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GrowNYC, State, City and Elected Officials Break Ground on the New York State Regional Food Hub in the Bronx

The 60,000-square-foot facility will support local farmers and underserved New Yorkers

Bronx, NY- March 24, 2021 – Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, Empire State Development Acting President and CEO Eric Gertler, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Richard A. Ball, New York City Economic Development Corporation Acting President Rachel Loeb, Congressman Ritchie Torres, Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., Council Member Salamanca and community members joined GrowNYC to celebrate the start of construction for the New York State Regional Food Hub (The Hub), a joint State and City project resulting from the [NYS-NYC Regional Food Hubs Task Force](#). When complete, the facility will strengthen the local food economy and improve access to healthy and affordable foods for low-income communities.

The Hub, a 60,000-square-foot cold-storage facility on a 135,000-square-foot lot in the Hunts Point neighborhood of the Bronx, will dramatically expand GrowNYC's wholesale distribution infrastructure that makes high-quality, local foods accessible to underserved New Yorkers through wholesale buyers, including institutions and restaurants, and through innovative partnerships with nonprofit organizations. It will also create quality jobs all while strengthening rural communities by supporting New York State farmers. The new food hub will work with a range of small- and mid-sized farms, providing unprecedented access to New York City's wholesale marketplace. The processing facility will also assist Upstate producers and processors in targeting institutional and private sector procurement opportunities. This first-of-its-kind, publicly funded food hub dedicated to supporting regional farmers will serve as a model throughout the country.

Prior to the Covid-19 health crisis, 1.4 million New York City residents were food insecure. Because of the pandemic, that number has jumped to approximately 2 million people.

In 2020, GrowNYC's wholesale division distributed 5.4 million pounds of fresh produce, 2.9 million of which was through their Emergency Fresh Food program implemented in March of 2020 to provide no-cost emergency fresh food to communities throughout New York City hardest hit by Covid. The Hub will allow GrowNYC to increase the amount of food they distribute to 20 million pounds, benefitting local farmers and underserved New York communities, and ensuring the capability to respond to potential future emergency food needs for New Yorkers.

The project received major funding from the State of New York, Empire State Development, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the New York City Council; Office of the Bronx



Borough President, New Markets Tax Credit Financing from NYC Neighborhood Capital Corporation and J.P Morgan Chase Community Development Banking, additional funding from the Federal Economic Development Administration, Bank of America Foundation and Green Mountain Energy, and bridge financing from Farm Credit East, Low Income Investment Fund and Enterprise Community Partners, the \$39 million project will take 18 months from groundbreaking to ribbon cutting.

The New York State-New York City Regional Food Hubs Task Force, convened at the direction of the Governor, was announced at the State's first-ever Upstate-Downstate Summit. The Task Force was charged with developing a roadmap to build a Regional Food Hub System to enhance the connection between upstate food producers and the downstate market, increase access to fresh food for underserved populations, boost in-state food production and consumption, and create new job opportunities in the growing sector of food manufacturing. It placed a high priority on a regional food hub as part of its final action plan.

"Taking steps to fight back against food insecurity is critical in our post COVID recovery and improves the health and quality of life for all New Yorkers," **Governor Cuomo said.** "Through this groundbreaking partnership, we are taking real action to remove the barriers that have limited the ability of underserved New Yorkers to access fresh, nutritious foods, by creating a direct connection between our hard-working farmers and communities most in need. New York is proud to have played such a vital role in the development of this game changing Food Hub and we look forward to continuing our work with our partners to find additional ways to ensure that no New Yorkers go to bed hungry."

"Today's groundbreaking of the first-of-its-kind New York State Regional Food Hub in the Bronx is a win-win for New York families and farmers," **Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul said.** "The state-of-the-art Hub will open up new markets for upstate farmers, put more fresh food on the tables of underserved New Yorkers, and create good-paying jobs. This is how we build more equitable, healthier, and sustainable communities for the post-pandemic future."

"Empire State Development, through our New York City Regional Economic Development Council, is thrilled to be a partner on the New York State Regional Food Hub project," **Empire State Development Acting Commissioner, and President & CEO-designate Eric Gertler said.** "The Hub's unique service model not only demonstrates that New York's diverse economy includes farming but also enhances business opportunity for Upstate farmers to provide fresh food and produce options for their downstate neighbors."

