



# New urban farm, store opens in ENCORE! Tampa

YVETTE C. HAMMETT | TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2020



Photos provided by Meacham Urban Farm

The new Meacham Urban Farm is easily accessible for residents living at ENCORE! Tampa.



Downtown Tampa is getting an organic urban farm near its core and at the same time, a place where kids can learn where their food comes from and the importance of eating healthy.

Meacham Urban Farm, named for Christine Meacham, the first African-American school principal in Tampa, is located at 1108 E. Scott Street, within the ENCORE! Tampa housing development.

A soft grand opening for its store, which will be open to the public, will be scheduled for later this month.

Urban farmers Joe Dalessio, Kristin Beauvois, and Travis Malloy are combining their talents to create the farm, built on property owned by the Hillsborough County School District. The project is in conjunction with the Tampa Housing Authority.

Some 40 fruits, vegetables, and herbs are already under production at the farm and the hope is to draw not just students on a regular basis, but city dwellers looking for fresh-picked organic produce amid the urban jungle, says Dalessio, who also owns Black Finger Farm in Lutz.

“Our specialty is organic mixed vegetables, over 40 varieties of herbs, vegetables, and fruit. We offer a farm membership program so if you pre-purchase a farm card you get a discount throughout the season,” he says. “There will also be general sales at our farm store on weekends.”

The pricing on the farm card starts at \$250 and there are various tiers that can be added, giving members a 5% discount on all purchases. “We also offer local vendors’ meat and eggs,” he says.

The eggs come from Trailbale Farm in Tampa and the meats come from Providence Cattle, located throughout Central Florida.

Just how did these three partners get into urban farming?

Malloy calls it a “force of will. I wasn’t born in it and studied technical stuff in school, but I think it is one of those necessary things that more people need to start growing stuff. I started gardening in my backyard and then built a community garden in Temple Terrace, then started a chicken farm, and now this organic garden downtown.”

The project has everything the three were looking for, Malloy says.

“To be so centrally located and have an organic vegetable farm right in the middle of the city is pretty amazing,” he says. “A huge thing for me is the educational component. We will be working with students a lot and I have always really enjoyed doing that. Our big goal is organic, local affordable produce for the neighborhood, which is a food desert down here. Hopefully, it will also support other farmers.”

“In collaboration with schools, we offered them a platform for their curriculum,” Dalessio says. “It is developed specifically for farm education. They will bring out children for field trips here. It is going to be all ages, but we will focus on elementary students initially, teaching them where food comes from and tying it to biology curriculum, nutrition, plant physiology, and food, as well.”

The farm sits on just over two acres and has a 20-by-25-foot farm store with room for expansion.

It is considered “community-supported agriculture” and buying in early by purchasing a farm card helps to financially support this first season, Malloy says.

RemoTech is the general contractor for the project and Campina Construction located out of Orlando, also provided services. Dalessio says the farmer trio builds most of its own soils for use at the new farm.



*Read more articles by Yvette C. Hammett.*

*Yvette C. Hammett, a native Floridian and a graduate of the University of Florida, has spent much of her career as a professional journalist covering business, the environment, and local features throughout the Tampa Bay Area. She is an avid camper and outdoors person who has also been involved in local events for foster children and the elderly.*

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