

# NORC FARMS will:

- + activate older new yorkers and transform public housing with local agriculture
- + use urban agriculture to transform grass into socially, ecologically, economically productive space
- + plug into the existing social and institutional infrastructure
- + transform the tower in the park into the tower in the farm
- + achieve the city's stated "age-friendly" goals:

improve *social inclusion*, civic participation, and employment opportunities for older adults

increase availability and affordability of safe, appropriate *housing*

provide age-friendly *public spaces* and safe means for reaching them

ensure access to *health and social services* to support independent living  
Age Friendly NYC 2009

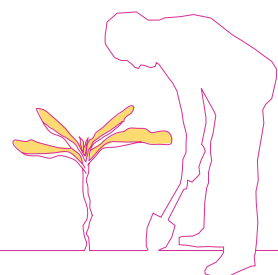


New York City has over 1.3 million people over the age of 60 - and this population is expected to grow by 50% in the next 25 years!



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*agriculture takes over the lawn, creating a space for intergenerational fun*



## Naturally Occurring Retirement Community FARMS

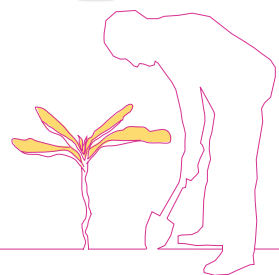
growing [older] in place *A naturally occurring retirement community (NORC) is a unique housing model that allows older adults to live in the community rather than an institutional setting. Age Friendly NYC 2009*



[premises] *Right now its easier to get tobacco in this neighborhood than it is to get a tomato.*

- + 1/3 of NORCS in NYC are in public housing projects
- + public housing towers in NYC are almost exclusively surrounded by grass enclosed by fences: this inaccessible inert space reinforces the social segregation that both the elderly and public housing resident experience.
- + there is little 'productive' public space within the projects: not only are the residents separated from the surrounding neighborhood, they are also without shared social space to create communities within.
- + public housing is often located in areas identified as food deserts, access to healthy food is a particular challenge for people with mobility issues, such as the elderly.
- + one of the primary impediments to urban agriculture in NYC is access to arable land
- + urban agriculture has great potential for community building, but needs a stable organization to facilitate it.

While the **utopian intentions** of the tower in the park haven't been realized, the physical infrastructure still has potential. NORC Farms transforms the swaths of poorly maintained grass, creating active social spaces, new connections to the exterior, and access to fresh healthy food.



*The engagement of older New Yorkers in environmental issues will promote their participation in the City's various "green" activities, allow them a greater degree of involvement within their own communities, and lead to involvement in other activities and social networks Age Friendly NYC.*

growing [older] in **place**



**inaccessible lawns**



**unactivated public spaces**



**food desert**



# [growing in place: a design strategy]

*The Department for the Aging (DFTA) will collaborate with NORCs across the City to ensure social services are being provided and to support additional services as needed. Age Friendly NYC 2009*

NORC Farms is an innovative strategy to create and cultivate farm plots AND social spaces within public housing complexes with senior populations.

**Flexible in nature**, it will be responsive to the particulars of each social and spatial context, developing programs and designs **calibrated to the local community**.

A core component will be a **creative partnership** established between teams of professionals and the NORCs or local senior centers. A landscape architect, a regional farmer, and a community program director will work collaboratively to SUPPORT, design and guide the NORC Farm process. Another core component will be a **kit-of-parts**: container greenhouses, raised planter boxes, tool sheds, will be available to the NORC Farm. The focus of the kit-of-parts will be a universal and age-friendly design.

