

Plans Move Ahead for Grow Dat Youth Farm

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This semester Tulane architecture students are designing a plan for an urban farm that will expand fresh produce options for New Orleanians and increase jobs and educational opportunities for high school students. Alumna Johanna Gilligan is director of the Grow Dat Youth Farm that will cover 3.5 acres in New Orleans City Park, including offices, outdoor classrooms and market space.



Johanna Gilligan, a 2003 Newcomb College graduate, is an Urban Innovator fellow at Tulane working to improve the regional food system. The Grow Dat Youth Farm is one of her initiatives. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

“Our mission is to nurture young people through the meaningful work of growing food,” says Gilligan. “We will work with several high schools and youth organizations to recruit paid interns and teach them how to grow vegetables and fruit and prepare them for market.” The high school students also will have classes in cooking, nutrition and finance.

Gilligan, a 2003 Newcomb College graduate, is an [Urban Innovator fellow](#) at Tulane. She was awarded a stipend from the Rockefeller Foundation to develop the program in coordination with Tulane Community Health Centers and the Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives office at Tulane.

Meanwhile, two architecture studio classes are working on design aspects for the farm for the Tulane City Center, which oversees the [site design](#).

Leading the architecture design class is [Scott Bernhard](#), while [Abigail Feldman](#) leads the landscape design class.

The building stage, supported by major gifts from Maziar Behrooz, a 1985 School of Architecture alumnus, and John and Anne Mullen, could begin as early as next month.

By January 2012, says Gilligan, one acre will be in production. The farm aims to produce 10,000 pounds of food in its first year.

“At full production, 40 percent of the food will be donated and 60 percent will be sold ? either at a market area on site or to local vendors,” says Gilligan. She anticipates that the farm will grow into its space over the next three years.