



City of Brockton

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For Immediate Release:

Brockton Public Schools Awarded Competitive Food Security Infrastructure Grant

BROCKTON, MA - Brockton Public Schools have been awarded a Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to strengthen the local food system in the City of Brockton.

“During this holiday season and the continued health crisis, it is vital that our families in the City of Brockton receive increased access to healthy, local food and we are excited to be a recipient of this award. We are honored to be among the 231 projects to receive funding out of an unprecedented 1,300 applications,” said Brockton Mayor Robert F. Sullivan. “Our sincere thanks to the Baker-Polito Administration and our State delegation.”

“It is critical and timely for us to address access to healthy, local food to meet the needs of many of our students and families facing urgent food insecurity as a result of the coronavirus pandemic,” said Brockton Public Schools Superintendent Michael Thomas.

The FSIG award (\$118,260) will be used to purchase a freight container farm. This climate-controlled, hydroponic farm thrives within a 40-foot insulated, custom-built shipping container. “The freight farm will be located on the Brockton High School campus and provide year-round fresh produce to address critical community-wide issues of food insecurity, nutrition, and sustainability,” said Brockton Public Schools Grants Director Karen Watts, who led the successful development of the proposal.

Brockton High School Science Department Head Dr. David Mangus and his faculty will oversee the project. “The farm will produce up to 3.5 acres-worth of nutritionally dense crops and will be an important hands-on educational resource for our students in high-tech urban agriculture,” said Dr. Magnus. “It will provide timely, real-world applications for students in science courses, including horticulture, ecology, environmental science, and earth science.”

Over 13,000 plants will be grown from nutrient-enhanced water and light energy from powerful LED lights, without the use of pesticides, herbicides, synthetic fertilizers, or other chemicals, using 99.8% less water than conventional farming methods.

“City of Champions”

“Our faculty will engage students in vocational engineering, computer science, culinary arts, and business programs in relevant courses integrated with the freight farm operation,” said Shawn Desmond, the High School’s Coordinator of Career and Technical Education. “For example, students will be assigned capstone projects to develop business plans including marketing, advertising, and outreach for the farm’s produce sales and distribution.”

MassHire will be an integral partner enabling students to receive training as paid interns in produce sales and distribution through their *Summer Youth Works Program*. Student internship sites will include a year-round Brockton High School Farm Stand and the Brockton Farmer’s Market. The district was approved to operate the farm stands by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service for sales to low-income residents as a SNAP/EBT Retailer.

The district’s grant was announced on November 24, 2020, in the fifth round of FSIG awards by the Baker-Polito Administration. A total of \$56 million was committed through the administration’s Food Security Task Force to invest in local food infrastructure to ensure access to local, nutritious food for families throughout Massachusetts.

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