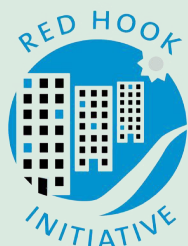




IMAGINE! ¡IMAGINA! 想象!

# WOLCOTT STREET FARM



BLACKSPACE

*Red Hook's Backyard for Food, Unity, and Culture*

20-46 Wolcott St, Brooklyn, NY 11231 | **December 2021**



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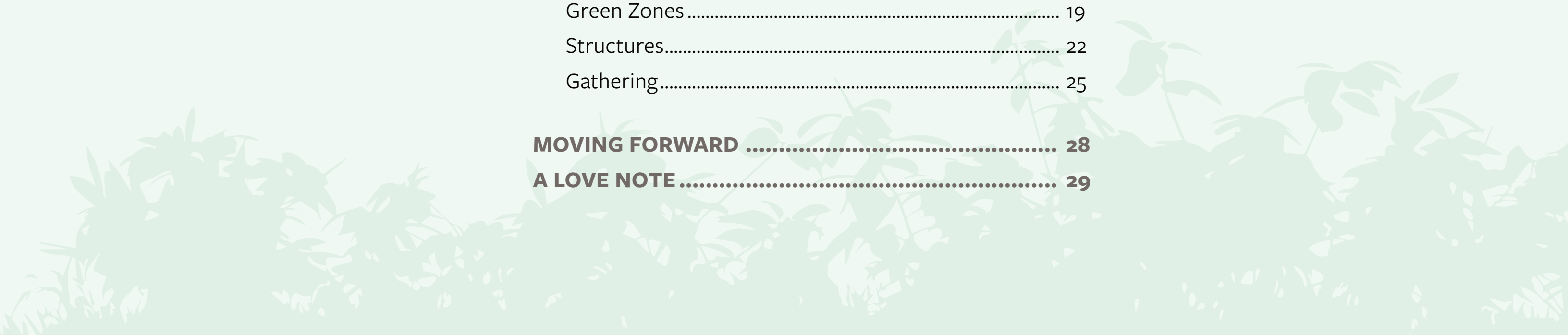
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# Project Introduction

*Through a community of partners, the Wolcott Street Farm community is reimagining its existing space as the neighborhood’s “public backyard.”*

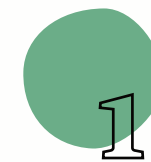
The vision includes intimate and welcoming spaces for gathering, yard work, sharing with neighbors, and storage. The visioning and redesign aims to leverage an incredible passion, a diverse knowledge base, and ensure Wolcott Street Farm thrives in its next evolution.

*This document offers clarified community values, spatial layout, and post-pandemic program recommendations that center the well-being of Black and marginalized groups in Red Hook.*

## Goals



*Red Hook Initiative (RHI) and BlackSpace closely worked together to prioritize ambitions for the space and program offerings.*



1 Create concepts for space that leverage Red Hook participant stories, customized values, and BlackSpace Manifesto.



2 Integrate local and global Black landscapes context, research and precedence into design.



**3 Present design recommendations and schematic site plan document** that guides RHI’s re-configuration of the farm.

# Background

## Red Hook

The native Lenape referred to the region as Ihepetonga. The village was colonized by Dutch people of New Amsterdam in 1636, and named Roode Hoek, after the red clay soil and the point of land projecting into the Upper New York Bay. In the 1840s, Red Hook became an industrial hub, seeing up to 26,000 ships per year. Dockworkers of various ethnicities began settling in Red Hook. African-American dockworkers began to move to Red Hook in the 1890s.

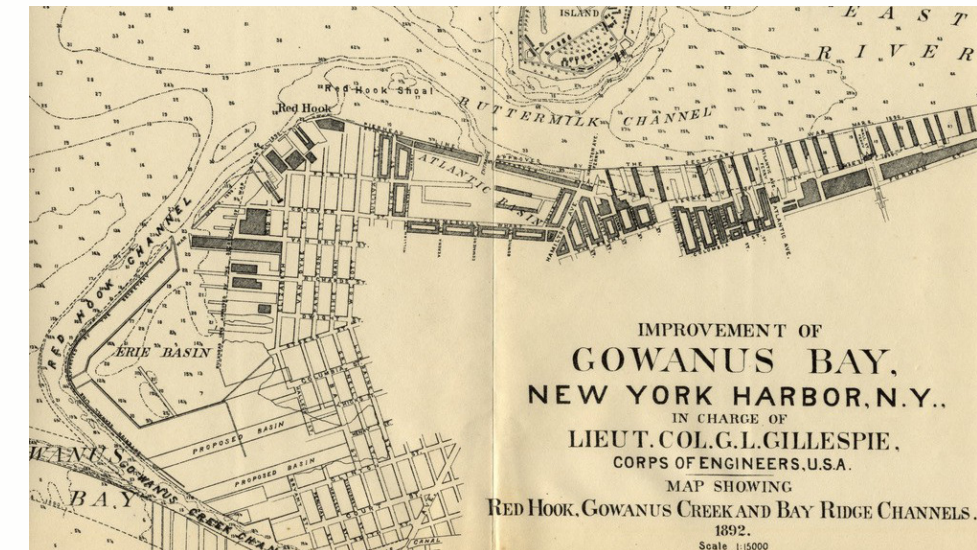
In 2010 the racial makeup of Red Hook / Carroll Gardens / Columbia Street area was 60.9% (23,342) White, 19.8% (7,581) Hispanic or Latino of any race, 11.9% (4,573) African American, 4.5% (1,728) Asian, 0.4% (143) from other races, and 2.4% (912) from two or more races, 0.2% (61) Native American, 0% (13) Pacific Islander.



