



SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF EARTHWORKS URBAN FARM

The Capuchin Soup Kitchen

#1

Welcome to Earthworks Urban Farm, a program of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. In traveling this path together, we invite you to delve into the relationships among people, land, food, and power. If this is your first time to the neighborhood or Detroit, what assumptions might color your vision? If you know the neighborhood well, how might you see, smell, touch, or listen in ways that allow you to imagine new possibilities? At the end of the path we are on, we envision a Detroit where all people have access to healthy, culturally relevant foods; a place where communities make up the leadership of the local food system and where neighbors are assets that depend on one another. We're on the path; we hope you'll join us.

#2

You are standing at the doors to one site of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, which serves about 800 meals daily. Here, all are welcome to come eat breakfast and lunch Monday through Friday. We believe all people deserve access to healthy food, which is why most of the produce from our gardens goes straight into meals here at the soup kitchen. For communities of color in Detroit, it is far easier to access low-quality, highly-processed foods like chips, soda, or fast food than to access nutritious food like fresh fruits and vegetables and good sources of protein. The food that is available to us has so much to do with who controls and distributes land and resources. Earthworks is one piece of a larger movement working to reclaim community leadership and racial equity in our local food system.

#3

Pause for a moment in front of our "Garden of Unity," a collection of garden plots that are open to all community members, including participants in the Earthworks Agricultural Training (EAT) Program. EAT is a 9-month training program for adults interested in developing agricultural and leadership skills. The Garden of Unity and the EAT Program work towards a food system in which communities determine what food is grown and how it is distributed. Food is so much more than an intake of calories--it is deeply tied to our cultural identities. We believe that all people have the right to determine the kind of food they eat. Can you think of a food that you grew up eating? What story does that food tell about where you come from?

#4

This structure is a greenhouse, built in 2004. Why do we have such a big greenhouse? We want to be able to provide local gardeners with healthy vegetable and fruit seedlings to grow their own gardens with. Since this greenhouse was built, volunteers and staff have started and distributed over 700,000 seedlings.

Those little lettuce, cabbage, kale, tomato plants have grown up to produce tons and tons of food in Detroit, Highland Park and Hamtramck. The growing and distribution of the seedlings is a part of Keep Growing Detroit's Garden Resource Program, which Earthworks supports.

#5

This is the site of the original garden of the Earthworks program. A Capuchin Friar, Brother Rick Samyn, started Earthworks in 1997 after he heard from young people in the neighborhood going to the gas station to buy groceries. Brother Rick grew up working at his family's small grocery store on the Eastside, and felt compelled to provide the youth of the neighborhood with an opportunity to deepen their relationship with food and the natural world. Capuchins are men who, following in the tradition of St. Francis of Assisi, have dedicated their lives to their faith and the service of all creation. The garden was created to connect people to each other, the land, and their food.

Today, what started as a small vegetable patch continues to grow.

#6

How do we grow in the winter time? This structure in front of you, our hoop house, helps keep crops protected from frosts and dry winter winds in an environment that can be up to 50 degrees warmer than outside temperatures. Surrounding the hoop house, you may see several different varieties of berry bushes. We grow currants, grapes, black raspberries, red raspberries, gooseberries, and elderberries in our gardens. Food preservation through jam making, fermentation, dehydration, canning, freezing, and more is a great way to enjoy a wide variety of locally-grown foods year round! Come try our jams or buy them as gifts at our market, Meldrum Fresh, open May until November on Thursdays from 11AM-2PM.

#7

This site was formerly a small grocery store, one of three small stores that used to be on this block. Now there are none, as food retail has become concentrated in chain supermarkets, which drive independent stores out of business and funnel profits to corporations rather than communities. These profit-driven chains have located themselves in surrounding affluent suburbs rather than in Detroit, where consumers have less purchasing power. Combined with the unreliability of Detroit public transportation, it is challenging for folks without car access to get to places where fresh produce is sold.

