

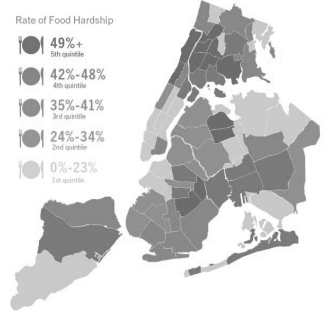
The **FOOD** Production of Space in NYC

Since the inception of NYCHA's Connected Communities program in 2018, the design of open space within public housing communities has been brought to focus as a key area to invest in. Already, through partnerships with public, private and non-profit organizations, NYCHA has invested over \$35 million dollars towards improving the open spaces of 46+ developments.

Reports like NYCHA's Open Space Masterplan have highlighted the necessity for shared spaces where community can grow and thrive. The Open Space Masterplan consisted of an in-depth study for 133 developments in the NYCHA portfolio. After completing an assesment of existing open space infrastructure, Nancy Owens Studio and Grain Collective looked to increase the connectivity and the liveability of NYCHA developments through a series of broad recommendations.

When we looked at these studies, we noticed that the existence of gardens was an asset which researchers paid careful attention to when evaluating the quality of facility conditions. Gardens serve not only an aesthetic function, but their maintenance also provides serious opportunities for community-building.

Additionally, in the face of increasing climate vulnerability, the environmentally-remediating potentials of green space are more important than ever.



In this design project, we want to introduce another intersectional lens of looking at gardens as strategic assets within public housing communities. As revealed by existing studies and demonstrated in the graphic featured on the left, the siting of NYCHA developments often aligns with the presence of food deserts and areas of high food vulnerability.

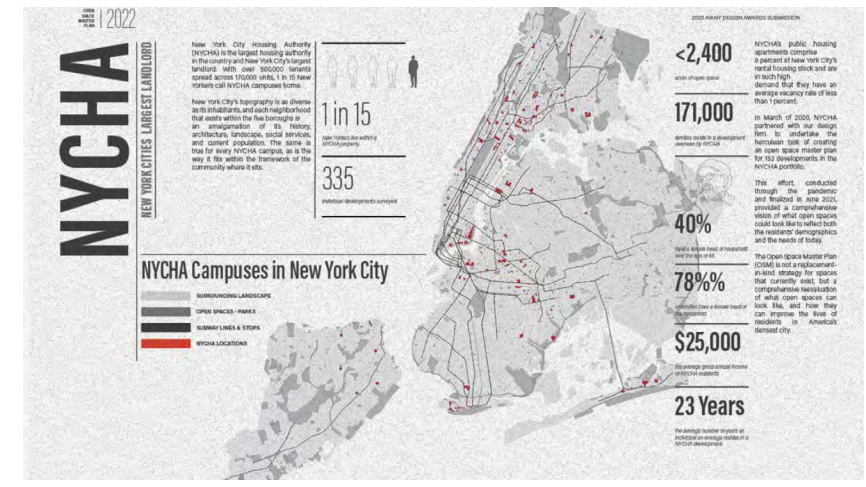
In recent years, we have observed the popping up of new democratic ideas of small-scale urban food production in the form of community gardens focused on growing edible perennials. Some examples that come to mind include the Beacon Food Forest in Seattle, Washington and Red Hook Farms in Brooklyn, New York with the latter example being a garden directly adjacent to NYCHA's very own Red Hook Houses.

We ask: what is the potential of NYCHA open spaces as a site for *food production*? How can open space be utilized as a material resource to alleviate the urban plight of food insecurity in areas of high vulnerability?

Within our project, we seek to study the potential for NYCHA gardens through three conceptual lenses. Using the Lefebvrian triad of spatial production to guide our analysis, we look at gardens through an idealised conceived production of space, actual lived production of space, and historic perceived production of space. The specific methods in which we conduct research within these frameworks are articulated below.

By conducting research within these conceptual frameworks, we hope to better understand what functions gardens fulfill for residents' everyday experiences today. We also hope to learn how gardens within NYCHA developments have evolved over time. We hope to ground our understanding of existing gardens and their lived social functions with our formal design analysis exploring the potentials of food production within open space.

By the end of the project, we hope to have a booklet (alongside other smaller deliverables outlined below) that looks at the past and present of resident gardens, while also proposing new future possibilities of food production within these spaces.



What are the (contemporary and past) social functions and material outputs of resident gardens in NYC?

How can we re-imagine open space as a community resource potentially capable of alleviating the existing urban plight of food insecurity, particularly in the context of NYCHA developments?

CONCEIVED

Our group will analyze open space as the material landscape in which food production can take place under ideal conditions.

Using the documented observations from the Open Space Master Plan and GIS data, we will first create a catalog inventory of all the open space plots adjacent to NYCHA developments-- identifying each open space shapes' name, adjacent NYCHA development, and area.

Next, using these shape layers, we will pose a series of comparative scenarios

placing scaled NYCHA development-adjacent open spaces in dialogue with other open spaces such as Central Park/ Red Hook Farms to contextualize scale and question the productive capacity of these spaces.

Lastly, with an idealized consideration of urban environmental conditions, we will research and propose a series of planting palettes that could be implemented in order to maximize food production within the spatial limitations (that we quantified in the earlier exercises) of NYCHA-adjacent plots of open space.

LIVED

Our group will look at how community and tenant gardens in proximity to NYCHA developments operate within the social fabric of their surrounding communities.

We will first make a selection of potential gardens to investigate in the city by researching the Open Space Masterplan and the Green Thumb program guide.

Next, we will reach out to stakeholders within these gardens to schedule and hold interviews where we will ask a series of questions in order to gain a better understanding of how gardens

are maintained through community collaboration, how knowledge is passed down over time, what these gardens mean for residents, etc.

Using these interviews, we hope to create a short film reflecting on the ongoing social function of these garden spaces.

We also envision creating a storybook visually representing through text and illustration the stories that we learn from our conversations with garden stakeholders.

PERCEIVED

Our group will look at the history of the typology of the resident gardens in New York City over time.

We will first research the various forms the resident-maintained garden has taken throughout New York history-- such as the tenant garden, intergenerational garden, community garden, etc. For this research, we will use existing and available literature.

Following our initial literature review familiarizing ourselves with the differing iterations of the resident garden over time, we will look to access specific archival

material documents relating to these gardens that we have researched. This may include NYCHA-sponsored tenant garden competition guides, garden maintenance pamphlets, etc. that we can find and obtain through a visit to the NYCHA archives.

Using this archival research material, we will assemble a timeline broadly examining the resident-maintained garden in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

We will also write and design a social history of resident gardens, supplemented with images provided through the archival material that we will have obtained.