## Wolcott Street Farm

Wolcott Street Farm's existence is a testament to the advocacy, protection, and care of its surrounding residents and institutional stewards, like Red Hook Initiative (RHI). The farm has had different names over time including: Added Value, NYCHA Farm, Red Hook Houses Farms, and Wolcott Street Farm—the latter two of which we use interchangeably in this document. Managed by full-time and seasonal Red Hook Farm staff, the team look to strengthen Wolcott Street Farm's presence as a place that honors and collaborates with local Black and Latinx youth, older adults, school groups, volunteers, and families.

Through its vibrant urban farm, access to healthy, affordable produce, and nurturing a new generation of green leaders, the farm community is re-committing itself as a community hub for the food, land, and cultural traditions of people from Red Hook Houses and its neighbors.





# Co-Designers

The team of co-designers represents an intention, based in the BlackSpace Manifesto, to **Plan With, Design With,** and **Choose Critical Connection Over Critical Mass.** With a purpose to walk alongside the Wolcott Street Farm community, we met community members who include volunteer farmers, residents of the Red Hook Houses, food distribution customers, youth members, year-round and seasonal staff, and design professionals to think collaboratively about Wolcott Street farm's space and programming.



## Red Hook Initiative's Staff Team

### *Red Hook Farms Team*

Alex Isidoro ● Avonnie C. ● Ms. Betty ● Brendan Parker ● Chane “Cha” Wright ● Destiny Mirabal ● Jawad ● Justin Craig ● Koron Smiley ● Michael Martinez-Velez ● Saara Nafici ● Sani Dudley ● Souhair Kenas ● Qu’adeer ● Timothy ● Xiao Chun Sun

### *Community Volunteers*

Bridgette Gomes ● Helen ● Jose ● Jian Nen Zhang ● Jin You Chen ● Lee Gerrol ● M. Beaton ● Meridia S. ● Sai Jin Wez ● Shao Zhang ● Yu Ying Kuang ● Zhao Wan Zhen

## BLACKSPACE

## BlackSpace Urbanist Collective Team

Alicia Ajayi ● Kenyatta McLean ● Emma Osore ● Ujiji Davis Williams



# Principles

Red Hook Initiative's full time and seasonal staff as well as community volunteers identified BlackSpace Manifesto principles to set intentions for and evaluate the project.

## Protect & Strengthen Culture

保护和加强红钩的文化

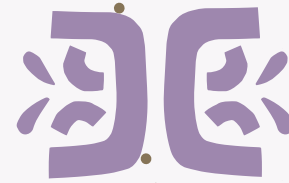
*Protege y fortalece las culturas*

Make visible and strengthen Black cultures and spaces to honor their sacredness and prevent their erasure. Amplify and support Black assets of all forms—from leaders, institutions, businesses, arts, culture, and histories.

## Center Lived Experience

亲身体验 ● *Experiencias vividas*

Lived experience is an important expertise; center it so it can be a guide and touchstone of all work.



## Promote Excellence

卓越 ● *Excelencia*

Amplify, elevate, and love Black vanguards and the variety of their challenging, creative, exceptional, and innovative work and spaces. Allow excellence to build influence that creates opportunities for present and future generations.



## Foster Personal & Communal Evolution

社区进化; 个人进化 ● *Evolución comunal; Evolución persona*

Make opportunities to expand leadership and capacity.



## Move at the Speed of Trust

信任 ● *Confianza*

Make opportunities to expand leadership and capacity.



# Community Values

Inspired by the BlackSpace Manifesto principles, the co-design team, made up of 28 people from various farm community groups, shared their stories and perspectives to create four top values representing the most important issues and aspirations for Wolcott Street Farm: a green oasis, culture, safety and welcome, and unity.





# A Green Oasis

珍视它为当地的绿洲

LA HONRA COMO UN OASIS VERDE

Wolcott Street Farm an important asset to protect in a compromised green space network in Red Hook. In a context where old trees have been ripped from NYCHA campus plazas to make way for construction, Red Hook farm is an even more valuable asset in the local green network of the Columbia Street Farm, Coffey Park, and Senior Center raised beds.

“

*I love the ash tree - makes me feel calm and refreshed. I feel closer to nature. Under its canopy, I can breathe better because of the oxygen it generates.*

— CO-DESIGNER

”





# Culture

保护和加强红钩的文化

*PROTEGE Y FORTALECE LAS CULTURAS DE RED HOOK*

Wolcott Street Farm as a community space is ripe for developing healing connections with Red Hook’s Black, Latinx, and AAPI communities through food culture. During a long pandemic, the Wolcott Street Farm activities stopped and some of the vibrancy of, particularly the Black community, was diminished. However, there are local cultural producers, organizers, cooks, healers, artists, civic/social club members, event producers, neighborhood heroes, and educators who have rich and relevant networks, stories, and experiences to share.

“

*I would like to see us protect and strengthen culture - people in Red Hook have big personalities to express.*

— JUSTIN

”





# Safety and Welcome

感觉安全和被欢迎

SE SIENTE SEGURO Y BIENVENIDO

A major tension of the physical farm is its open access which can create a feeling of welcome and also leave it vulnerable to plant theft or littering. The farm beds are currently too crowded and are not easily accessible to small children, seniors and people with physical disabilities. In the aspiration to help more local residents receive the benefits of being at the farm, the puddly mulch paths and overflowing compost piles can create the perception that the farm is unclean or disorganized, a deterrent to welcoming new people.

66

*There is not enough space for the farmers—they are not protected. The workers are not able to walk down a single path [in between rows of veggies] without stepping on [the plants]*

— MS. BETTY

99





# Unity

连结不同的群体

UNIFICA DIFERENTES GRUPOS

The Red Hook Farm participants, while predominantly local and BIPOC, speak at least three different languages, have varying histories on the farm, and bring diverse cultural land and farming practices. Through participants shared love of being on the farm, working side by side, and cooking and sharing foods, the Wolcott Street Farm is a natural site for human connection and unifying groups.

