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Department of Environmental Protection, Workforce Housing Group, Banana Kelly, Grow NYC, Department of Housing Preservation and Development Announce Completion of New Urban Garden at Formerly Blighted Bronx Buildings

Kelly Street Green Takes Root Behind Five Rehabbed Bronx Buildings Once Listed as Some of the City's Most Distressed Properties

The "Double Green" Project Will Produce \$43,000 Worth of Food Each Growing Season and Manage More than 250,000 Gallons of Stormwater Annually, Improving the Health of the East River

Before and After Photos can be Viewed on [DEP's Flickr Page](#)

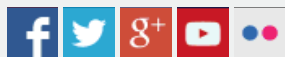
The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Workforce Housing Group (WHG), GrowNYC, Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and partners today celebrated the completion of the Kelly Street Green urban garden. Kelly Street Green is the final component of the rehabilitation of the five buildings at 916, 920, 924, 928, and 935 Kelly Street in the Hunts Point-

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Longwood section of the Bronx. Seeing potential in unused backyard space, which has southern exposure that is ideal for planting, WHG applied for and received nearly \$237,000 in funding through DEP's Green Infrastructure Grant Program, which funds stormwater management projects on private property, and worked with GrowNYC in the design and implementation of the garden plan. Kelly Street Green is one of 29 organizations DEP's Green Infrastructure Grant Program has partnered with since 2011 and has the capacity to capture as much as 13,500 gallons of stormwater each time it rains, or more than 250,000 gallons annually, and reduce pollution in the East River. The five buildings along Kelly Street were severely distressed and in foreclosure prior to WHG partnering with HPD to acquire and preserve them as affordable housing; a process which completed early last year with a celebration welcoming the original tenants home to newly renovated apartments.

"Investing in green infrastructure is a cost-effective way to improve the health of New York City's local waterways, but it also brings many additional benefits to communities including a greener landscape, cleaner air, increased shade and cooler temperatures during the summer," **said DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd**. "In addition to supporting community gardens like this one through our grant program, DEP's Green Infrastructure Program will transform the city's streetscapes as we begin to install the first of thousands of specially designed curbside gardens that will not only manage stormwater, but beautify neighborhoods as well."

"These buildings were once the poster child for distress and neglect. Together we worked to end the cycle of negligent ownership that plagued the properties and threatened the stability of the neighborhood," **said HPD Commissioner Vicki Been**. "Today we're celebrating the completion of a first-class garden that gives the tenants access to healthy food options and which also enhances the green infrastructure of the community. These buildings are now a resource of affordable housing, a positive influence in the community, and an example of how urban renewal can be achieved through mission driven public-private partnerships."

"Affordable housing is critical, and of vital importance to people, but helping grow that community and laying deep roots is what keeps a community grounded and sustainable for future generations," **said John A. Crotty, Principal of Workforce Housing Group**. "The garden is a community development tool, it's a positive affirmation of building community based on the principal that residents should be given a real choice, and have agency over their lives. Rather than enforcing a policy by banning and preventing, the garden provides the opportunity to create and grow. The garden provides residents a real opportunity to make informed and healthy choices."

"We began our work on this block of Kelly Street nearly 40 years ago. But when the privately owned buildings on the block fell into speculative hands, we needed partners with capital and expertise to rescue these buildings and partner with us for their redevelopment," **said Harold DeRienzo, President of Banana Kelly**. "We are pleased that we were able to partner with WHG in the redevelopment. We are equally pleased that they took the lead on raising funds for this massive green infrastructure project, our largest to date. Brick and mortar builds neighborhoods, but it is only through projects like this that we are able to truly build community."

The new garden area is comprised of 13,000 square feet of contiguous space behind four of the buildings at 916, 920, 924, and 928 Kelly Street. The Kelly Street Green is a combination of landscaped and planted areas, with raised beds that will produce as much as \$43,000 in fresh food each growing season. For vegetable production, more than 2,000 plants were brought in to help augment the approximately 500 plants started from seed earlier this year. Kelly Street Green will not only provide the tenants of these buildings with access to healthy food but will foster participation in the creation and distribution of the garden's production.

WHG received nearly \$237,000 in funding from DEP's Green Infrastructure Grant Program which supports stormwater management projects on private properties in combined sewer areas of New York City. Banana Kelly was also awarded a \$100,000 community grant from TD Bank to help fund the creation of Kelly Street Green. The green infrastructure technologies installed at the garden include a 1,402 square foot green roof, a 3,675 square foot community garden with raised planters, 2,775 square feet of gravel, permeable pavers with underlying storage area, and eight water storage barrels.

DEP is engaged in a city-wide effort to soften the impervious urban landscape and help absorb rainwater that would otherwise drain into the combined sewer system and contribute to combined sewer overflows into local waterways. This is the fourth year of the Green Infrastructure Grant Program. During the first three years DEP committed over \$11 million to fund 29 different projects, which was matched by \$5.6 million in private funds. In total, the projects will prevent an estimated 13 million gallons of stormwater from entering the combined sewer system each year.