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Richard A. Ball said, "I am so pleased to join this groundbreaking ceremony and help to celebrate the New York State Regional Food Hub with all our partners who have worked so hard to make the Food Hub a reality. This critical infrastructure project came to fruition thanks to the vision and insight of the New York State-New York City Food Hubs Task Force, which was a result of the State's Upstate-Downstate Summit. The New York State Regional Food Hub is an incredible opportunity to connect our upstate farmers with the downstate marketplace, growing their business while increasing food access to underserved New Yorkers. The Food Hub, when complete, will be a game changer for New York agriculture."



“The pandemic demonstrated just how critical investing in and diversifying our regional food system is,” said **Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development Vicki Been**. “By strengthening our regional distribution channels, creating local jobs, and supporting regional farmers, this Regional Food Hub embodies how infrastructure investments can rebuild New York City into a stronger, fairer, and more resilient city.”

“Every New Yorker should have access to fresh, affordable produce especially in communities hardest hit by COVID-19,” said **NYCEDC Acting President Rachel Loeb**. “That is why we’re thrilled this new Hub will provide food to New Yorkers in low-income communities, create new jobs, all while supporting regional farmers. We look forward to working with the State, Elected Officials and GrowNYC, to bring this vision to life.”

“We are tremendously grateful to and thankful for State and City leaders, and all supporters of this project, who share our vision to provide access to fresh, healthy food to all New Yorkers while strengthening regional agriculture,” **Marcel Van Ooyen, President and CEO of GrowNYC** said. “I’m so happy to see this day when we break ground on the Hub, which will not only hugely impact our ability benefit local farmers and underserved New Yorkers, but will also serve as an example of how cities throughout the United States can bring fresh farm products to their neighborhoods and, at the same time, support their local farm systems.”

“Today’s groundbreaking of GrowNYC’s regional food hub is a landmark moment in investing thoughtfully and strategically in our food infrastructure here in New York. The food hub will reduce the costs of bringing the goods to market, thus expanding access to affordable, healthy and fresh foods for all New Yorkers,” said **Kate MacKenzie, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Food Policy**. “We’re excited to work together to ensure the success of the food hub and see it as the first of many investments we should be making in food infrastructure in the City and the State.”

“I am very excited to see the groundbreaking for the Regional Food Hub of GrowNYC. New York City is one of the richest cities in the world yet so many New Yorkers are going through the day hungry. Access to adequate, nutritious food is a human right yet food insecurity has been a major problem in our city for years. Eradicating hunger has to remain our top priority. The Council will continue working with groups like GrowNYC to expand access to fresh, healthy food to all New Yorkers,” said **City Council Speaker Corey Johnson**.

“Prior to the pandemic, many Bronx residents suffered from food insecurity. COVID-19 has exacerbated this and has shown its impact will be felt for a long time,” said **Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.** “I am proud to have allocated \$600,000 towards the New York State Regional Food Hub, which will benefit local farmers, create true living wage jobs and aid in providing access to healthy food for for our most vulnerable communities during this global crisis and for years to come.”

“The pandemic has exacerbated hunger and food insecurity for Bronx families who were experiencing these issues well before the pandemic. Families are more likely to go hungry now than ever before, and the lack of access to nutritious foods worsens health outcomes for the borough. This Food Hub has the potential to improve the Bronx’s ability to deliver farm-to-table foods, residents’ access to fresh produce, and ultimately better health results. I look forward to a strong partnership with the



Food Hub and its impact on the Bronx and NYC food supply system,” **said Congressman Ritchie Torres (NY-15).**

“Before the pandemic, New Yorkers were experiencing food insecurities and unstable access to fresh, healthy food items at levels unlike any other in the country,” **stated Council Member Rafael Salamanca (17th Council District, The Bronx).** “COVID-19 exacerbated these inequities, leaving supermarket shelves in my district and many others bare of any fruit, produce or vegetables. As a former health care administrator, I’ve used my platform in the Council to close the food gap, partnering with bodegas to place healthy food options near cash registers, being the leading sponsor of the Health Bucks Program in the City Council, and allocating capital money to projects like Grow NYC’s new regional food hub (\$1.45 million in FY20). With this facility in the South Bronx, the most vulnerable New Yorkers in the borough will have access to the freshest and healthiest food items via GrowNYC’s partners in the farming industry. I applaud GrowNYC’s continued commitment to expanding access to healthy food options, especially during the pandemic, and look forward to working with them in my district and beyond to promote a healthier lifestyle in New York City.”