“

*This is the first time we're volunteering at the farm. Every Friday the Chinese community will come [and] we are thinking we are part of the community right now. [W]e have moved together with...Black [people] and Spanish [speaking people]—we are happy.*

— MR. ZHOU

”





# Inspiration for Space

Merging the aspirations of co-designers for the future with images of existing urban garden innovations, and traditional African-American gardening practices, we remixed many influences and recommendations into the final design.

For example, the co-design team grappled with the tension between wanting to make the space as welcoming as possible and the reality that crops were sometimes randomly removed by a few bad actors. In this design we ultimately recommend keeping a fence-less garden inspired by a Black gardening technique that prioritizes creating a feeling of welcome over any risk of losing plants.

“

*Yards are left gateless for a purpose.  
‘Very, very seldom is there a gate. It’s so  
that visitors always feel welcome...’*

— VAUGHN SILLS

*From Places for the Spirit: Traditional  
African American Gardens*

”





# Inspiration for Space *cont.*

“

*It's amazing that the former bricks of [the local church] could be salvaged when the church was demolished 6 years ago and given new life to form the perimeters of our garden. It's starting to feel very sacred already!*

— THEASTER GATES  
on Kenwood Gardens

”

During our design process, we shared images of existing urban garden structures, and learned the co-design team preferred minimal environmental impact and approachable aesthetic including structures and bed configurations that had streamlined designs that could be crafted using upcycled or low-impact materials within local capacity. These preferences helped define the visual character and programmatic suggestions for the farm.

Our best inspiration came from the visioning sessions where ideas were planted that were abundant, specific, and radical - like having more community-controlled growing beds, having a food-truck style food distribution area, paving paths with octagonal pavers, or including small shelter structures on site for the unhoused. These ideas influenced the overall design vision.





# Project Vision

The design vision of Wolcott Street Farm reflects a “public backyard”—an outdoor space that centers around a balance of public and private spaces that support safe and deeper connections between humans and the landscape, an experience that should not rely on private access to land. Reflecting on the identified community goals, the motif of a “public backyard” establishes as **a green oasis that is safe and welcoming, and brings people to work together as well as express themselves and their cultures.**

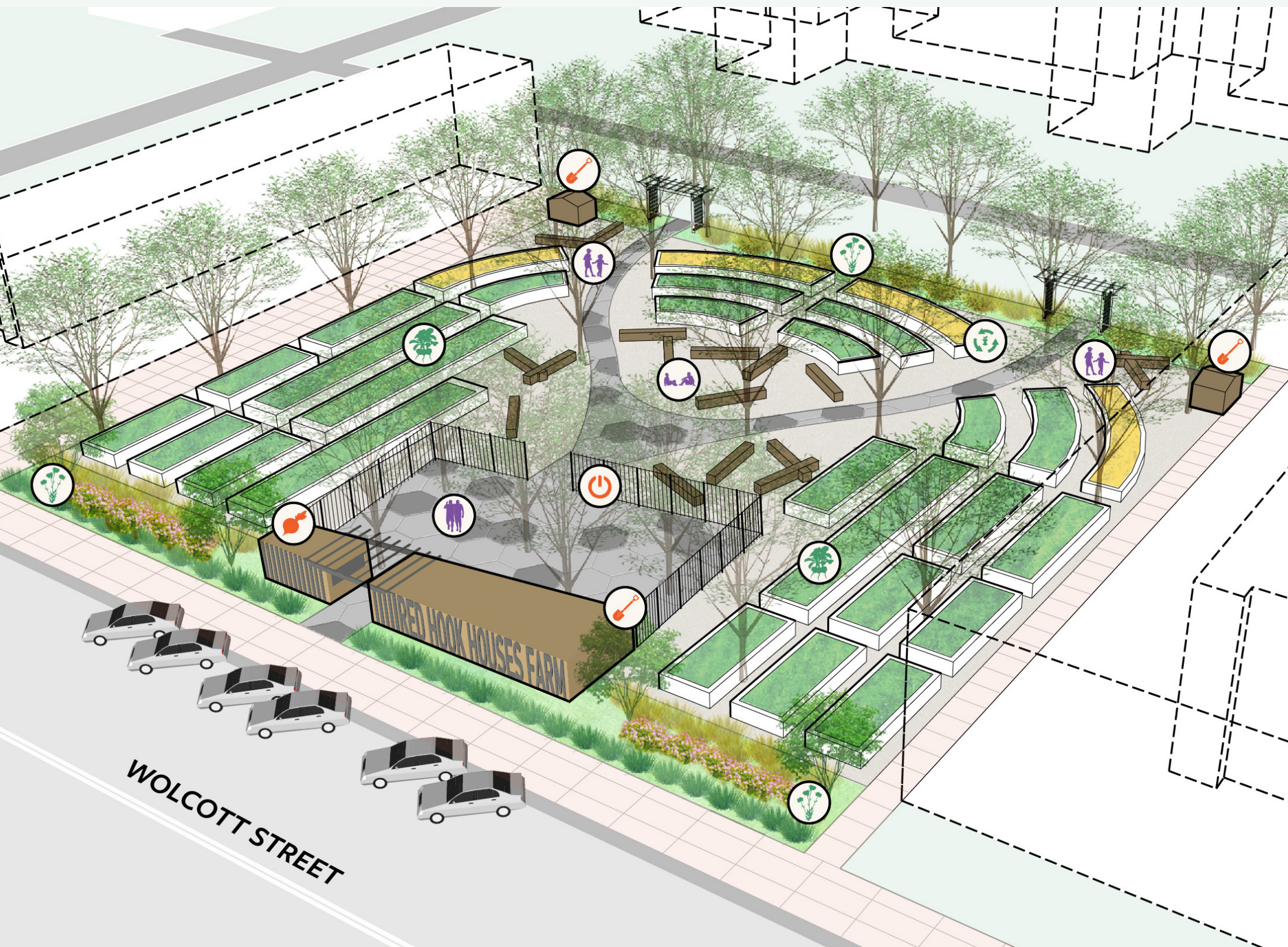
The design proposal reorganizes the existing 1.1 acre urban farm into a space that accommodates not only robust agricultural production but also spaces for communal gathering, hands-on learning, skilled training and passive interpretation. To leverage these much needed uses and anchor the design proposal within the community-driven values, the site is organized into four main design elements: circulation, green zones, structures, and gathering spaces - to meet the desired programmatic and spatial demands. The strategy uses design elements and materials that can be done “DIY-style” with low-impact and semi permanent fixtures.