Over the last decade DEP has invested nearly \$10 billion to upgrade wastewater treatment plant capacity and related efforts to reduce combined sewer overflows, and the cleanliness and health of New York City harbor water continues to improve to levels not seen in more than a century. However, overflows remain the city's major harbor water quality challenge. As traditional "grey" infrastructure upgrades became increasingly expensive and the resulting incremental water quality improvements diminished, in 2010 DEP launched the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan, an alternative approach to improving harbor water quality that combines traditional infrastructure upgrades and the integration of green infrastructure to capture and retain stormwater runoff before it ever enters the sewer system. The Plan has the ambitious goal of capturing the first inch of rain that falls on 10 percent of the city's impervious surfaces in combined sewer areas. This particular project was undertaken in connection with the settlement of an enforcement action taken by New York State and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for violations of New York State law and DEC regulations.

In addition to the Grant Program for private properties, DEP has a large capital construction program that builds green infrastructure on city-owned property such as streets and sidewalks, schools, and parkland. DEP also has put in place stormwater management regulations for new development and redevelopments. Over the next two decades, DEP is planning for \$1.5 billion in public funding, and another \$900 million in funding connected to new development or redevelopment, for targeted green infrastructure installations, as well as approximately \$2.9 billion in cost-effective grey infrastructure upgrades, to significantly reduce overflows and further improve the health of local waterways.

Throughout the planning and construction of the Kelly Street Green, WHG has collaborated with Grow NYC in the funding, design and implementation of the garden plan. GrowNYC supported the program, helped design the garden and has provided technical assistance and tools along the way. They will continue to have a role in the project as garden management evolves. GrowNYC was also vital in identifying the two full time caretakers who now live on site. In addition to managing the garden, the caretakers are educators and community advocates who will help foster the building's resident's interaction with the garden. They have already started two programs "Chef in the Kitchen" and "Know your Plants." Both classes are intended to maximize residents' understanding of garden and its production possibilities.

"I applaud Workforce Housing Group's vision and am thrilled to be a partner on this very exciting farm project," said **Marcel J. Van Ooyen, Executive Director at GrowNYC**. "As an organization committed to greening New York City block by block, I can't think of a more fitting urban greening effort for us to work on. The Kelly Street Green backyard farm is everything that urban sustainability should be about: saving water, greening a community and providing access to healthy,

fresh produce. I am deeply grateful to Workforce Housing, DEP and all the project partners and funders for having the vision and commitment to create an urban oasis in one of the city's most unlikely places.”

The previous ownership of the five buildings along Kelly Street, after refinancing the properties and incurring an unsustainable level of debt, allowed them to slide into such a deplorable state that all five were placed in HPD's Alternative Enforcement Program (AEP), an initiative that annually targets the 200 most distressed buildings in the city for remediation. WHG and HPD, along with Banana Kelly and other partners were able to affect a change in ownership, and put in place a comprehensive rehabilitation and financing plan that got the buildings back into good repair and into a stable financial situation for the long-term.

It took 16 months to perform the repair work on the entire Kelly Street portfolio's 81 total units. The rehabilitation of the buildings was extensive and included roof replacement, exterior sidewalk/concrete replacement, masonry work, replacement of public hall stairs, joist replacement, new kitchens and bathrooms, new apartment doors, window replacement, new entrance doors, replacement of the storm drainage system, plumbing, electrical and lighting upgrade, and new security systems. In addition to aiding in the rehabilitation of the buildings, the funding provided by HPD includes regulatory agreements that ensure the apartments remain affordable to low-income households. [The ribbon cutting celebrating the completion of rehabilitation](#) and the return of the original tenants took place in March 2013.

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Workforce Housing Group (WHG)

WHG is a for-profit affordable housing development firm that specializes in re-purposing distressed multifamily real estate in the New York metropolitan area. WHG works collaboratively with for-profit, not-for-profit, and government partners to reposition financially and physically distressed properties as long term affordable housing resources. <http://www.workforcehousinggroup.com>

NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with nearly \$14 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. This capital program is responsible for critical projects like City Water Tunnel No. 3; the Staten Island Bluebelt program, an ecologically sound and cost-effective stormwater management system; the city's Watershed Protection Program, which protects sensitive lands upstate near the city's reservoirs in order to maintain their high water quality; and the installation of more than 820,000 Automated Meter Reading devices, which will allow customers to track their daily water use, more easily manage their accounts and be alerted to potential leaks on their properties. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/nycwater](https://www.facebook.com/nycwater), or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/nycwater.

NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)

HPD is the nation's largest municipal housing preservation and development agency. Its mission is to promote quality housing and viable neighborhoods for New Yorkers through education, outreach, loan and development programs, and enforcement of housing quality standards. HPD is tasked with fulfilling Mayor de Blasio's Housing New York: A Five-Borough Ten-Year Plan to build and preserve 200,000 affordable units for New Yorkers at the very lowest incomes to those in the middle class. For more information visit nyc.gov/hpd and for regular

updates on HPD news and services, connect with us via [facebook.com/nychpd](https://www.facebook.com/nychpd) and twitter.com/nychousing.

Banana Kelly

Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, Inc. is a community development corporation located in the Hunts Point-Longwood section of the South Bronx. Our mission is to contribute to a revitalized, safe and economically vibrant South Bronx through the development and management of affordable housing and provision of targeted human services. Over the past 38 years we have renovated and upgraded over 9,000 units of housing in the South Bronx. Our social service programs work with homeless and disabled residents, including residents with developmental disabilities. Our healthy living initiatives include the development of four green infrastructure projects to date. In the past ten years we have collaborated with partners on the development of one new construction project, and two over-leveraged distressed housing projects. The Kelly Street project, of which Kelly Green is a part, represents our largest and most productive collaboration to date.

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