

Eastie Farm

A 21st-century community farm in East Boston

East Boston can set an example for the rest of the city by developing an urban farm that brings neighbors together to grow their own food. While the city is rich in community gardens, these spaces are typically divided into individual plots that neighbors rent and maintain separately. What's missing is a shared space where all community members are invited to join hands in planting and harvesting together; a place where novice gardeners can come to learn and veterans can come to teach; a place where all passers-by are invited to stop in, meet their neighbors, contribute to the farm work, attend an educational demonstration, or simply relax among the flowers, herbs, and veggies. In the short time it has been active, Eastie Farm has already transformed the 294 Sumner plot, creating a welcoming entrance with bilingual signage, flowerbeds, and a path leading through a network of raised beds where neighbors have together planted crops like cilantro, kale, spinach, radishes, and tomatillos. People of various ethnic backgrounds representing the demography of East Boston have participated in weekly work parties; children of the neighborhood have come with their parents to learn about growing; long-time residents are working alongside newer arrivals to the area; everyone is looking forward to the harvest. With Eastie Farm, our neighborhood is positioning itself as a leader in sustainability, urban agriculture, and community integration.

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We propose that Eastie Farm retain 294 Sumner permanently to continue to bring the East Boston community together to grow food locally in an eco-friendly manner. Given the farm's guiding principle of social and ecological justice, it has already proven a joyful and diverse gathering place to celebrate land and food.

Given that Eastie Farm thinks globally and acts locally, and has successfully begun creating a resilient and ecologically informed community, its ability to raise funds for sustaining itself are high. Educational institutions, governments at all levels, and private organizations interested in social or ecological justice are likely to appreciate the work already being done at the farm. In addition to external funding sources, Eastie Farm can also generate income from onsite education on various relevant topics, as well as sales of a portion of the produce grown, perhaps via CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).

Benefit Community

Local, organic food

Education

Integration

Foster Innovation

High-tech farming techniques

Integration with school curriculum

Zero waste approach

Fight climate change

Activate streetscape

Art

Flowers

Greenery

Respect neighbors

Mutual benefit projects

Neighbor-friendly practices

Engage Community

Volunteer work days

Integration with school curriculum

Community workshops and walkthroughs

Collaborative projects

The vision:

Benefit Community

Year-round food access

Eastie Farm will offer fresh, local, sustainably-grown food to East Boston residents all year.

Solar-heated greenhouses will be used to extend growing season through the winter. Low-cost, high-efficiency methods such as freight farming and vertical-farming will also be used.

While Eastie Farm will work to remediate the lead that is prevalent in urban ground soil, all edibles will be grown in raised beds containing organic soil or in hydroponic environments that do not require soil.



FIGURE A SOLAR-POWERED GREENHOUSE - PROTOTYPE FROM BOSTON COLLEGE

Education

The community learns that it is possible to grow food locally. It also learns how to do so, and, how to do so in an eco-conscious manner. Eastie Farm works with Zumix FM Radio programming to disseminate educational information about edible plants, permaculture, zero-waste, sustainability, and regenerative farming. There are community walkthroughs and volunteer days when the public attend and learn about the farm's practices. People also learn farming skills as well as organizing skills by volunteering at the farm doing some of the myriad tasks that need to be done on a regular basis by way of its upkeep. Planting, pruning, and harvesting events are all advertised to the public so they may attend and learn.



FIGURE A YOUNG MAN CHECKING OUT THE SOLAR-POWERED WATER-PUMP AT THE FARMER'S MARKET



FIGURE A BUDDING YOUNG SCIENTIST EXPERIMENTING WITH A WATER PUMP

Integration

The farm is a teaching farm in a diverse community (more than 50% of East Boston is Hispanic). All signage and classes are offered in English and Spanish. Volunteer workdays, community workshops, and walkthroughs are offered on a regular basis. Group sessions bring various neighbors together, thereby bridging gaps between different sections of the population with different ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, not to mention people of different age-groups.



FIGURE THE SIGN IS IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

Foster Innovation

High-tech farming

The farm benefits from working with various organizations and institutions who excel in the area of urban agriculture, use of renewable energy, and in education. Some examples are the Boston Food Forest Coalition, The Urban Farming Institute, and Boston College Renewable Energy Research Center. Several soil-less farming technique (such as hydroponics and aquaponics) are used. The greenhouse is kept at the optimal temperature via the use of solar panels. The water pumps are operated by solar panels. Rain water is harvested, stored, and sunk. Low-cost, versatile season-extension spaces such as hoop-houses are also used.