The programmatic recommendations stem directly from the co-design team and share opportunities for a holistic design of the space that can embody the four community values, navigate tensions of the physical site, and steward the dreams of its participants.





# Project Vision *Schematic Design*



## Green Zones:

-  **Native Perennial Garden**  
Perennial Border ● 常青边界 ● Frontera perenne
-  **Agricultural Production Zones**  
General Beds ● 普通床 ● Camas generales
-  **Compost and Refuse Area**  
Compost Area ● 堆肥区 ● Área de compostaje

## Structures:

-  **Farm Storage**  
Storage Sheds ● 储藏棚 ● Cobertizos de almacenaje
-  **“The Pentagon” Command Center**  
Pentagon ● 五角大楼 ● Pentágono
-  **Market Distribution Area**  
Market ● 市场 ● Mercado

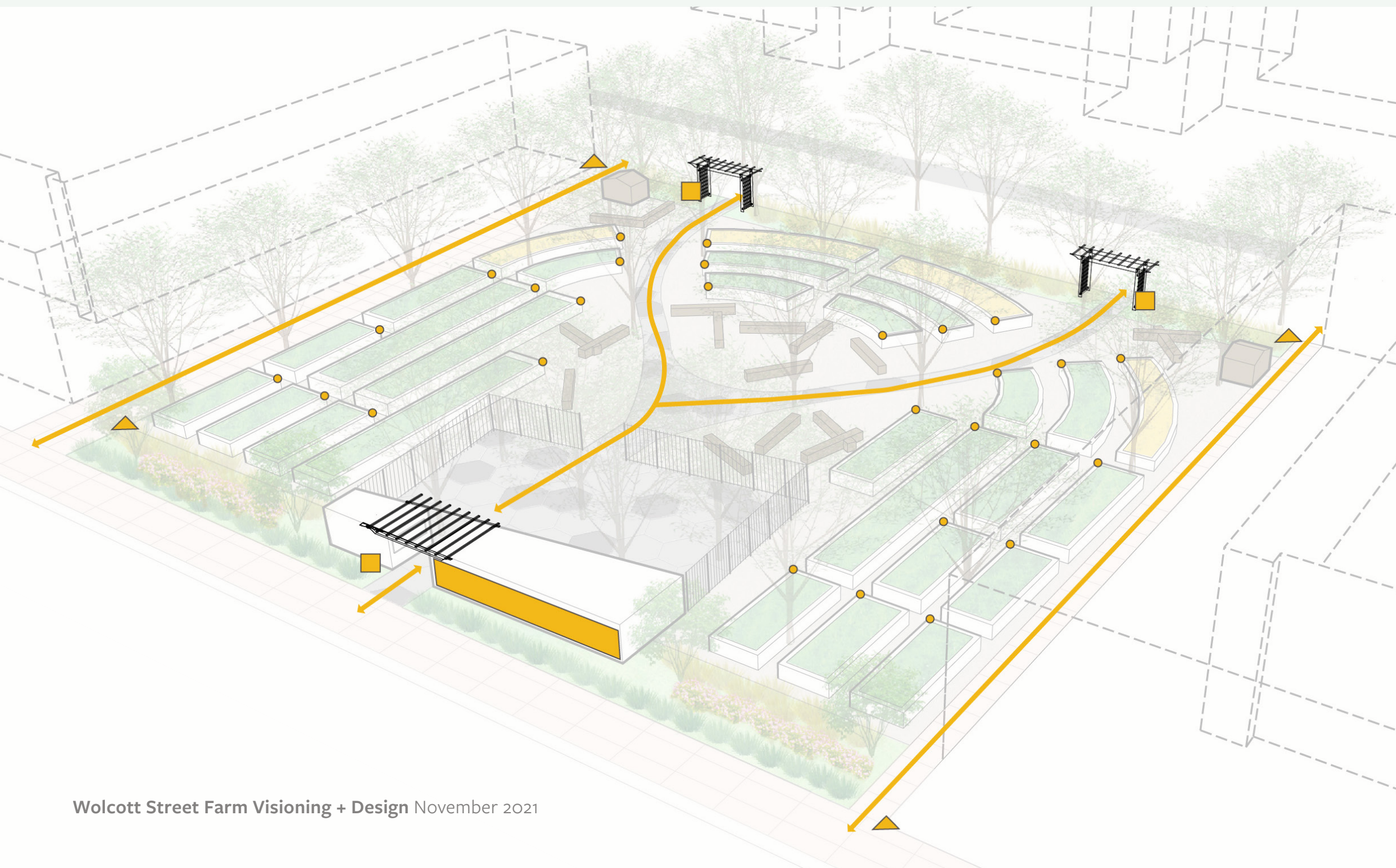
## Gathering Zones:

-  **Outdoor Gathering Areas**  
Meeting Room ● 会议室 ● Sala de Reuniones
-  **Learning Zones**  
Classroom ● 课堂 ● salón de clases
-  **“The Pentagon” Training Area**  
Pentagon ● 五角大楼 ● Pentágono



# Circulation Overview

The design includes primary and secondary pedestrian access between buildings while also making the pathways accessible for carts, strollers, wheelchairs, or larger delivery vehicles. This design can be implemented in phases based on surrounding construction that currently blocks the northern entrances.



