



East Capitol Urban Farm Project A UDC Partnership Effort

THE NEED

With only four full-service grocery stores in Ward 7 (Ward 3, by comparison, has 11), many of the Ward's 71,000 residents do not have easy access to healthy food. Additionally, a 2012 study* found that as many as 17,000 people were eating and sharing fish which may contain chemical contaminants above recommended health levels caught from the nearby Anacostia River—many because they are hungry.

MEETING THE NEED

To help address these and other challenges, in 2015, the **University of the District of Columbia's College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences (UDC)** partnered with the **DC Housing Authority (DCHA)** to lease a vacant three acre lot (located at 5900 East Capitol Street SE, Washington, DC) to transform the parcel into the District's largest-scale urban farm and aquaponics facility—**East Capitol Urban Farm**.

The challenge and opportunity for partners is to develop this farm as a model for **temporary use** of vacant lots while demonstrating on-site stormwater management and local food production. The East Capitol Urban Farm is being established in collaboration with the **Urban Waters Federal Partnership**—14 federal agencies** working collectively to address environmental and economic challenges in cities across the country in underserved communities. The East Capitol Farm is one of a network of urban farms UDC and its partners will develop.

Through community engagement and partnering with many local and federal agencies as well as public and private organizations, the concept for the farm grew in scope and size to become a multi-functional community asset, inclusive of the following features and characteristics: urban farming with a special emphasis on diverse, biointensive, niche crops, a farmers market, food truck, public art, nature discovery space for kids, a community garden, pollinator gardens, interpretive trails, rain gardens and other environmental practices.

East Capitol Urban Farm will promote urban agriculture, improve food access and nutrition through a community-centered farmers market, offer nutrition education, provide community gardening, create opportunities for entrepreneurship, and include a research and demonstration site for UDC. **Groundwork Anacostia River DC** will lead efforts to engage Ward 7 youth at the Farm throughout the year, and there will be arts and educational programming for local schools, residents, and UDC students, with support from the **DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities**.

* <http://www.anacostiaws.org/fishing>

** urbanwaters.gov

A UNIQUE COALITION DEVELOPS

As planning for East Capitol Urban Farm advances, the excitement continues to build. DCHA, who owns the land, will provide water and electrical connections. UDC will operate and maintain East Capitol Urban Farm. UDC, through an award from the **Department of Energy & Environment's (DOEE)** Sustainable DC's Innovation Challenge Fund, has also committed to build an aquaponics facility, a "win-win" food production system where fish provide plants with nutrients to grow and plants act as a bio-filter to purify the water for fish.

Earlier this year, the **DC Building Industry Association (DCBIA)**, the premier non-profit trade association representing over 450 member companies and thousands of real estate development industry professionals, joined the effort by providing design and construction expertise and materials. Beginning at 7:30 am on **Saturday, September 26, 2015**, hundreds of DCBIA members and community volunteers will build the Farm on DCBIA's **23rd Annual Community Improvement Day**.

American Forests (the nation's first conservation organization devoted to protecting and restoring urban and wildland forests) and **Bradley Site Design** (a DCBIA member and locally prominent consulting firm) are contributing trees, urban wood waste and bio-retention resources. They will also evaluate the farm's social, economic and ecological impacts.

The **DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities** commissioned artists to develop a place-making sculpture and three murals that will be completed on Community Improvement Day. The artwork will convey environmental themes such as managing stormwater pollution and urban sustainability.

The **Metropolitan National Church** is establishing the community garden zone of the site and will provide stipends to employ students who will work year-round. **Groundwork Anacostia River DC** has been and will continue to provide its youth Green Teams to help with developing and maintaining the site.

Select agencies of the **Urban Waters Federal Partnership**—the **U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry**—are contributing funding, soil, and other assistance.

Walmart, the nation's largest grocer, and the **Walmart Foundation** have committed funding toward the project as part of its Healthy Foods Initiative, launched in 2011 with First Lady Michelle Obama.

THE FUTURE

The project's vision goes beyond the East Capitol Urban Farm. With the **temporary** nature of the initial site in mind, UDC and partners plan to use innovative technologies to build raised beds and portable aquaponics/fish tank facilities. UDC has mapped the District's underused properties to ensure a continued viable future, if moved to another site.

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