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# The Food Project Co

— Catalina Aycardi and Ben Whitaker —

*Community Programs & Farm Assistants Fall 2020*

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# The Organization

**Mission:** The Food Project's mission is to create a thoughtful and productive community of youth and adults from diverse backgrounds who work together to build a sustainable food system. Our community produces healthy food for residents of the city and suburbs, provides youth leadership opportunities, and inspires and supports others to create change in their own communities.



**The Food Project**

**Youth.**

**Food.**

**Community.**

# The Dudley Neighborhood

- ❖ The Dudley neighborhood includes parts of Dorchester as well as Roxbury.
- ❖ There is a significant population of Cape Verdean families
- ❖ Due to racially discriminatory housing policies, of the land in Dudley was vacant and subjected to illegal dumping by the early 1980s
- ❖ Dudley residents responded by creating the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI).
- ❖ By working together, DSNI and TFP were able to utilize the vacant lots in West Cottage and Langdon Street to serve the community. These vacant lots were turned into an urban farm.



# West Cottage & Langdon Street Farms



- ❖ The Food Project uses 2 acres of previously vacant land in the Dudley Neighborhood.
- ❖ The land is used to grow food for the Dudley neighborhood, as well as to teach youth about urban agriculture.

## Co-Op Responsibilities at the Farms

- ❖ Planting and seeding crops
- ❖ Weeding and tending to growing crops
- ❖ Harvesting food for farmers' markets
- ❖ Putting compost on beds
- ❖ Facilitating youth programs related to urban agriculture



# Youth Programs

## Root Crew: July - August

- ❖ Root Crew is TFP's most advanced youth program.
- ❖ Members have been part on TFP's two previous youth programs, where they gain valuable skills related to urban farming and food justice.
- ❖ The co-op student was responsible for delegating tasks, educate youth on the importance of the task being accomplished, making sure farm equipment was being used correctly and safely, etc.



## City Sprouts:

- ❖ An organization that focuses on giving youth the opportunity to learn and grow through hands-on work in garden/farms.
- ❖ Co-op helped run an afterschool program at West Cottage for a group of seven 6th-8th graders from Dudley area
- ❖ Program focused on giving kids valuable exposure to farming and healthy foods
- ❖ Youth helped with various tasks such as harvesting, weeding, and planting

# The Dudley Greenhouse



What it used to  
look like



What it looks  
like now



### About the space:

- ❖ Was an illegal chop shop before DSNI took over the site and built a greenhouse
- ❖ The greenhouse works in partnership with the Greenhouse Advisory Committee. This is an elected body of neighborhood residents.
- ❖ The Dudley Greenhouse is a 10,000 square foot facility which enables TFP to better serve the community.
- ❖ The Greenhouse acts as a resource center for thousands of residents. People come to the greenhouse looking for seedlings, compost, gardening tips, etc.

### Co-Op Responsibilities in the Greenhouse:

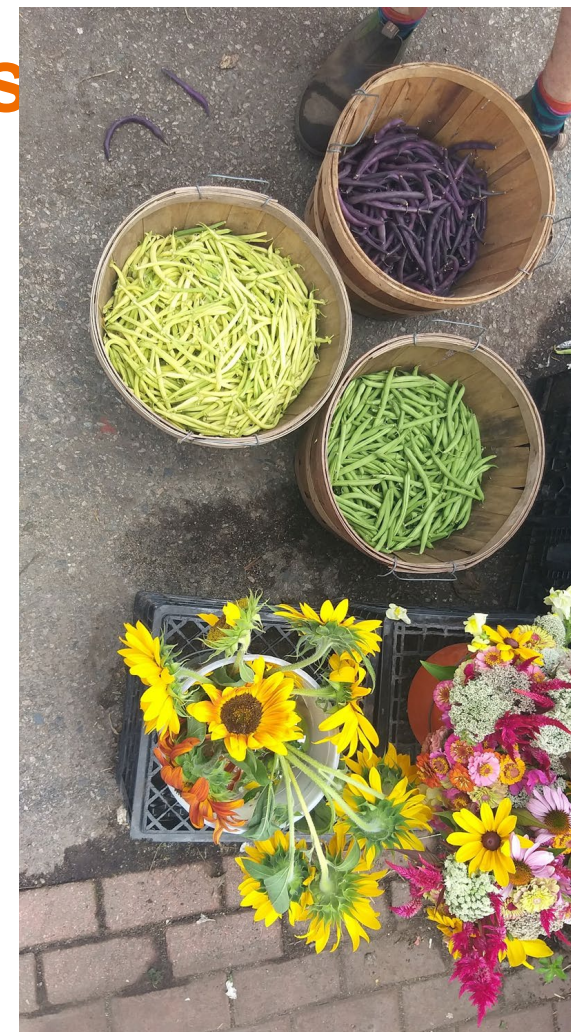
- ❖ Help people access the resources they are looking for when they come to the greenhouse
- ❖ Planting, tending to, and harvesting crops
- ❖ Nurturing seedlings
- ❖ Sorting and cleaning veggies from the farms





