

RECIRCULATING FARMS COALITION, NEW ORLEANS FOOD & FARM NETWORK TO BUILD INNOVATIVE URBAN FARMING AND FOOD CENTER

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New Orleans, LA — Today, the [Recirculating Farms Coalition](#) and the [New Orleans Food and Farm Network](#) announced they are building a new Urban Farming and Food Center in downtown New Orleans that joins innovative water-based recirculating farming with traditional soil-based growing. The organizations recently received major grants for the project from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation and the Claneil Foundation, as well as other donations. The Center will be a hub for research, education, training, and community interaction on growing, marketing, and preparing healthy food in the city and beyond.

"We are so appreciative of all the support for this project," said Marianne Cufone, Executive Director of the [Recirculating Farms Coalition](#). "The new Center is all about empowering people to grow healthy fresh food for themselves and for sale at affordable prices to their neighbors and communities, creating green jobs and preparing delicious, nutritious meals. We expect it to be a catalyst for personal and community farms and local food here in New Orleans and all around the country."

The core of the Center will be a farm that employs cutting-edge growing techniques for urban settings, including recirculating hydroponics and aquaponics. Recirculating hydroponics uses continuously recycled water with nutrients in place of soil to grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Recirculating aquaponics combines hydroponics (growing plants) with aquaculture (raising fish). Both systems are ideal for cities because they can be built indoors, on rooftops, or on oddly shaped and even paved lots. The Center will also have a community garden, with raised soil beds and fruit trees.

Sanjay Kharod, Executive Director of the [New Orleans Food and Farm Network](#), explained, "We want to incubate neighborhood-led projects and the regional food economy by working at all scales, from backyards, to city lots, to a network of commercial farms, with a goal of promoting food justice. The new Center is integral to all of this — as a training center, a hybrid model of a joint market and community farm, and a showcase of sustainable alternatives in urban agriculture. This is only the beginning of what we can achieve together."

While New Orleans is famous for its unique cuisine, fresh healthy food is not always accessible and affordable for everyone. Louisiana has the second highest obesity rate in the country and New Orleans is one of the worst food deserts. The new Center has plans to help change this. The Center's farm will source fresh food to local distributors, restaurants and grocers, as well as direct to consumers through an on-site farmers' market. It will also offer a wide range of gardening, farming, and farm-to-table cooking classes, programs for youth and seniors, and demonstrations, lectures, and presentations. The Center will host special events too, like harvest dinners and private parties, at its new space.

In addition to funding, the project has drawn much praise, excitement and in-kind support.

"The [Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry](#) is excited about the creation of this urban farming and food center," said Commissioner Mike Strain. "We plan to work collaboratively with the Recirculating Farms Coalition and New Orleans Food and Farm Network on this project that will educate the community and promote sustainable urban agriculture in Louisiana and beyond."

"[Tulane City Center](#) is excited about this innovative project that continues to build a strong and just local food system, and we look forward to working as a team to ensure it is carefully designed and beautifully executed," said Maurice Cox, the new director of Tulane University's renown community design program, the [Tulane City Center](#), which will provide planning expertise for the new Center.

"This Center is an amazing collaborative effort that will inspire sustainable urban farming and healthy eating and lifestyles," Cufone said.

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The Recirculating Farms Coalition is a collaborative group of farmers, educators, non-profit organizations and many others committed to building local sources of healthy, accessible food, through eco-efficient farms using clean, recycled water. We believe these recirculating farms can create stable green jobs and supply sustainably grown food — fruits, vegetables, herbs and humanely-raised seafood — in diverse communities nationwide, and someday, worldwide. The Recirculating Farms Coalition is headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana.
<http://www.recirculatingfarms.org>

Through public education, training, and assistance in creating food-growing gardens in backyards, schools, churches, and even abandoned lots, NOFFN helps to “grow the growers” – those who have become community leaders in advancing food security. A significant focus for the organization is developing sustainable, successful farmers and ranchers in low-income and socially disadvantaged communities of the greater New Orleans area.
<http://www.NOFFN.org>