

America's First Sustainable Urban Agrihood Is Growing in Detroit

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This week, the Michigan Urban Farming Initiative (MUFI) revealed its plans for the first Sustainable Urban Agrihood in the North End.

Wait, an agrihood? It's an alternative neighborhood growth model, positioning agriculture as the centerpiece of a mixed-use development. There are some agrihoods around the country, but in rural areas. This is the first within a city.

MUFI's agrihood spans three acres on Brush Street, a few blocks up from East Grand Boulevard. MUFI runs a successful two-acre garden, a 200-tree fruit orchard, and a children's sensory garden. They provide free produce to the neighborhood, churches, food pantries, and more.

The big part of the announcement was the plans to renovate a three-story, 3,200-square-foot vacant building that MUFI had bought at auction years back. This renovation and more is a collaboration between MUFI, Sustainable Brands, BASF, GM, and Herman Miller in an effort to create an energy efficient, sustainable Community Resource Center (CRC), which should be finished in May 2017. GM and Herman Miller are providing repurposed office furniture and

supplies for the CRC. Integrity Building Group in Detroit is doing the architectural design and construction.



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The Community Resource Center will include office space for MUFI, event and meeting space, and two commercial kitchens on the first floor. A healthy cafe will be located on vacant land next to the CRC.

Tyson Gersh, MUFI President and co-founder, said at the announcement that they want to be the first LEED certified platinum building in Detroit.

Also in the works for the agrihood: the restoration of a house for student intern housing, a two-bedroom shipping container home, and work on turning a fire-damaged home (in which only the basement is left) into a water harvesting cistern to irrigate the garden.

Here's a glimpse inside the agrihood and inside the building which will house the CRC.
