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ZOETIC WALLS CLEVELAND MURAL BEING PAINTED IN COLLINWOOD - PHOTO BOB PERKOSKI | [SHOW PHOTO](#)



for good

largest urban greenhouse in the country officially opens in central neighborhood

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2013

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Cleveland has gained a reputation nationally for its vibrant local food culture. The city's foodie status has gotten quite a bit bigger - literally - thanks to [Green City Growers Cooperative](#), a 3.25-acre greenhouse that celebrated its official opening on Feb. 25.

Size matters at the hydroponic, high-tech greenhouse, which aims to produce three million heads of lettuce and 300,000 pounds of herbs annually to vendors within a 50-mile radius from its location in Cleveland's Central neighborhood.

"It's the largest food production greenhouse in an urban area in the U.S.," says Mary Donnell, CEO of Green City Growers.

The greenhouse, which is the size of three football fields, grows its healthy wares in nutrient-rich water rather than soil. The year-round venture, overseen by the nonprofit [Evergreen Cooperative Corporation](#), started harvesting crops in January and is already producing about 60,000 heads of lettuce per week. Green City Growers customers include grocery stores and restaurants.

Planting the leafy goods are local residents. The 25 Clevelanders Green City Growers hired to run the operation will become employee-owners of the cooperative business, receiving a living wage and health insurance.

Besides producing those tasty eats, the goal is create jobs and build financial assets for residents of Cleveland's underserved neighborhoods, says Donnell, whose background includes helping to create a hydroponic greenhouse program for The Ohio State University. The project's key partners include the City of Cleveland, the [Cleveland Foundation](#), PNC Bank and the National Development Council.

Cleveland's new greenhouse is an economic development project that could mean better things for an inner-city neighborhood. "It's wonderful that we have this in the heart of the city," Donnell says.

SOURCE: Mary Donnell

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