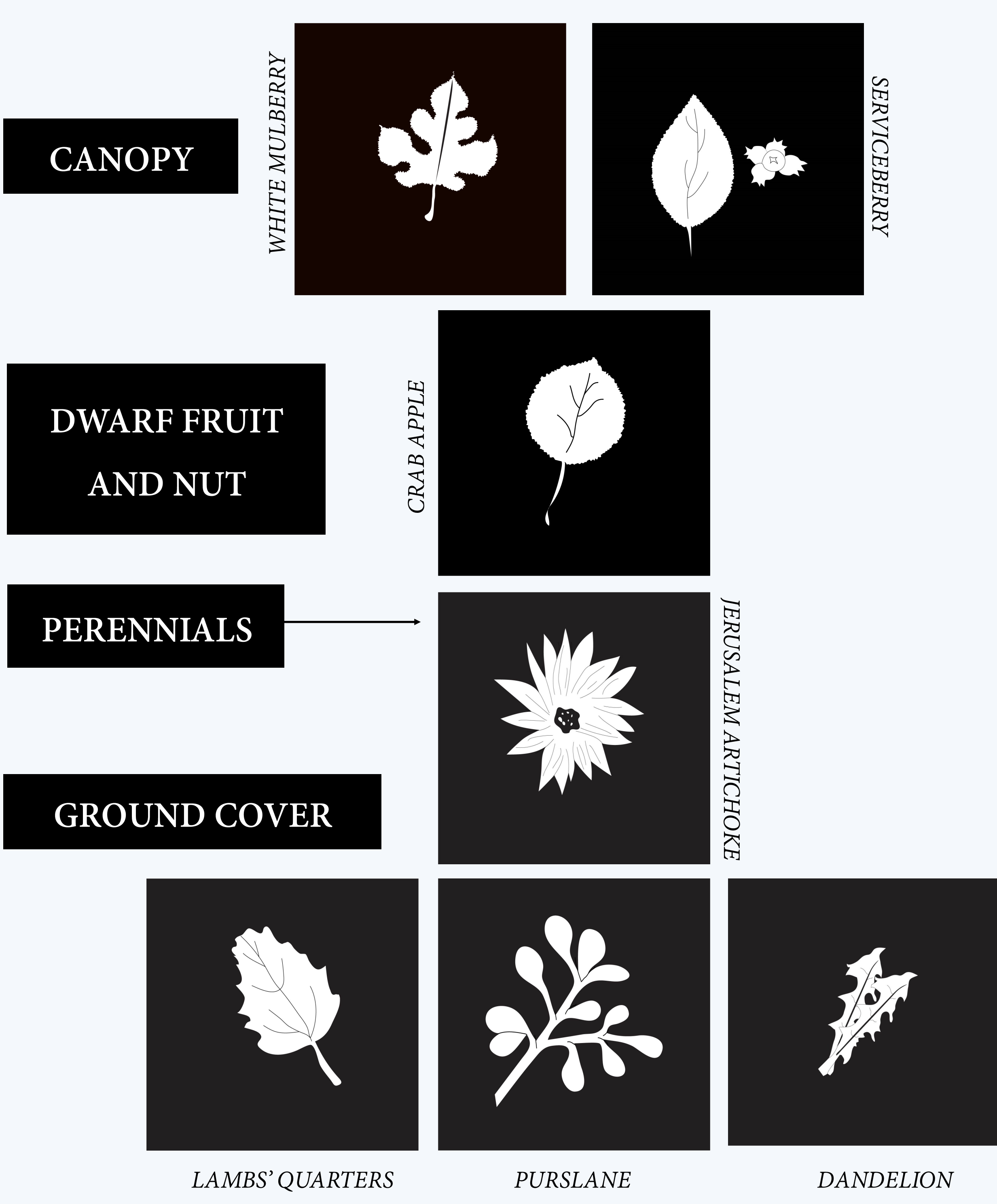#### NUTRITIONAL COMPARISON
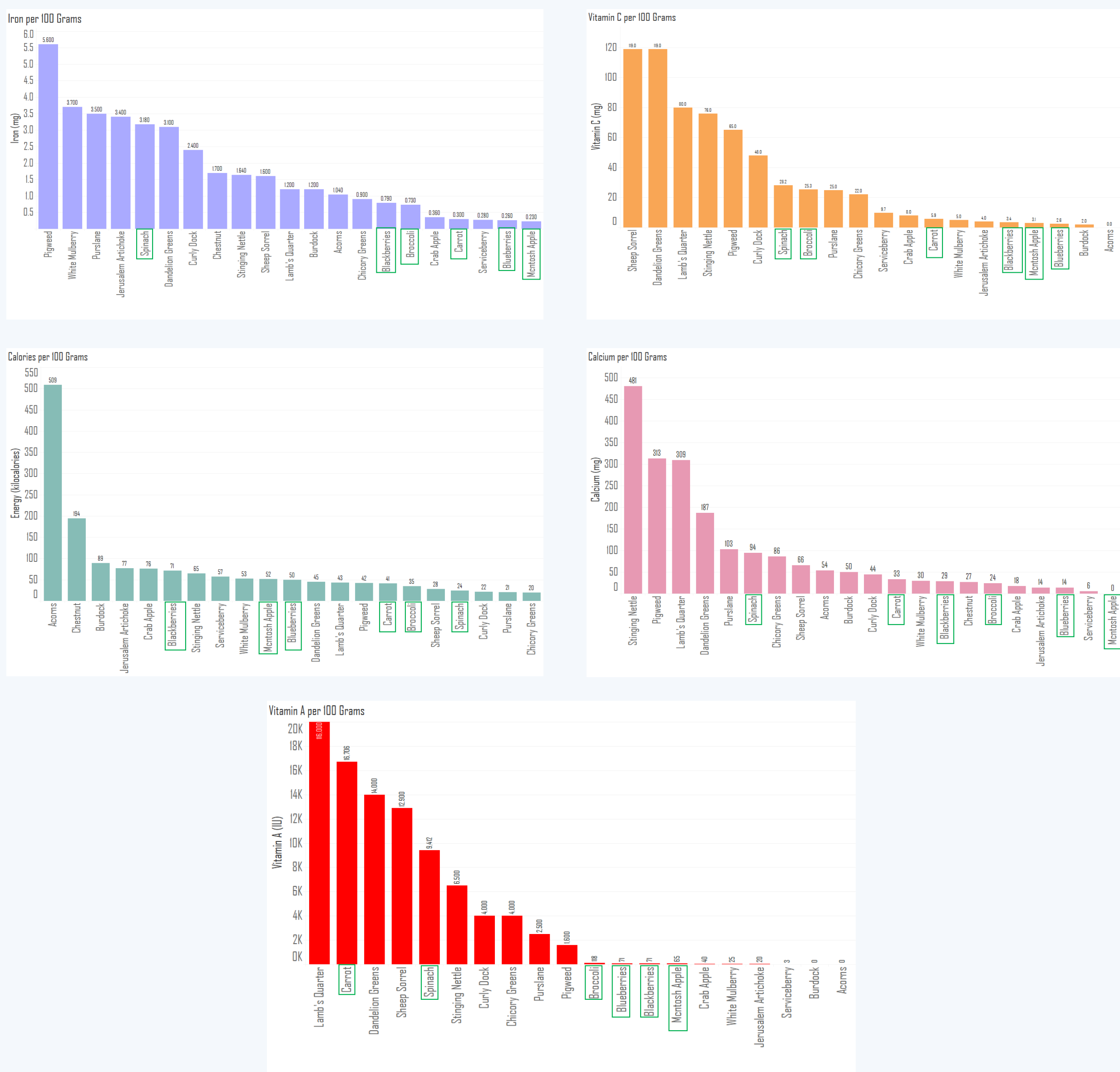
Above is a sampling of wild edibles commonly found throughout the Northeast. These plants grow prevalently and spontaneously in and around Somerville. Surprisingly, these plants' nutritional profiles hold their own against common grocery store produce items many have come accustomed to.

Presenting these plants and encouraging community members to engage with them through a food forest format gives people the power to walk on the sidewalk and recognize the flora around them, and if they so choose, to eat it as well.

LEVELS

- CANOPY
- DWARF FRUIT AND NUT
- PERENNIALS
- GROUND COVER

FOOD FOREST HIERARCHY

WHITE MULBERRY

SERVICEBERRY

CRAB APPLE

JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE

LAMBS' QUARTERS

PURSLANE

DANDELION

BENEFITS OF A FOOD FOREST

Less continual maintenance required

High Productivity and variety

Public space means involvement when one wants and can

Ecosystem & habitat creation through edible landscaping

Educational opportunities for all ages

ABERDEEN BIRD

FALL 2019

ENV. STUDIES

TUFTS 2020