

Around the Farm

How can landscape architects foster better urban farming communities

As a landscape architecture student, being on the farm means something different. As climate change continues to affect every aspect of our lives, it becomes increasingly important to think about alternative ways for more sustainable food production. One way of achieving this is by having local produce. Urban spaces are characterized by their verticality and the density of population around them.

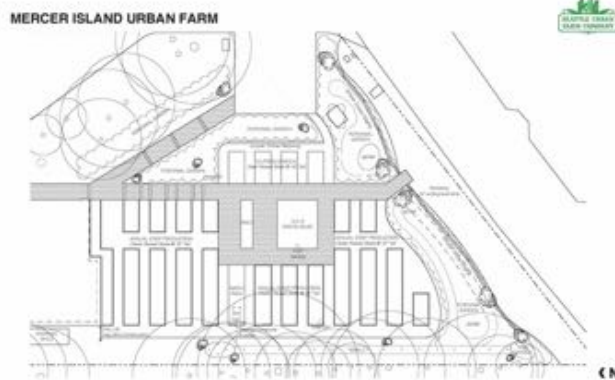
As I walk down stairs to the farm clubhouse at UW Farm Mercer Court, oftentimes I find myself looking at the structures that support the whole farm. Unlike our farm site at the Center of Urban Horticulture, our farm at Mercer is situated in a highly urban site, each plot surrounded by tall residential buildings, and the whole site span across two stories vertically from one end to the other. The stairs have been the biggest challenge people have in the past few years working here. We see farm teams and volunteers carrying large totes of heavy produce up and down the stairs all the time. Wouldn't it be a better design if there were not so many stairs and elevation change?

I selected some great examples of urban farms to showcase some examples of successful local food production processes.

1. Mercer Island Urban Farm (Residential scale)
Seattle Urban Farm Company
Client: Mercer Island resident



Photo credit: Seattle Urban Farm Company

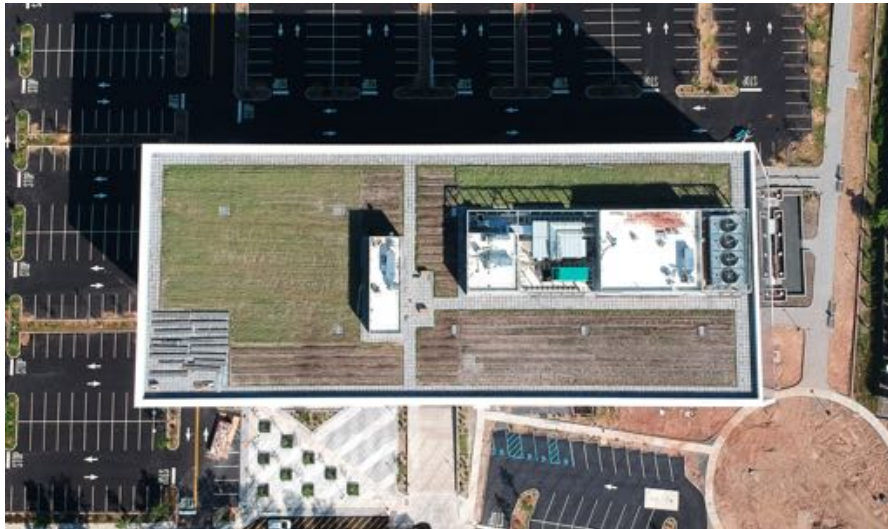


This is a residential design project by Seattle Urban Farm Company. The new design shaped the landscape into a series of raised beds, connected by permeable pavings.

Takeaways:

These examples could be used for similar sites with topographic changes. Using salvaged woods and locally sourced materials could make this kind of small scale project more easily achievable.

2. Corporate Commons 3
Brooklyn Grange
Location: Staten Island, NY



This urban farm is located on the rooftop of an office building in Staten island, NY. This rooftop farm is the biggest rooftop garden in NYC, giving a green and vibrant view towards Manhattan and Fresh Kills Park.

Takeaways:

Rooftop farms are gaining more popularity in the past few years, especially during the pandemic. Urban rooftops account for a large portion of the overall shared spaces in cities, but using them as garden requires a lot of considerations beforehand during the design and construction phase. Things like wheelbarrow circulation, irrigation systems, ventilation, and weight bearing capacity are all things that needs to be considered.