# Farmers' Markets

- ❖ TFP strategically locates their farmers' markets in areas with low access to food.
  - ❖ Dudley Farmer's Market- Cat
  - ❖ Ashmont Farmers' Market- Ben
- ❖ Both markets accept SNAP/HIP, P - EBT, Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupons and WIC as payment.
- ❖ Popular foods Tongue of Fire shell beans, assorted hot peppers, callaloo, East Asian cooking greens
- ❖ Co-Op Responsibilities: setup and clean up, communication with customers bagging food, working the register, organize pre-orders, etc.





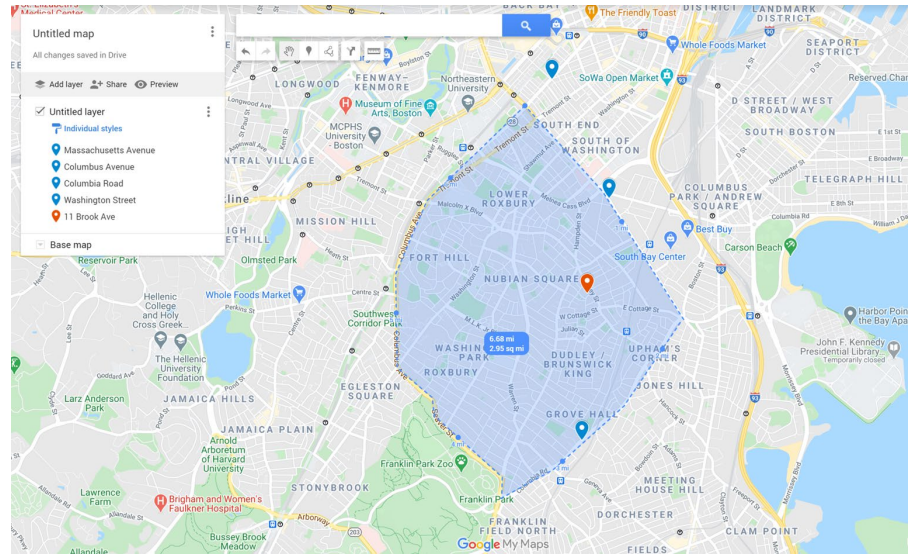
# Food Donations

- ❖ Following the farmer's markets, any food that did not get sold gets donated to several organizations in the Dudley neighborhood.
- ❖ This year, The Food Project's goal was to donate 70% of the food grown.
- ❖ Co-Op Responsibilities include:
  - ❖ Packing and sorting food to be donated
  - ❖ Deliver food to community organizations
  - ❖ Hand out donations at food distribution sites



# Winter Tasks

- ❖ Work at an urban farm is very seasonal. Most of the staff we worked with earlier in the co-op had left by mid-november as the farmer's markets stopped and the food production slowed.
- ❖ Greenhouse Tasks: the Dudley greenhouse is still running and producing some food. This includes: beets, turnips, greens, cucumbers, kale, etc.
  - ❖ Co-Ops are responsible for watering the remaining crops, planting, and harvesting.
- ❖ Research Project: Hunger Relief Mapping
  - ❖ The greenhouse will serve as a food distribution center from Jan - March due to the COVID-19 crisis.
  - ❖ Co-Ops are responsible for creating a comprehensive list and map of food distribution sites in the neighborhood.



# Our Expectations

- Ben:
  - Educate myself on food injustice
  - Learn the day to day of working at a farm
  - Meet others who are passionate about NGO work and food
  
- Cat:
  - Gain experience working in an urban farm
  - Connect with the community
  - Educate youth on the importance of food sovereignty and agriculture

# Challenges

- Ben:
  - Summer and Fall work days were extremely taxing on the body
  - Occasional customers at the markets caused stressful situations
  - First co-op, so I encountered some work week fatigue
  
- Cat:
  - Farming is a rewarding, but physically exhausting job
  - Not being able to work with youth as much as expected was disappointing
  - Due to COVID, there were fewer programs in the late fall/ winter, meaning that there was less work for the co -ops to do.

# Our Takeaways

- Ben

- Learned about a community so close yet so far from Northeastern students
- Met wonderful people throughout the semester
- Made me realize I want to work in non -profits
  - Given me more ideas as to what I want to do in my next co -op
  - Helped me understand what I want from a work environment

- Cat

- Learned about the importance of cultivating the mindset to work *with*, not just *for* the community.
- Gained a wider perspective of agriculture and the ways in which it can be brought into urban spaces.
- Learned about the challenges of a non-profit, and gained insight into how they operate.