Recognizing that food and transportation are interconnected, we run a Community

Bike Shop on Wednesdays from 12:30-3:30 PM, as many Detroiters rely on bikes for their primary mode of transport. How might growing a garden allow Detroiters to overcome the barriers caused by inequitable distribution and transportation?

#8

This is one of two rain water harvesting systems that we use here at Earthworks, installed in 2014 in collaboration with the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. How does it work? Two 1,100 gallon tanks collect rainwater runoff from the roof of the hoop house. This rainwater is then pumped using solar energy into an elevated 3,000 gallon tank, which uses gravity to run the drip irrigation system through the hoop house. Water is an increasingly costly resource, both financially and environmentally, in a city with rising municipal water rates and a combined sewage system that contaminates fresh Lake Erie water. Rainwater harvesting is one potential tool for Detroit growers seeking sustainable practices.

#9

As you travel down Meldrum towards Kercheval, you will pass on your left the Capuchin Monastery, St. Bonaventure and the Solanus Casey Center. Mt. Elliott was the former city limit, and by locating themselves just outside the city limit, the Capuchins were able to keep livestock and grow their own food. By growing their own food, the Capuchins followed the agricultural legacy of the First People of this land. The Anishinaabe (or People of the Three Fires) called this land home for thousands of years before the arrival of white colonial occupiers, and have engaged in agricultural practices on this land for at least 1,000 years. It is their tradition that we learn from and honor in working with this land.

Welcome
to our largest garden site.

#10

This site is the property of our great partner, Gleaners Community Food Bank, which is located in the building behind the garden. At all of our garden sites, we practice regenerative agricultural practices-this means that we work to give more life and health to the soil than we take out of it. Some ways we do this include using compost as a natural fertilizer, rotating our crops every year, utilizing living mulches, planting cover crops, planting flowers to attract a diversity of insects to the garden, and minimizing how much mechanical tillage we use.

#12

As a certified organic farm, instead of using chemical fertilizers in our gardens, we make and use our own compost to help maintain and improve the fertility of our soil. We collect nitrogen sources, such as fruit and vegetable scraps and coffee grinds from the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and local businesses. We layer these with carbon sources, such as leaves. Then we add a small amount of finished compost. This last step sparks the growth of millions of tiny microbes, which turns the pile into super nutritious fertilizer.

#13

As you walk back to the Earthworks garage where your tour began, you will pass a lot on your left that was home to our Youth Farm Stand garden. This garden was formerly maintained by teenagers who participated throughout the year in farming, marketing, cooking, personal development and learning about our food system through weekly educational sessions and garden workdays. Our youth programming is now held at the James and Grace Lee Boggs School, where we coordinate an after school urban agriculture, nutrition and health program with the students.

#11

These boxes you see are home to honey bees. Honeybees are an integral part of our farm as well as agriculture worldwide. They pollinate over 1/3 of all the food we eat! Bees provide humans with valuable products like honey, beeswax, pollen and a natural antibacterial agent called propolis. In recent years, many beekeepers have seen a dramatic decline in bee populations due to the negative impacts of pesticides. Pesticides used to grow GMO crops are highly toxic to pollinators and the plants that sustain them, and neonicotinoids are the group of insecticides primarily linked to colony collapse. Buying local honey, organic produce and planting native wildflowers help keep local honeybee populations healthy and supports local beekeepers!

#14

Nearing the end of your tour, take a moment to reflect on what you have seen, smelled, touched or heard today. What made you feel surprised, uncomfortable or curious? Similarly to how the milkweed plant is called a weed but in fact plays an essential role in sustaining the monarch butterfly on its migratory journey, we encourage you to look upon this community with respect for its history, abundance and resilience. What did you see growing in “vacant” places? How might the work you see happening here relate to the place where you live? How will you tell the story of what you learned today? We hope that you will share your reflections with us.

Thank you for walking with us towards a just, beautiful food system.
Please return this tour guide to where you found it.

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