



Cleveland food desert making a bid for better fare: editorial

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By [The Plain Dealer Editorial Board](#)

Used to be the only lettuce on the streets of Cleveland's Central neighborhood was the kind that bought trouble. But the sustainability strategy championed by Mayor Frank Jackson and embraced by grass-roots activists and well-heeled nonprofits has seeded this urban wasteland with the real green.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are taking root in a food desert.

The most ambitious project involves the Cleveland Foundation's plan to build a hydroponic greenhouse on a 5 1/2-acre parcel that will not just grow produce but also produce jobs.

The \$15 million Green City Growers Cooperative will employ 35 to 42 people, many of whom live in the neighborhood.

The private, for-profit business is based on two other successful community projects the foundation funded: Evergreen Laundry Cooperative and Ohio Cooperative Solar.

The proposed deal, still in the land negotiation phase, will join two other nutritious initiatives that have sprouted in the hard-hit 'hood. The Central Community Co-Op opened its doors this month, and offers members not simply a discount on fresh food but access to free dental and medical services. And the Thackeray Garden Group is turning a vacant half-acre site into a fruit orchard.

There is also talk of transforming five acres at East 55th Street and Woodland Avenue into an East Side version of the West Side Market.

This commitment to go from grit to green offers a healthier future not just for neighborhoods but for the local economy.

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