## phase [1] farmfinder:

what can be cultivated?

identify open land at the site, and appropriate plant species for the group and location

## phase [2] seedling sites

make it visible and central

create the catalyst : identify social gathering areas that overlap planting zones to create spatial connections between NORC farmers and residents

## phase [3] plug in farming

be ambitious *and* precise

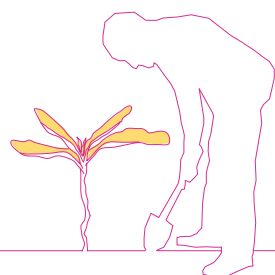
de-centralized farming plots will be encouraged to sprout throughout the complex

## phase [4] patchwork farming

farming goes viral

groups throughout the city and beyond can adopt the NORC Farm strategy, activating seniors and their communities

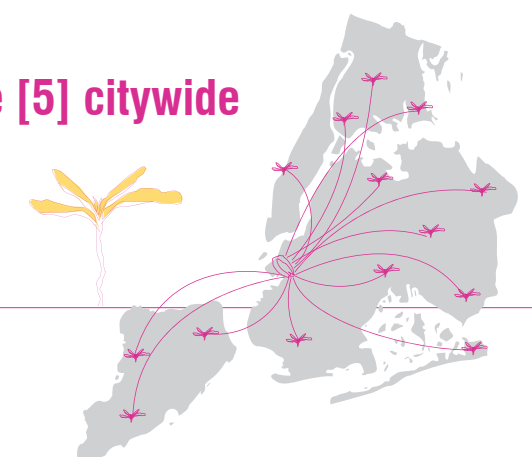
Phasing plans depict a case study of the Red Hook Houses.



A typical housing project block has on average 2 acres of open space

**growing [food] in place**

## phase [5] citywide





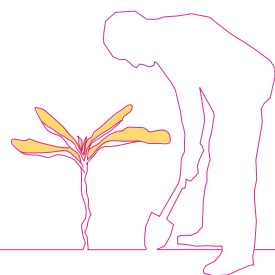
# [activated public spaces + year round growing]

*It's not just about growing food – it's about practices and how people form relationships, get comfortable with each other, and learn to communicate through really owning the food system. Will Allen growing power*

NORC Farms will be a catalyst for **social engagement** for a demographic that is often left to the margins of public space and social society. NORC FARMS locates seniors at the center, tapping into their **wisdom and experience**, and creating a structure for their **knowledge** to be passed on. The vision is to see senior citizens take down the wrought iron fences, root up the vast lawns, and locate farms in highly visible areas near entrances and pathways so that passerbys will **stop to chat** – what are you doing? what is ready to eat? when is it going to rain? – conversing, engaging, and activating their minds and bodies. New plug-in greenhouses will be accessible from the lobbies, creating a year round growing environment, warm hangout areas, and a view of the fields.



*new plug-in greenhouses transform building entrances and create year round space for plants and people*



Public spaces should be within a 3 block walk to support the ease-of-access goals outlined in *AgeFriendly NYC* guidelines.  
growing [older] in **place**