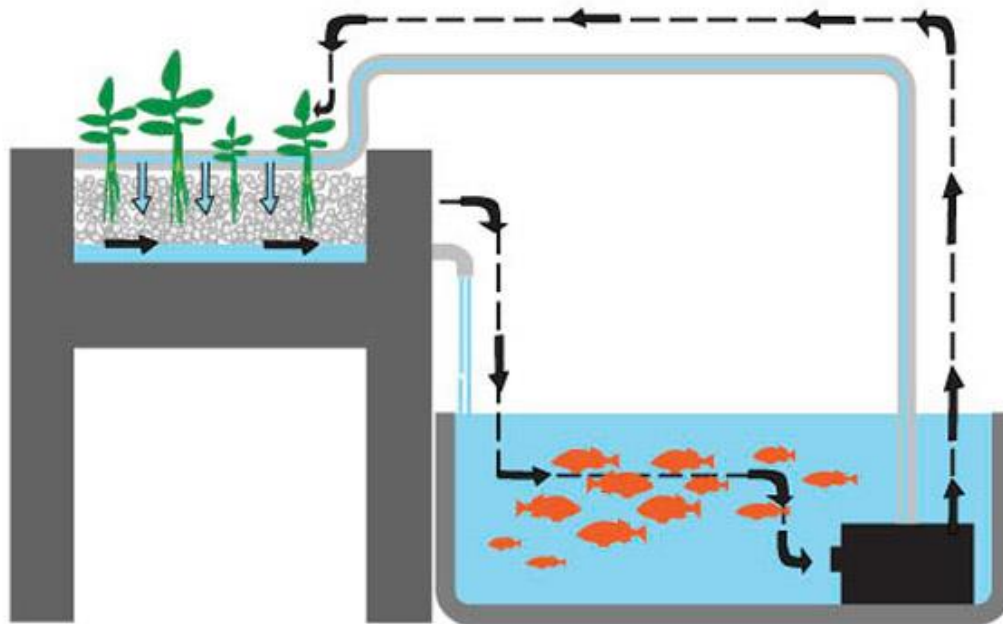


FIGURE 1 VEGETABLES GROW IN WATER (WITHOUT SOIL) --- NUTRIENTS SUPPLIED BY FISH

Zero waste

The farm uses the sunlight that shines on it and the rain that falls on it fully. As much rain water as possible is stored. The rest is sunken into the ground so it becomes part of our ground water. This avoids storm drain overflow, which is a problem that not only taxes the city's infrastructure, but also brings nutrients and other pollutants into our harbor increasing algae blooms, thus rendering the harbor unsuitable for marine life and for human recreation. All organic byproducts of the farm are composted and used in the farm.