“Bank of America is committed to advancing economic mobility by supporting organizations like GrowNYC that increase access to resources and improve quality of life,” **said Anne Walker, New York City president for Bank of America.** “As we move forward and address the impacts of the coronavirus, including increased hunger, it’s vital to have innovative projects like The Hub underway to help empower vulnerable New Yorkers and transform communities.”

“Sun Club grants allow Green Mountain Energy to advance our mission of changing the way power is made while supporting nonprofit organizations that are vital for the wellbeing of the community,” **said Mark Parsons, vice president and general manager of Green Mountain.** “We are excited to support Grow NYC with a \$150,000 sustainability grant to implement a waste recycling system and install an express electric vehicle charging station. We want to congratulate Grow NYC for breaking ground on the New York State Regional Food Hub and applaud their continued efforts to mitigate food insecurity.”

“The New York State Regional Food Hub will be critical to feeding Bronx communities in need and providing New Markets Tax Credit equity has been key to the development of this 60,000 sq. ft. distribution facility,” **said Courtney Nolan, Vice Present, New Markets Tax Credit Group, Chase.** “We’re proud to support GrowNYC in their efforts of building a food safety net and giving fresh food access to local low-income communities.”

“Farm Credit is pleased to be a part of GrowNYC’s efforts to develop the New York State Regional Food Hub,” **said Mike Reynolds, Farm Credit East CEO.** “GrowNYC’s Greenmarkets and wholesale division are already important market channels for many Farm Credit East members. The regional food hub has great potential to assist even more of the region’s growers in gaining access to the New York City market while also improving access to fresh, healthy food for underserved populations.”

“The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on low income communities of color has made more clear than ever the importance of equitable health infrastructure, including access to fresh and healthy food for every New Yorker,” **said Kirsten Shaw, Director of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regions at the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF).** “GrowNYC has built a strong and



creative set of programs to engage community partners and expand fresh food access in underserved neighborhoods. LIIF is proud to provide a loan to help GrowNYC build on that success and use the New Markets Tax Credit to develop the New York State Regional Food Hub. The Food Hub will strengthen our city's food security for the long-term by supporting regional farmers and increasing fresh food access for vulnerable communities, providing a unique model for cities across the country. LIIF congratulates GrowNYC as well as local leaders and the City and State of New York for their visionary support of this project."

"Expanding access to fresh, regionally-sourced food, especially for nutritionally vulnerable, low-income people, is more critical now than ever," **said Katia Izyumova, Director of Lending, Enterprise Community Loan Fund (Enterprise).** "Enterprise is proud to celebrate alongside GrowNYC the groundbreaking of a project that promises to deliver tangible impact to New York's residents and farmers."

About GrowNYC

GrowNYC is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve New York City's quality of life through environmental and food access programs that transform communities block by block and empower all New Yorkers to secure a clean and healthy environment for future generations. Reaching millions on New Yorkers every year, GrowNYC operates Greenmarkets, Fresh Food Box sites, and Farmstands; engages New Yorkers in zero waste education; builds and maintains green spaces; and engages people of all ages in hands-on education.

About NYCEDC

New York City Economic Development Corporation creates shared prosperity across New York City's five boroughs by strengthening neighborhoods and creating good jobs. NYCEDC works with and for communities to provide them with the resources they need to thrive, and we invest in projects that increase sustainability, support job growth, develop talent, and spark innovation to strengthen the City's competitive advantage. To learn more about our work and initiatives, please visit us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#).

About Empire State Development

Empire State Development (ESD) is New York's chief economic development agency. The mission of ESD is to promote a vigorous and growing economy, encourage the creation of new job and economic opportunities, increase revenues to the State and its municipalities, and achieve stable and diversified local economies. Through the use of loans, grants, tax credits and other forms of financial assistance, ESD strives to enhance private business investment and growth to spur job creation and support prosperous communities across New York State. ESD is also the primary administrative agency overseeing Governor Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Councils and the marketing of "I LOVE NY," the State's iconic tourism brand. For more information on Regional Councils and Empire State Development, please visit regionalcouncils.ny.gov and esd.ny.gov.



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