



TRENTON AREA SOUP KITCHEN • 72 1/2 Escher St. • PO Box 872 • Trenton, NJ 08605  
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### **Trenton Area Soup Kitchen and Capital City Farm Neighbors and Partners**

The Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) was founded in 1982, and provided meals from several locations before building its current home at 72 ½ Escher Street, the doors of which opened in July 1991. Over the years two more building expansions were needed to meet the growing demand for meals, as well as the expanded services TASK began to provide to increase its patrons' self-sufficiency. TASK has continued to provide meals, but also has grown its adult education program, computer lab, and art programs to improve the quality of life for many of Trenton's impoverished residents. To accommodate this growth TASK plans to expand its facility by 3,500 square feet. We are working with our neighbor, Capital City Farm, as their land and TASK's are adjacent and, together, we want to ensure that the expansion meets our mutual goals.

Capital City Farm (CCF) began as a vision in 2011 when a TASK volunteer looked at what was previously a weed filled lot, and wondered if the property could be used to provide something positive to the neighborhood. After reaching out to D&R Greenway Land Trust a group of area non-profit partners, including TASK, ISLES, East Trenton Collaborative, Escher Street SRO, Helping Arms and the Rescue Mission was formed to begin the process of acquiring the land and developing the concept for an Urban Farm. Local residents were included, forming an advisory committee to help guide this development.

From inception, it was clear that TASK would be a significant part of life at CCF, and vice versa. Since the land was remediated in 2015, and the farm's first crop was planted in 2016, conversation has continued as to how best to use our mutual efforts to meet what is, in essence, the goal of both organizations: a place that can nourish the mind, body and soul.

Some mutual efforts are already in place. With the development of the farm property better access via a walkway to both TASK and the farm was created, making travel here safer for residents. The farm made possible a general beautification with the cleanup of the end of Escher Street, the change in fencing and planting of trees along the street. Rain water that drains off of TASK is used by CCF; leftover food scraps from meals are used in compost at the farm; TASK provides meeting space; and TASK also provides payroll support for some farm staff. Patrons from TASK have been hired to work on the farm, and were involved in painting the artwork on the storage unit.

It is envisioned that with the proposed expansion TASK and CCF will be able to have several program ideas come to fruition.

- The new adult education space in the expansion will provide room for CCF and TASK to provide nutrition education, education on garden design and maintenance, and to assist residents in monitoring the positive impact freshly grown food can have on their health.
- The TASK kitchen will be available and easily accessible for use by CCF to hold cooking classes.
- The dining room at TASK can provide indoor space on evenings and weekends for CCF events that may need to be brought indoors due to inclement weather.
- TASK will be able to purchase the freshest food from CCF, which supports both entities financially.
- The partnership will allow TASK, CCF, and the other non-profit partners, opportunities to work together on outdoor events that benefit the children and youth of the community, an item cited in the community engagement project D & R Greenway facilitated.
- Because of the community engagement project, it is clear that community members value both TASK and CCF, and together we can help local residents enjoy a positive community.