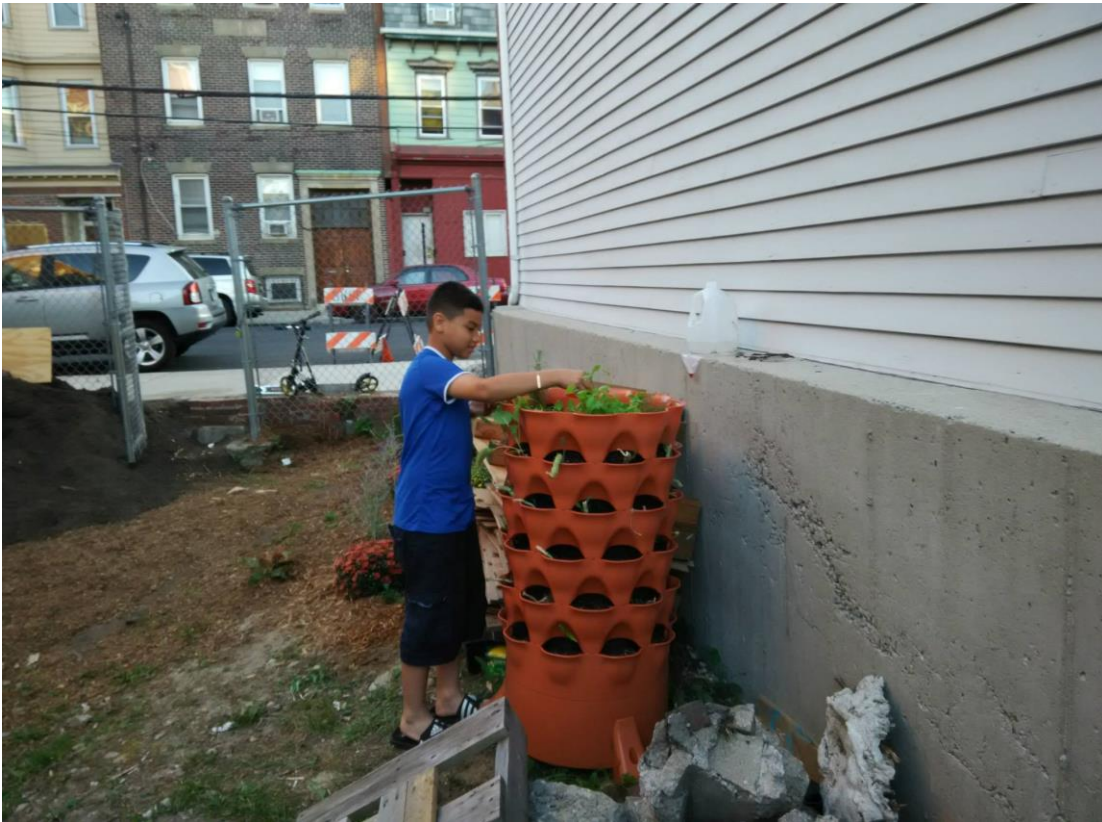


FIGURE A YOUNG MAN ADDING KITCHEN WASTE TO THE PLANT POWER, WHERE EARTHWORMS WILL COMPOST IT.

Communal space, work, and rewards

Eastie Farm does not assign divided spaces to individuals for them to do whatever they please with. The entire space is owned and operated by the community. Someone may plant a peach tree today, and someone totally different may enjoy the fruits of that tree several years from now. People attend to whatever needs attention; and harvest whatever is ready.



FIGURE VOLUNTEERS WORKING AT THE FARM



FIGURE FAMILY WORKING ON A RAISED BED



FIGURE MASSPORT'S NELSON WAS SO IMPRESSED WITH WHAT HE SAW AT THE FARM, HE CAME IN TO TAKE A CLOSER LOO



FIGURE A VOLUNTEER'S FRIEND COMES TO VISIT



FIGURE OWNER OF A NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENT TAKES PRIDE IN EASTIE FARM



FIGURE NEIGHBORS COME TO VISIT

Fight climate change and pollution

Eastie Farm contributes towards both mitigation of, and adaption to climate change. Just by virtue of being a low-energy, low-carbon alternative to other options for the land (such as commercial and residential building) it reduces the ongoing energy consumption that the space would have otherwise incurred. It produces food locally, which means that much food does not have to travel in trucks from far-away places, emitting carbon in the process. By educating people how to work together and grow food, it creates a resilient community that can adapt to the inevitable results of climate change. It sinks rain water, thereby making it possible to grow food during droughts imposed by climate change, while also avoiding dead zones in the ocean. Excess rain can cause flood in an overly developed neighborhood. By being an open space that's engineered to sink rain water, Eastie Farm saves the surroundings from flooding.



FIGURE A RAIN GARDEN -- FED BY RAIN WATER RUNOFF FROM THE STREET

Activate streetscape

Eastie farm turns heads. The colorful and diverse flower beds, the green background, the artwork both up front and in the back, invites passersby. People are drawn to walk in, sit in the chairs, put their feet up, and soak in the greenery and the art. The open space provides relief.



FIGURE A WELCOMING LOOK

Respect neighbors

Eastie Farm is founded on the principle of eco-consciousness. Neighbors are part of the ecosystem that the farm exists in. Neighbors' rooftops are water-catchment areas for the farm. Eastie Farm is in constant touch with the neighbors, educating itself not only of their needs and concerns, but of their wishes and dreams as well. Eastie farm is in the good books of all immediate neighbors, who have attended planning meetings and expressed good will towards the farm. Young children of neighbors also participate in the farm workdays. Neighbors provide additional water when needed, and keep an eye on the farm.



FIGURE NEIGHBORS OF THE FARM AT THE FARM

Engage Community

Volunteer work days

Volunteer work days happen regularly. All community members are welcome. Volunteers are told what to bring, and given guidance to operate safely, while learning and enjoying the experience of gardening.



