

# Edible Queens: The Blog

MAY 25, 2011 · 3:17 PM

## Inside the Five-Borough Farm Project



Urban farmers sharing ideas at a citywide workshop hosted by the Design Trust for Public Spa

There's a fantastic organization based here in New York City that might be under your radar, the Design ' Space. The interesting work they do is in systematically examining, by pulling together the right group of and issues around shared environments, and then raising public awareness of those findings. You may recent, high-profile projects: *Taxi 07*, exploring ideas for a possible re-design of the City's taxi fleet, whic recent "Taxi of Tomorrow" contest, and *Made in Midtown*, a study of the importance of the garment dist creative and economic activity, supported by fashion industry leaders Tim Gunn, Isaac Mizrahi and Dian



Spring planting at the Community Plot of Astoria's Two Coves Garden

One of the Design Trust's currently developing projects is the *Five Borough Farm: The Future of Farmir City*, an effort to evaluate the collective impact of the City's diverse community of urban farmers, to voice and to assist the City in developing policy that addresses the needs of our farming community.

It goes without saying, especially to readers of *Edible Queens*, that there is much innovation and initiative taking place across the City and right here in Queens. For example, Greens for Queens, run by the First P of Newtown, grows produce specifically for use in local food banks. The Agricultural Program of the John School is 94 years old, and the Pembroke Avenue Community Garden of Little Neck has been in continuous operation. There are no less than five community farms in Jamaica. And, the Two Coves Garden in Astoria is so popular it has a long waiting list for participants. All across New York City the movement is developing rhizomatically, and with these activities, there isn't yet a citywide plan to support the industry's impact.



new beds for the Community Plot of Astoria's Two Coves Garden

So, the Design Trust did two things. First, they engaged principal players in the field, including the NYC Urban Gardening Coalition; Just Food, a collaborative volunteer effort to promote issues around holistic nutritious agriculture; and Added Value, dedicated to the sustainable development of Red Hook by educating a new generation of young leaders, and others. To produce the full study, the Design Trust brought on Rupal Sanghvi, of Health Impact Fund, to quantify and measure the impact of urban agriculture on the City and its residents, and Nevin Cohen, an expert and Chair of Environmental Studies at the New School, who will evaluate the existing agricultural landscape and identify new opportunities.



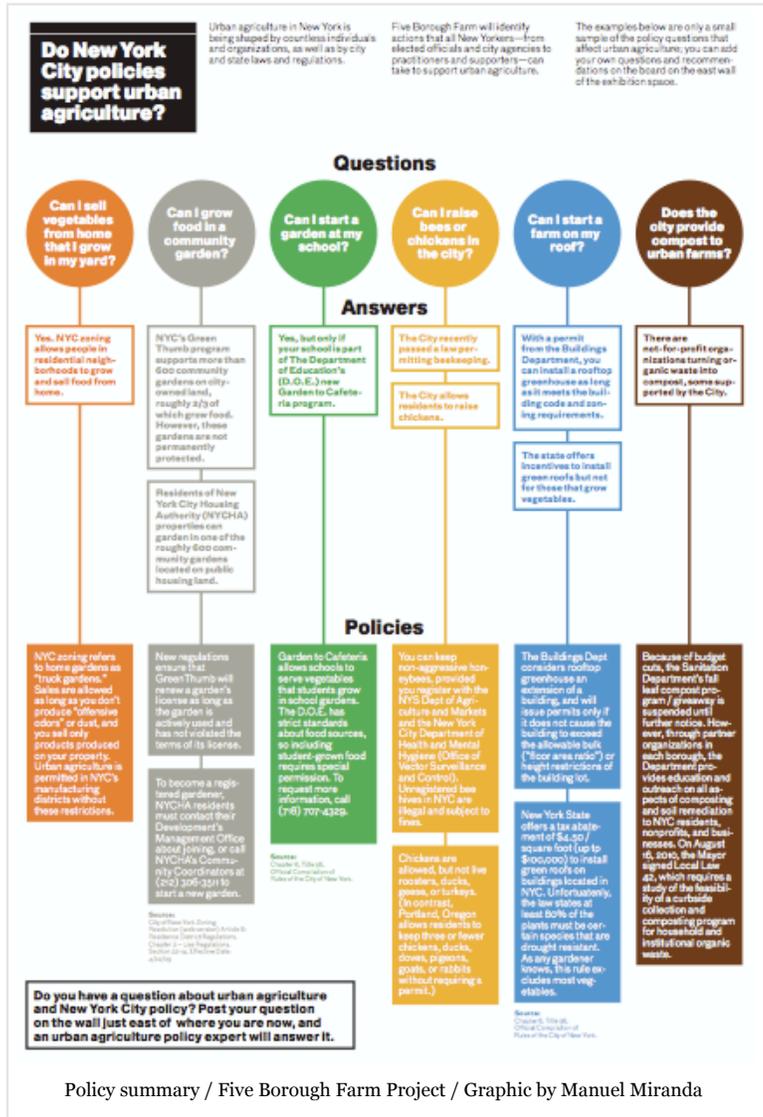
Greens for Queens Urban Farm at the First Presbyterian Church of Newtown

Second, they held a citywide workshop bringing together organizers of school-based farms, gardens on N.Y.C. Housing Authority grounds, professional agricultural operations, non-profit community gardens, and independent growers. As you can imagine, the expressed goals of these diverse parties vary, including making fresh produce available in underserved communities where there aren't good supermarkets; growing produce for commercial use and thus creating jobs; educating children about nutrition, health, and where their food comes from; keeping storm water out of the sewers, and other environmental goals; and others, much of which, they found, is about social justice. What all the farmers said they needed was a hub of information and resources, especially for initiatives that are just getting started. They needed growing techniques, supplies, and financial support, and guidance in understanding municipal regulations.

The City certainly encourages urban farming. Did you know, for example, that anyone can sell produce grown on their property? Or that you can keep bees and raise chickens right here in the City? However, there's definitely a need for improvement in public policy. While the City offers a tax abatement against the costs to install a roof garden,

your roof can sustain it according to Code), the plants you grow must be drought-resistant, thereby disqualifying many common vegetables. So, the goals of the Project are to close those gaps.

Stay tuned! The Design Trust for Public Space will reveal its findings at the end of the year. As growers face the challenges and rewards of providing food grown here in Queens, improving their communities, feeding their families, and affecting their environments, and educating their children, it's great that an organization like the Trust is studying the movement on a macro level, focusing on what's possible for a healthier future. Learn more about the Design Trust for Public Space [here](#).



Thanks to Jerome Chou, Director of Programs, Design Trust for Public Space

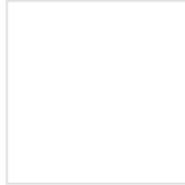
—Written by A

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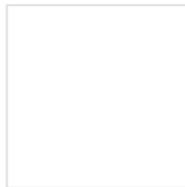
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## One Response to *Inside the Five-Borough Farm Project*

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**Cindy**

May 25, 2011 at 4:38 PM

Use “rhizomatically” in a sentence? Ok: My admiration for Anne’s blogs grows rhizomatically as well as of like Kudzu!

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