## Legend:

- Circulation and Wayfinding
- farm identity signage
  - welcome signage and entrance
  - directional signage
  - planter bed signage
  - new circulation changes



# Circulation

## Physical

## Recommendations

The “swept yard”-style entrances, bed circulation paths, and four types of wayfinding help create safety and welcome including efficient routes for passersby and staff as well as safe, well-kept, and engaging walkways for people still getting to know and navigate the farm. Extending the paths of the community and agricultural production beds on the left and right sides from the surrounding sidewalks to the center of the farm can support more “eyes on the farm”-style community security and safety when the beds are activated with people working.





# Circulation *Program Considerations & Recommendations*

## ART

- Include multilingual messages of Black joy, Red Hook Black history, and love along main pathways through the farm.

## ROUTINES AND MAINTENANCE

- Close off northeast entrance of park when farm is not staffed to minimize through traffic during low activity times at the farm.
- Prioritize neatness and a cleanliness from entrance points

## PEOPLE CARE

- Periodically have residents / people physically stand at entrances to welcome people
- Create familiarity near the entrances by having regular bed work near entrances so locals recognize people they know.



*Crowdsourced  
Recommendations*



*BlackSpace  
Recommendations*

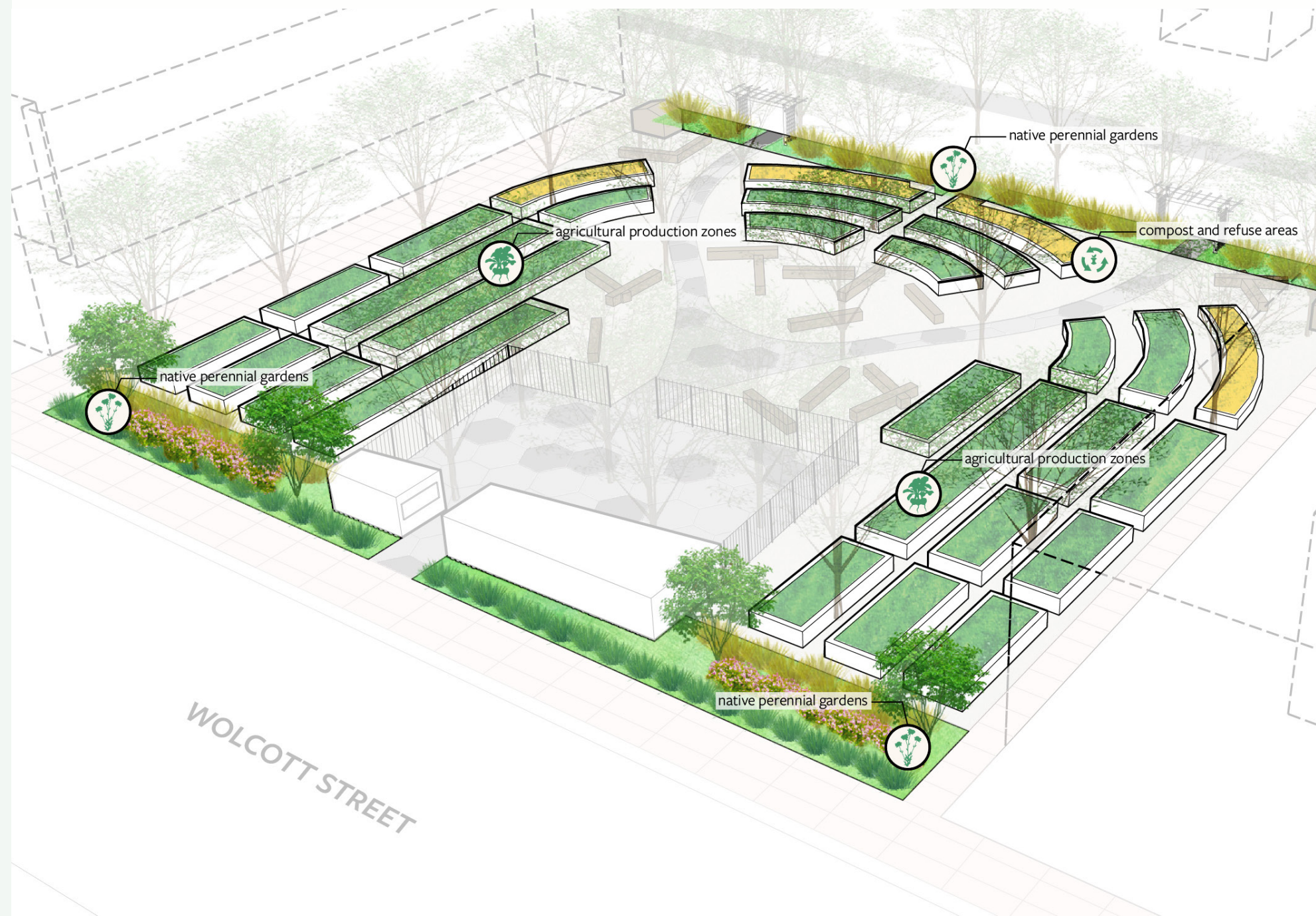




# Green Zones Overview

The green zones beautify the sidewalk accessible food distribution market with native perennial beds and create more welcoming and efficient entrances and pathways throughout.

<b>24</b>	<b>Number of Proposed Beds</b>
<b>5828 SQFT</b>	<b>Total Growing Area</b>
<b>1194 SQFT</b>	<b>Total Compost Area</b>
<b>4777 SQFT</b>	<b>Total Perennial Area</b>
<b>4 FT</b>	<b>Space Between Planter Beds</b>
<b>10 FT</b>	<b>Width of Each Planter</b>
<b>145 SQFT</b>	<b>Market Distribution Area</b>
<b>600 SQFT</b>	<b>Main Storage Area</b>
<b>144 SQFT</b>	<b>Satellite Storage Area</b>





# Green Zones *Physical Recommendations*

Breaking with traditional convention of beds in completely straight rows, the semicircular beds improve flow and offer the feeling of a “hug”, as one participant noted. Modifying beds to be a length and width that allows people to reach on either side from the paths, versus stepping fully into the beds, improves access for multiple bodies and abilities.