FIGURE PEOPLE HARD AT WORK



FIGURE LEARNING TO USE THE BROADFORK



FIGURE SHOPPING CARTS CAN BE USED FOR CLEANING TOO

Integration with schools

Schools in East Boston, as elsewhere in the country, have room for community activities in education. **Excel Academy**, for instance, has an enrichment program, which allows students to choose from a variety of extra-curricular experiences such as community gardens and scouting. Eastie Farm is plugged into such programs in East Boston schools

Community workshops and walkthroughs

Workshops are offered on specific topics such as composting, rain garden setup, solar panel installation, etc. For such workshops, the public are invited. Public may watch, ask questions, and assist the experts as needed. In addition, defined tasks may be assigned to teams of the visitors.

Public walkthroughs are offered by the garden in-charge at scheduled times and by appointment. The entire farm is covered at a high-level and questions answered.

Collaboration

Eastie Farm collaborates with several organizations in East Boston and in the Greater Boston area. Following is a list of such organizations:

- La Sanghita Café: Collaborating on 'Food is Medicine'



FIGURE A SALAD MADE WITH RADISH SHOOTS FROM THE GARDEN



FIGURE 2 AT LA SANGHITA AFTER A WORK DAY



FIGURE MAKING OF THE SALAD



FIGURE ENJOYING A NICE LUNCH AT LA SANGHITA AFTER THE WORK DAY

- Zumix: Collaborating on teaching as part of the radio program



FIGURE ZUMIX (BRITTANY) AT THE EASTIE FARM PLANNING MEETING



FIGURE 3 ZUMIX (MADELINE) AT THE EASTIE FARM WORK DAY

- NOAH



FIGURE NOAH AT EASTIE FARM

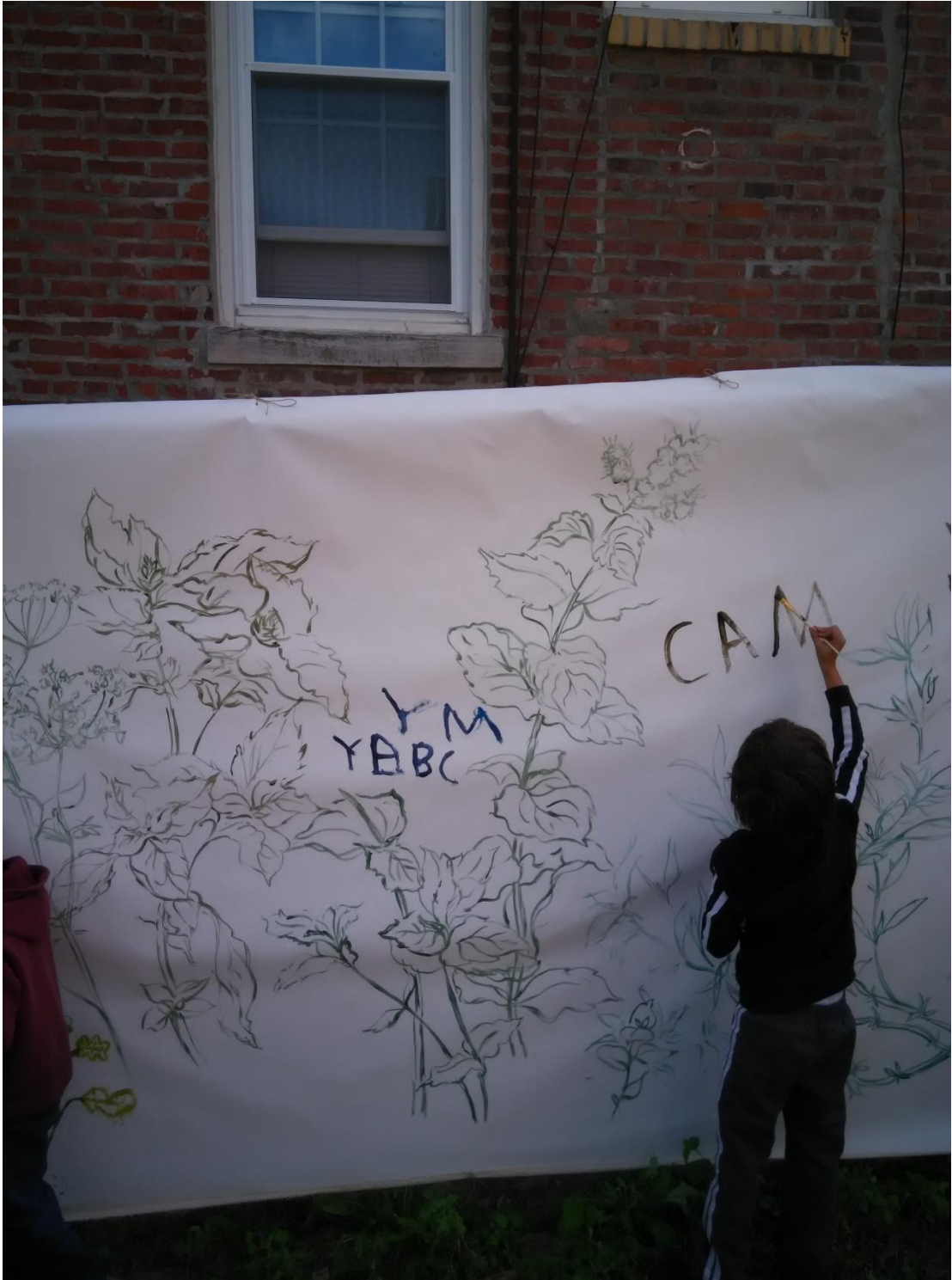
- Boston Food Forest Coalition



FIGURE ORION (BFFC) WITH KAREN (RESTORING ROOTS) AT EASTIE FARM

- Individual local artists







Besides the above, Eastie Farm had potential for collaboration with the following organizations as well:

- East Boston Neighborhood Health Center
- YMCA (Ashley Street Teaching Kitchen)
- Harbor Arts

Social Media Presence

Eastie Farm is present on Facebook, twitter, and Instagram.

Business Plan

Operational Model

Eastie Farm is in the process of becoming a non-profit organization, comprised of a board and officers, and governed by a system of bylaws. The board will be responsible for overall strategy and fundraising. The officers will be responsible for the operations of the organization, but any specific officer can be given any larger responsibility chosen by the board at its discretion. Being a non-profit organization also qualifies Eastie Farm for external funding, and makes general interactions and transactions with other entities formalized.

