



Dudley Neighbors, Inc.

Dudley Greenhouse

Background & Context:

In 2004, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) acquired the site of an abandoned automotive garage. The property was heavily contaminated and required significant environmental remediation. At the same time, the Massachusetts Highways Department (MHD) settled a lawsuit with the EPA and was required to undertake a supplemental environmental project. In lieu of paying a fine, MHD financed the \$1.5 million Dudley Greenhouse project. Increasing access to healthy food options had long been an emphasis of DSNI.

Implementation:

A series of community discussions led to the idea of redeveloping the site as a community-owned, commercial greenhouse. A concrete cap was placed over the contaminated soil, with greenhouse production occurring in raised planter beds. The site is now owned by Dudley Neighbors, Inc., the CLT subsidiary of DSNI. Half the greenhouse is designated for commercial agriculture and leased at nominal rates to The Food Project, a local nonprofit. The remaining portion of the site is set-aside for community groups and local residents.

“The work of a CLT is not just to manage properties, but to engage the community in what they want to see in the land trust, whether that’s commercial, a greenhouse or agricultural land.”

Challenges

DNI was unable to secure its initial greenhouse tenant and the structure sat vacant for nearly five years. However, DNI was well positioned to absorb the unexpected vacancy loss as the project was completed without incurring debt and the organization’s tax-exempt status allowed for minimal holding costs.

Benefits

The Dudley Greenhouse serves as an amenity that supports the marketability of DSNI housing units. Many prospective buyers are attracted to the idea of a community that is based around healthy, locally grown food. The project also helped fulfill the community’s goals of increasing access to quality open spaces.

Project at a Glance

Location:	Roxbury, MA
Project Category:	Urban Agriculture
Year Completed:	2006
Agricultural Acreage:	10,000 SF
CLT Role	Securing Land
Agricultural Activities:	Community Garden, Commercial Agriculture
Tenure Arrangements for Securing Land:	Fee Simple Ownership
Major Partners:	The Food Project, Massachusetts Highway Department
Website:	www.dsni.org
Staff Contact:	Harry Smith, Director of Sustainable and Economic Development hsmith@dsni.org

Lessons Learned

Community engagement is particularly important in the urban agriculture setting, where CLTs often rely on local residents to carry out agricultural production. Harry Smith of DNI explained, “We were not going to [the residents] and saying, ‘you should be growing your own food.’ They came to us saying, ‘we want to have a garden, we want land to grow on.’ A large-scale, expensive project, like the Dudley Greenhouse, needs to occur within the context of a larger community visioning process.