The longer dual perennial borders and addition of trellises turn the “green oasis” benefits (shared often as the most loved thing about the farm) inside-out; making the current structures, gathering spaces, beds, and pentagon that are currently turned inwards and disconnected the farm’s activities from the community - much more noticeable from the sidewalks.

The maximized green space including the addition of more trees, adds more green physical beauty to the neighborhood, can support increased awareness of the farm’s activities, as well as provide culturally relevant signals of invitation so that more neighbors may receive the benefits of this life-giving green space.





# Green Zones *Program Considerations & Recommendations*

## FLEXIBLE FIXTURES

- Add signage and glossaries about which crops and why to pick
- Place strings to let people know where is ok to walk in beds

## ART

- Create collages or wheatpastes of the community members on the beds
- Create presence of lots of flowers
- Highlight trees by adorning with lights or Black / African-inspired fabrics / art
- Display enlarged messages that can be read from residences to communicate love / care.

## ACTIVE/PASSIVE EVENTS

- Leave some seed packets out for people to take at will
- Designate or color code certain beds for picking
- Cultivate regular pruning and watering of trees.

○ *Crowdsourced Recommendations*

○ *BlackSpace Recommendations*





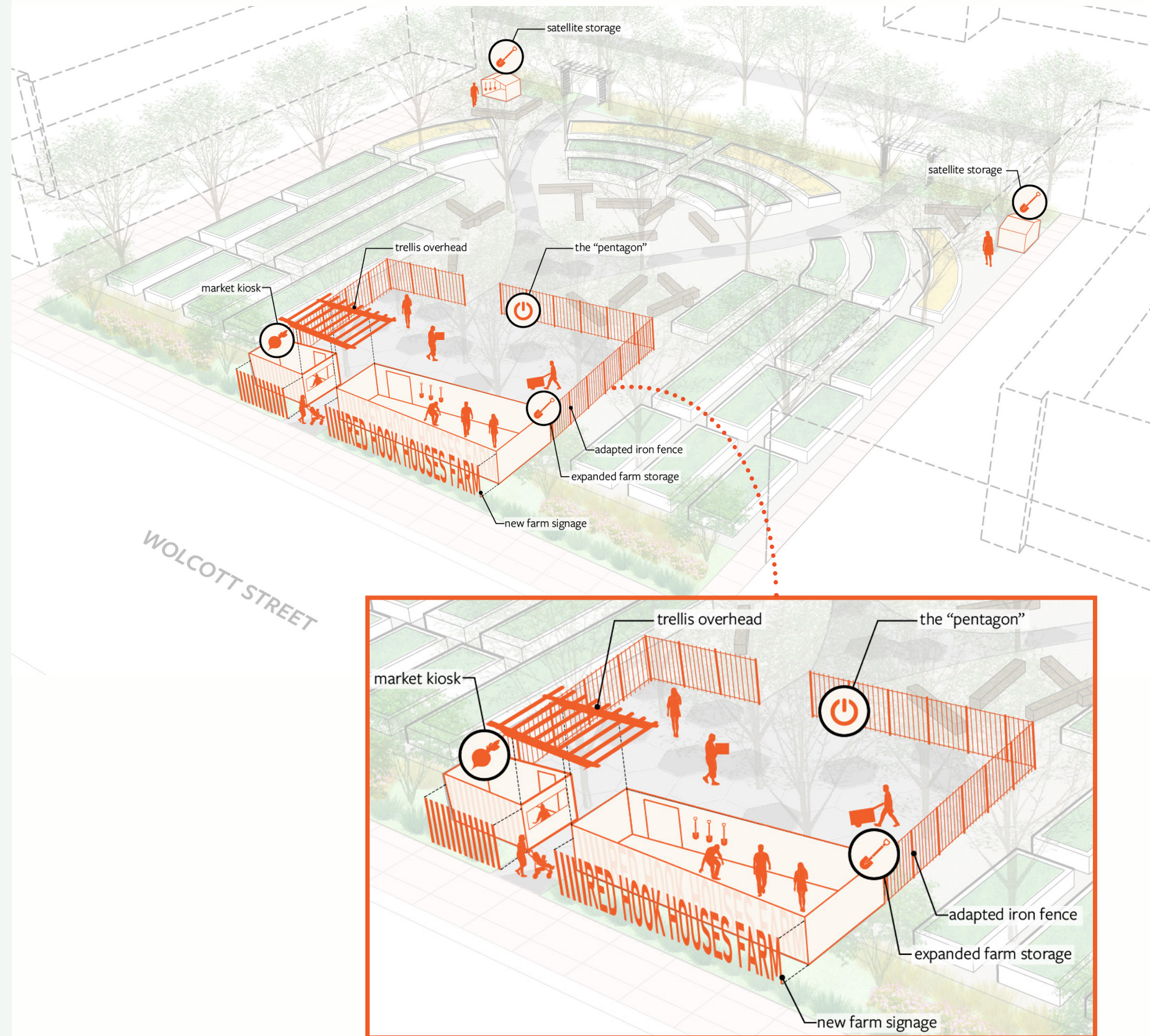
# Structures Overview

The pentagon fence is modified to become a centralized access point and activity area. The new structures include welcoming farm signage, an accessible market kiosk, expanded storage unit, and satellite storage to support targeted tasks on the farm.

“

*Ensure structures show that we're proud of this space and that it's a positive space.*

”





## Recommendations

The pentagon is the central meetup for people to come together at the beginning and end of any tasks. The design opens a central entrance to the pentagon (that can still be secured when not in use), linking the hardworking “heart” of the farm to other activity areas of the farm where people work together - composting, leading volunteers, harvesting in the community beds.