Eastie Farm will shoot for full funding for the ultimate vision. However, based on the funding and local resources available, even if they are limited, Eastie Farm can be a fully functional space that grows food, engages community, and teaches ecological values. The following cascading levels of infrastructure can be set up according to the funds available:

- A hoophouse
- A greenhouse
- A hoophouse + a greenhouse
- A passive greenhouse
- A solar-powered greenhouse
- A freightfarm plus a solar-powered greenhouse

The yields will be accordingly higher (as you go down the above list).

Similarly, the farm can operate with a part time farmer or a fulltime farmer, or two fulltime farmers. As more resources become available, experts can be brought to offer lectures and workshops on topics of specific and high interest relevant to the mission of the farm.

Funding Strategy

Eastie Farm has three potential sources of funding:

1. Classes
2. Produce Sales
3. External funding

Classes: Classes will be about gardening, ecology, climate change mitigation and adaptation, cooking, sustainable and regenerative farming, renewable energy, and nutrition.

Produce sale: A portion of the produce that grows in the farm will be sold. The intention is to make this as affordable as possible. This sale may take the form of a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).

External funding: As a non-profit organization that benefits the community, Eastie Farm is eligible for support in cash and kind. **East Boston Foundation** is one prospective source of funding. **The City of Boston** itself is a source of funding and support because Eastie Farm is in line with the mayor's wish for "big, bold" ideas, as it creates an informed and resilient community. Various private organizations, including banks, have funds allocated towards food justice, social justice, environmental justice, land conservation, and innovation. The **East Boston Neighborhood Health Center** is interested in holistic health practices which include good diet, and is therefore an ally and supporter in this venture.

Here is a list of several potential funders:

- New England Grassroots Environment Fund
- Trustees of Reservations (Boston Natural Areas Network is now part of it)
- East Boston Foundation
- Urban Farming Institute
- Boston Food Forest Coalition
- Boston College (and other educational institutions)
- Jeffries Point Neighborhood Association
- Neighborhood of Affordable Housing
- The Food Project
- Massport
- Boston Latin School

The three sources of funds will be utilized in a fashion that is

- in line with the guiding principles of Eastie Farm, and
- feasible to implement given the resources available at any given time, and
- necessary to sustain the farm

The vision of Eastie Farm is to operate as a self-sustaining organization to the extent possible, so it can be autonomous and true to its motives of social justice and ecological justice.

Site Design

