

Meacham Urban Farm offers options and education in downtown Tampa's food desert

TAMPA, Fla. — A green oasis now sits in the middle of a thriving city. Nestled between I-275 and downtown Tampa sits Meacham Urban Farm.

Joseph Dalessio is the owner and manager of the 2.1 acres.

"We do all organic bio-intensive agriculture," Dalessio said.

Dalessio is one of three farmers at the site.

The farm sits just blocks away from downtown Tampa and the farm may look like a pop-up for many.

Shalonda Bryon and her family of three recently found out it's a stone throw's away from their own home.

"Literally stumbled upon it because I did not know it existed and I live downtown," Bryon said.

It may look like an overnight creation, but it's been three years in the making.

A partnership between Tampa Housing Authority, HUD, and Hillsborough County schools made this possible.

Hillsborough County Schools provides the property and have become even more involved by creating a curriculum focused on the farm.

In the coming months, students will have the opportunity to visit Meacham

Urban Farms and learn from the land.

Grants from major companies helped fund the project.

The urban farm is a first of its kind in Tampa.

"This is like a lifestyle that we're trying to promote. It's the whole package," Dalessio said.

The goal is to provide options in a food desert area, but it's already doing more than that.

It's giving younger generations, like Bryon's 18-month-old little girl, an idea of what could be.

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"I think it's amazing that she's able to see this and it's making me realize that she's not a city girl. She's very much into farms and country lands which I think is very important for kids coming up in the future," Bryon said.

The farm offers a membership program and a deal that isn't available in a typical grocery store.

"We accept EBT and then we have a SNAP benefit program so if they use their EBT and spend \$20 they actually get \$40 worth of value in our farm store," Dalessio said.

The science behind the farming is meticulous, but the end game is simple.

"That's our goal is to feed people. That's it," Dalessio said.

The farm recently opened a market that is open during the weekend. For

more information, [click here.](#)