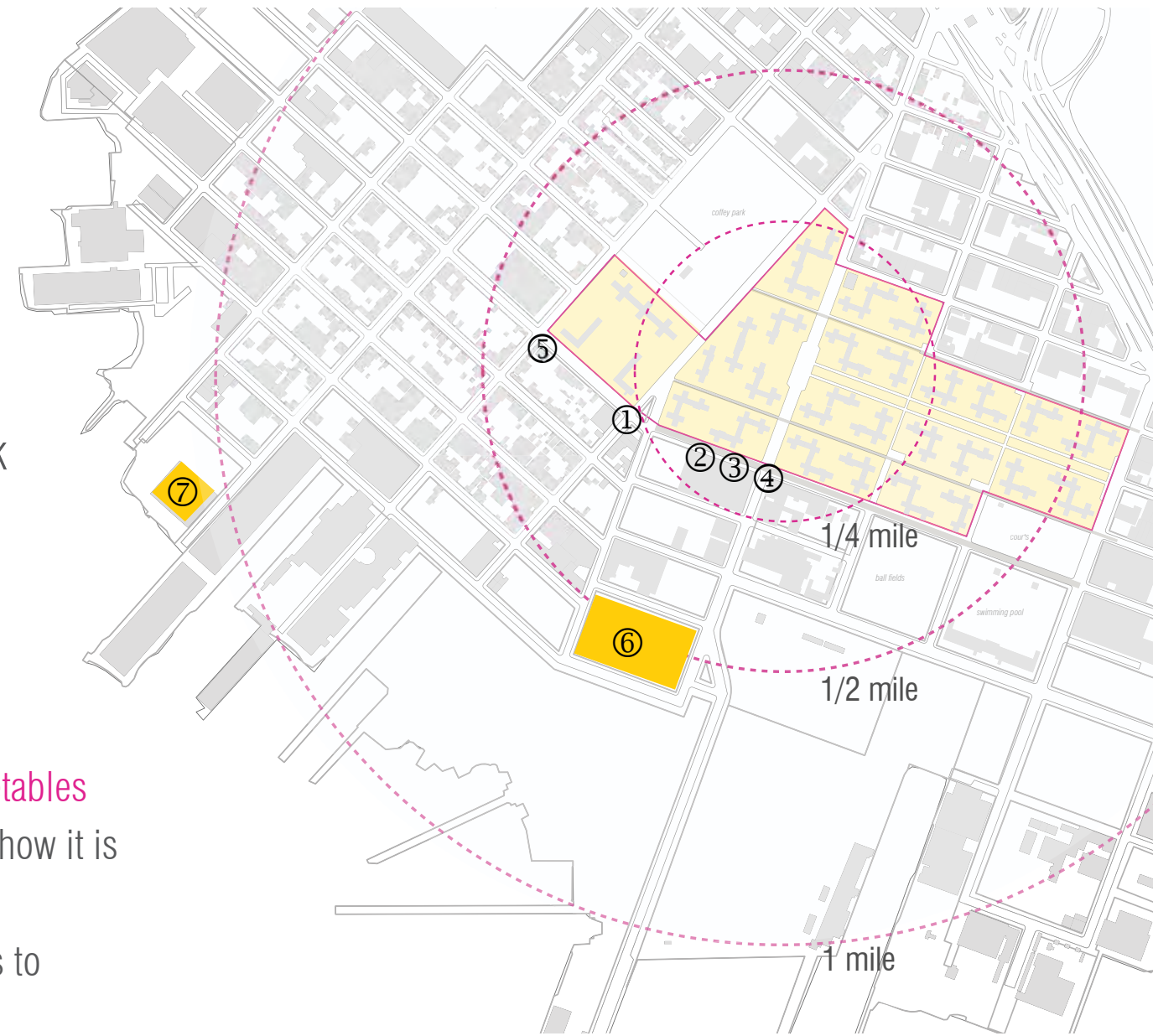
# [access to healthy and affordable food]

*The biggest crisis in our food system is the lack of access to good, healthy, fresh food, for people living in cities, particularly in low-income communities. Urban agriculture work is one of the most powerful solutions, because it brings food directly into the communities. Anna Lappé*

Older people have a limited walking distance, and suffer disproportionately from a lack of access to healthy food. Within 1/4 mile of the center of the Red Hook Houses there are fast food options, liquor stores, and poor quality grocers. This lack of fresh, healthy, and local food is unfortunately a typical condition affecting public housing projects, with particular challenges for their elderly residents.

NORC Farms will support increased health and nutrition of NYC's aging population:

- + creating direct access to seasonal, **fresh, and culturally appropriate vegetables**
- + creating a **connection** between food, how it is grown, where it is grown.
- + encouraging local stores and vendors to carry **higher quality** goods
- + activating natural muscle movement [as opposed to exercise]
- + opening up food based opportunities for **micro-businesses** to be developed, such as canning + pickling
- + growing food **organically**



- US Fried Chicken 1
- Associated Supermarket 2
- Red Hook Deli 3
- Liquor Store 4
- Wolcott Deli 5
- Added Value Red Hook Farm 6
- Fairway Supermarket 7

**good food!** ■



the median income for a single senior citizen in New York is \$10,450 a year  
growing **[food]** in place

