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Farmhouse center planned for West Side

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Buffalo's West Side neighborhood is about the last place you'd expect to see a farm.

But there it is on Massachusetts Avenue – surrounded by the neighborhood's tightly built homes – with buzzing bees, sprouting vegetables and several greenhouses.

The Massachusetts Avenue Project has been around since 2000, serving the dual purpose of providing fresh food in inner-city neighborhoods while educating students and community members about the food system.

But the time is nearing for MAP to establish a signature project, a roughly \$2 million Farmhouse Community Food Training & Resource Center that would serve as on-site headquarters, storage and training/educational space.

"We're really looking at this as a community resource and a training center on the West Side," said [Heather Brooks Newton](#), MAP development director. "We are trying to raise the profile of the conversation about food – how important it is to economic development, health and wellness, and financial stability."

MAP has administrative offices on Grant Street that it shares with PUSH Buffalo. It plans to move those offices to the new facility, which will be adjacent to the Massachusetts Avenue farm, once it's built. The organization also has a few farming plots on Winter Street.

The new facility will include indoor and outdoor training space, a teaching kitchen, resource library, improved cold storage and tool storage space. The storage is particularly important as it will give MAP the ability to harvest and store more food, Newton said.

MAP has about \$1.1 million in firm commitments to the project, with several proposals under consideration.

It hopes to break ground by early spring, possibly sooner, and to have a grand opening by fall

2016. Wegmans recently donated \$75,000 to the initiative.

“MAP has been doing great work for years and we’re confident that the new farmhouse will serve as a teaching tool for not just the neighborhood but the entire region.” said Michele Mehaffy, Buffalo consumer affairs manager at Wegmans.

Other funders have included the Junior League of Buffalo, Patrick P. Lee Foundation, James H. Cummings Foundation, New York state, the city of Buffalo, M&T Bank, Peter C. Cornell Trust, Simple Gifts Fund, the Children’s Foundation of Erie County and individual donors.

Every summer, about 50 teenagers learn not just how to farm but how to do blogging, marketing and food advocacy. The organization has provided jobs and training to more than 500 low-income youths and more than 9,000 residents, schoolchildren and policymakers since 2003.

Since 2008, 95 percent of high schoolers engaged with MAP graduated and went on to college.

Dan Miner is Business First's enterprise reporter. He also covers education and public companies.

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The Massachusetts Avenue Project's Farmhouse Community Food Training & Resource Center could open by fall 2016.