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CITY OF NEW ORLEANS CELEBRATES GROUNDBREAKING OF INNOVATIVE URBAN FARMING CENTER – GROWING LOCAL NOLA

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New Orleans, LA -Today, the Recirculating Farms Coalition and the New Orleans Food and Farm Network broke ground on a unique community farm and food center in New Orleans, “Growing Local NOLA”. Amid much celebrating, city and state officials, along with others offered support, congratulatory remarks and well wishes for the future.

Councilwoman LaToya Cantrell welcomed Growing Local NOLA to her district. She said, "Growing Local NOLA has been a long time in coming. The Center's home in Central City could not be more perfect and I am thrilled to see it come to life. Its public areas to garden, working farm, and spaces for community gatherings and educational programs will change the landscape of local food access."

“We’re excited to see Growing Local NOLA take root in our city,” said Dr. Karen DeSalvo, Health Commissioner for the City of New Orleans. “Increasing access to fresh, affordable food is vital to improving the health of our residents and is one of the goals for the City’s Fit NOLA partnership. This project – with its focus on helping people learn to grow, market and prepare more fresh and healthy foods – will be a tremendous asset to New Orleans and beyond.”

The core of the Center will be a working farm that showcases cutting-edge, yet affordable, water, space and energy efficient growing techniques, like recirculating hydroponics. These systems use constantly recycled nutrient-rich water in place of soil to grow plants (including fruits, vegetables, flowers, and herbs). Products will be offered to local distributors and restaurants, and directly to consumers through a nearby green market, and special events like a farmers’ market.

Louisiana Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain, D.V.M. said, “Growing Local NOLA will be a key education and demonstration facility for urban farming, particularly water-based growing methods. We support creative ways to grow more produce and look forward to working with this new food and farm center.”

There will be a wide range of programs at the Center like personal gardening, commercial farming, and farm-to-table cooking classes, fitness workshops, youth and senior events, lectures, and community discussions related to food, health and more. The Center will also host a community garden, with raised soil beds and fruit trees

“Growing Local NOLA is an amazing collaborative effort that will inspire sustainable urban farming and healthy eating and lifestyles,” said Marianne Cufone, Executive Director of Recirculating Farms Coalition. “We’re thrilled to be breaking ground on our new Central City home, with so much support from the community locally and partners nationally. This Center will be all about empowering people to grow healthy fresh food for themselves, their neighbors and communities, creating green jobs, and preparing delicious, nutritious meals.”

Working with other existing programs, Growing Local NOLA plans to help tackle the city’s label as a food desert and the state's high obesity rate - the second worst in the country - by providing healthy fresh affordable food and training in urban farming.

“One of Growing Local NOLA ‘s missions is food justice in the city of New Orleans, but will reach well beyond.” Said Sanjay Kharod, Executive Director of the New Orleans Food and Farm Network. “We hope the Center will become a model for others to support creative, local sustainable agriculture efforts.”

The organizations recently received major grants for the project from, among others, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation and the Claneil Foundation.