Shaded by beloved trees and an overhead trellis, this central entrance point also creates an opportunity for the food distribution areas to face the sidewalk and accommodate market storage inside. The secondary storage units at the front and back entrances can be a port-o-potty site, house tools needed for more specific activity areas like composting or produce harvesting or remain flexible to accommodate daily, seasonal, and market storage needs.





# Structures *Program Considerations & Recommendations*

## FLEXIBLE FIXTURES

- Designate space to store belongings for staff and volunteers.
- Place trash cans / recycle bins
- Hang bulletin- / white-boards inside/ outside pentagon with community values / tasks in relevant languages

## ART

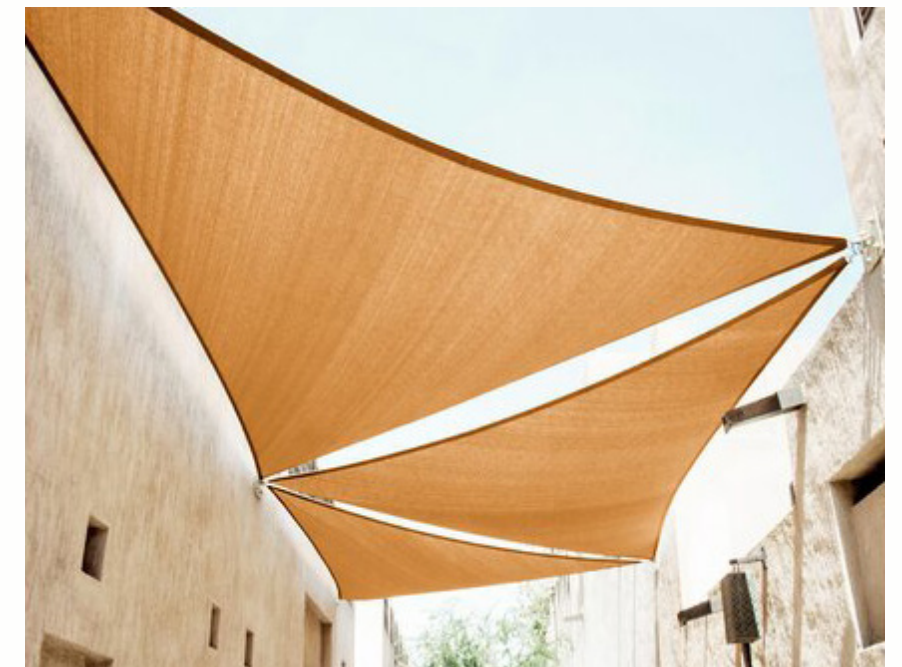
- Designate a chalking wall inside / outside pentagon for crowdsourced artistic contributions.
- Include murals / cultural paintings / ethnic flags (especially Black farmers or “red hooks”)
- Paint pentagon fence more vibrant colors or add art to the fencing.
- Host yearly artist call for Brooklyn Black artists to draw / paint south entrance.
- Install washable sail / shade / tarp structure under residential windows that might offer shade, catch litter from windows, and be easily hosed down.

## PEOPLE CARE

- Consider adding a mutual aid community pantry/fridge on site
- Leverage rebuild as an opportunity to invest in Black economics and skill building.
- Cultivate relationships with Black contractors from Red Hook for paid work.
- Pay non-staff Black / Latinx youth who help build the farm on mass volunteer days.
- Buy supplies from Black-owned and Brooklyn-owned hardware and plant stores: Hardware 2.0; Natty Garden

○ *Crowdsourced  
Recommendations*

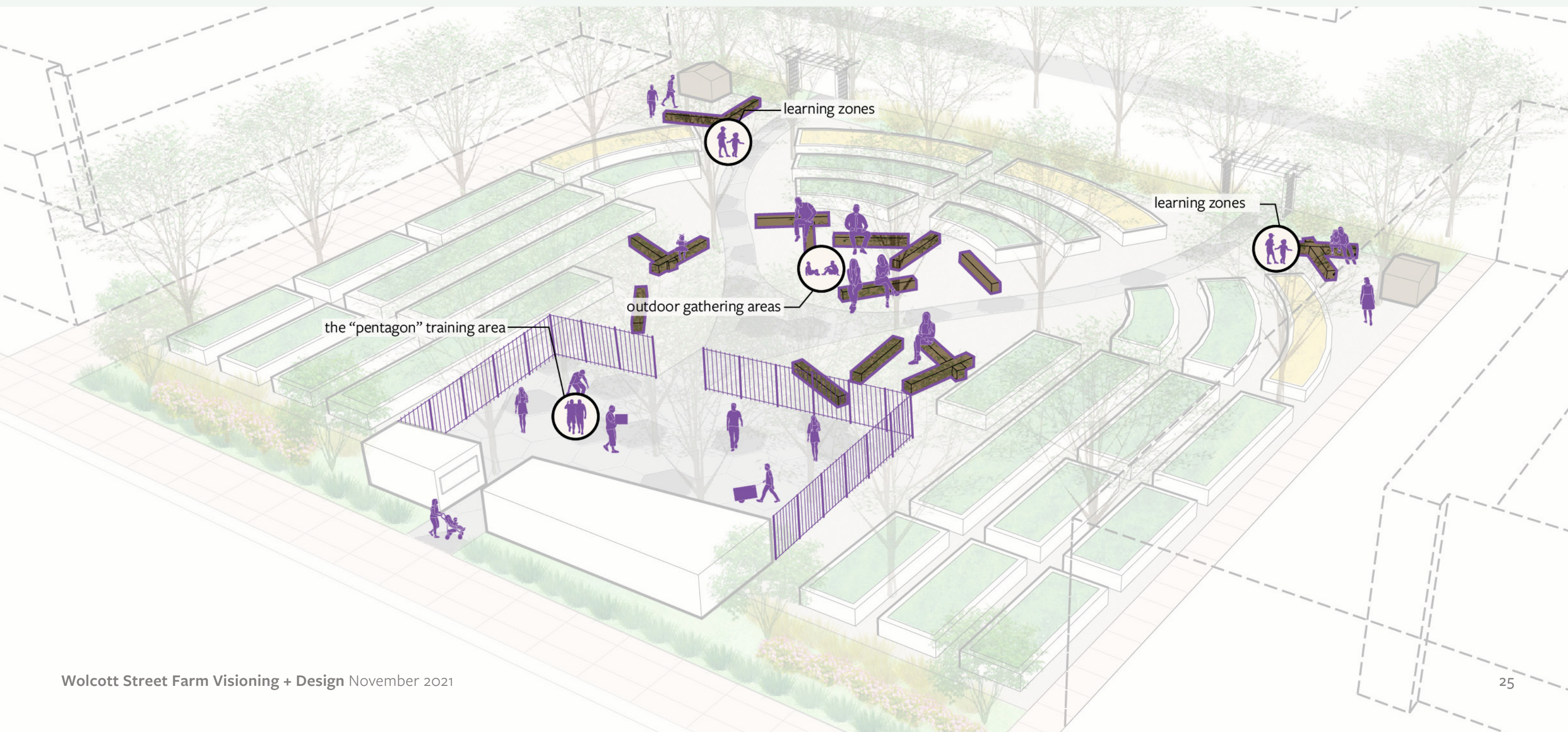
○ *BlackSpace  
Recommendations*





# Gathering Overview

The **central gathering areas** reintroduce flexible and communal seating on the site that was removed during the pandemic. The central space is “hugged” by the surrounding green zone beds - a subtle reminder that gathering, connection, and culture of Black and marginalized people of Red Hook is the soul of what will keep the farm alive, relevant, and thriving over many years.





# Gathering *Physical* *Recommendations*

The gathering spaces can accommodate cultural activities and rituals like large community cookouts or local music video shoots - a place for culture, food, play, and community events. The learning zones are opportunities for small group trainings and workshop, team huddles, or could even serve as contemplative spaces for reading, conversations, or taking breaks.

Inside, the pentagon can be organized into “zones” with relevant furniture to accommodate the most popular work activities like packing and distributing produce, training volunteers, storing supplies and belongings, or taking shift breaks. The storage areas could remain flexible to accommodate the needs of different groups.





# Gathering *Program Considerations & Recommendations*

## FLEXIBLE FIXTURES

- Ensure farm is home-like (i.e. offer good lighting and comfy seating areas for events and safety; consider bench covers for seating to prevent bird poop; rollaway firepit for the fall; incorporate speakers to play music)
- Add flexible game areas where teen employees and community members can play - activating the farm and attracting people who like to play, creating presence on the farm
- Flexible game areas (i.e. rollaway basketball hoop, lawn games, low rock wall along bldg; tire swing, etc.)

## PEOPLE CARE

- Offer Narcan, first aid, CPR, harm reduction trainings on site to staff and community.
- Invite local environmental activists (specifically those who fought against tree disturbance in Red Hook) for teach-ins to help spread the word about farm programs and benefits.
- Hire Black artists / healers to dedicate the space.

## ACTIVE/PASSIVE EVENTS

- Share food / land information through programming / plantings / skill shares / brochures in different languages. Topics / themes might include:
  - Food sovereignty / freedom
  - Indigenous stewardship practices (sage, quinoa, coffee, chocolate, forgotten greens)
  - Community garden / urban farm movement
  - Different groups teach other simple gardening in various languages (skill / language exchange)
  - Mini lessons about lasagne compost piles
  - Smells of nature
  - Regular free BBQ for volunteers, residents, staff
  - Host a farm party about perennial crops of the world (the Americas / Asia/ Africa)
  - How to prevent mosquito/ bug bites
- Pay young queer Black, Indigenous and POC artists (BIPOC), healers, teachers, musicians to produce monthly engagements.
- To rebuild “auntie effect”, pay or offer free space to Black adult social / civic clubs to host community events that honor Black holidays (i.e. clubs: cars, social, knitting, dance, cards, car; holidays: Juneteenth, Black August, MLK Day; Black/Latinx independence days).
- Offer / rent space for community youth birthday parties and other local family events.
- Instead of food scraps or volunteer time, exchange food for recorded recipes, land traditions, or local hi/stories OR receiving one monthly text about opportunities on the farm.

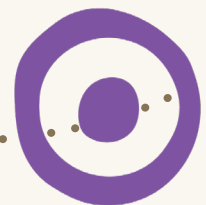
○ *Crowdsourced Recommendations*

○ *BlackSpace Recommendations*



# Moving Forward

*You have the power to add or change things to this plan—this is just the beginning.*



## PHASE 1

- Share the Plan
- Verify field measurements of existing farm and proposed design
- Schedule Redesign Kickoff!



## PHASE 2

- Build new storage and market distribution area at pentagon
- Family Cookout!



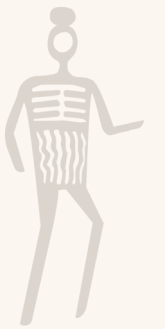
## PHASE 3

- Implement New Production and Community Beds
- Community Party!



## PHASE 4

- Add seating for Gathering Zones
- Celebrate!







# A Love Note

*Thank you* to all past, present, and future Red Hook Farms stewards who work for radical food, cultural, and environmental justice.

Special thanks to Red Hook Initiative, Isidor Studio, JIMA Studio, The Kresge Foundation, The Laundromat Project, Mailchimp, Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, Soul Spot Catering, Soul of the South Cooking, and YFW Productions whose vision, creativity, and support made this project possible.

Finally, a round of applause for all of the volunteers and co-designers, including Nefratia Coleman and Javier Lopez, former RHI staff, who entrusted BlackSpace to partner on this initiative.

**[redhookfarms.org](https://redhookfarms.org)**

**[blackspace.org](https://blackspace.org)**

Co-designed by **[BlackSpace](#)**, **[JIMA Studio](#)**, and **[Isidor Studio](#)**

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