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Urban Ecology Australia Inc 105 Sturt St Adelaide Phone (08) 8212 6760 <u>E: urbanec@urbanecology.org.au</u>	

From the Convener

UEA's November 2011 AGM was very lively with our guest speakers Beth and Ray Mylius giving an inspiring discussion on how they engage the community and wider audiences. It was agreed that we should develop further collaborations, perhaps with quarterly meetings/ discussions and invite all the different groups working towards sustainable futures to attend.

In December we celebrated the 20th anniversary of Incorporation of UEA with an honouring of past members who made it all possible. It was a good afternoon, a balance between a focus on the future but respecting the work that has gone into UEA's success. [See page 8 for a selection of photos taken by Sharon Ede at the party including skypeing Sophia Van Ruth in from Amsterdam].

Now in February we are back in full swing and looking forward to the year ahead. One thing the board has been considering is how we can strive to continue to meet our vision..

"The UEA vision is the transformation of human settlements into Ecological Cities – vibrant, equitable, socially supportive, ecologically sustaining and economically viable communities."

If you have any ideas or want to be involved please contact us.

Speaking of that we are also interested in seeking feedback on the information provided in this newsletter. Please let us know if you enjoyed reading it and/or if you would like more information.

I am forever surfing on the social media sites and came up with two pictures of different and integrated building gardens. It is good to see this sort of green design happening.

Finally we would encourage everyone who is reading this to become a member of UEA. Membership is free (tax deductible donations are welcomed) you just have to either sign up yourself using the membership form on the website or ring the office and leave your details.

Sue Gilbey

[On page 8 we have shown some of the fascinating developments that Sue found in her 'surfing']

Tours update

Christie Walk tours were still busy in Term 4 of last year which is usually a quiet period. Extra students have been visiting under the City Schools program, subsidised by the Adelaide City Council and others under the Disadvantaged Schools program with the tour and transport costs totally funded by NRM.

In addition there were nine classes from Rostrevor, Marymount and Endeavour Colleges, and three TAFE groups.

Several community groups have brought members along – Conservation Volunteers, National Seniors Australia and a fitness group from the gym at North Adelaide Aquatic Centre. We were also really pleased to host a visit from a group from the Aldinga Eco-village.

Do you belong to a community group who would like to visit Christie Walk?

Please contact the office on: 8212 6760 if you would like to arrange this.

Cruxcatalyst



The sustainability movement has done great work in getting a range of issues, from climate change to green buildings and cities, on the mainstream agenda.

But one thing the sustainability movement has not yet done well is articulate itself in a way that has truly resonated with people (although there are individuals who can and do, but their voices are not). The consequences are that, for example, the public debate on climate change is reduced to an argument over carbon tax.

How can we get people to 'get it'?

Right now, one thing I'm noticing in discussions with people is the perceived need to stay as far away from 'green' or 'sustainability' language and branding as possible, for fear of triggering a reaction against what are now 'loaded' words for many people. There's another question here about reclaiming the language - whether or not to, and if so, how (see The Australia Institute's Richard Denniss's talk 'Environmentalists Should Give Up on Sustainability: *http://bit. ly/wvOzfQ*).

For years, I wrote fact sheets, presented to and spoke to people in my capacity as a volunteer with Urban Ecology Australia. I wrote to communicate ecocity and environmental ideas to people, believing if they had good information, their views would change in accordance with that information, and they would act on it. This is true - but only for some people.

I wish I had known then what I know now!

And so as part of my contribution to helping create 'the shift', I've established a site called '*Cruxcatalyst*' (crux - the heart, or core; catalyst - change agent) to support sustainability change agents with resources, ideas and examples to become more effective communicators.

The kinds of things I'll be bringing include:

practical tools eg: 3 Tips for Effective Sustainability Conversations http://www.cruxcatalyst.com/2012/02/02/effective-conversations/

examples of effective communications approaches: eg. 'Don't Hurry, Be Happy http://www.cruxcatalyst.com/2012/01/11/dont-hurry-be-happy/

insights into psychology, neuroscience and change theory eg: 'Values, Campaigns & Change' http://www.cruxcatalyst.com/2012/01/25/values-campaigns-change/

personal support for change agents eg: *Be The Change - But Not All Of It*! http://www.cruxcatalyst.com/2011/11/14/be-the-change-but-not-all-of-it/

Crux was officially launched only at the start of January 2012, so it is newly hatched, and I've already had some good feedback. My intent is to be as useful as possible to other people like me who are struggling with how to best get their message to resonate.

If you'd like to subscribe and get all my updates, all you need to do is head to the home page and enter your name and email address: *www.cruxcatalyst.com*

You can also follow me on Facebook and Twitter at www.facebook.com/cruxcatalyst; www.twitter.com/cruxcatalyst

Let me know what you think, leave comments, challenge me, add your experiences and stories, and please share this with anyone you think it could help - that could be anyone involved in social change work, not just 'green'/sustainability folks.

Sharon Ede

Sharon Ede is a Life Member of Urban Ecology Australia, and during her university years was a full time volunteer almost from the moment the Centre for Urban Ecology opened at 83 Halifax Street in 1993 until 1997. She also served on the board for most of that time.

STOP PRESS!

Could this be the most challenging issue currently facing humanity? Rising sea levels will spark the largest movement of displaced people in human history. The areas in the world most severely affected are within our geographical region. How will this affect Australia? What are we doing to get ready?

Just Sustainability Australia will be hosting a forum at the Hawke Centre on **May 9th** in an attempt to begin to answer some of these questions. Don't miss this very important forum, featuring Dr Quassem, an expert on water management and the Chair of the Disaster Management Committee from Bangladesh, one of the most seriously affected countries; Fran Baum, Professor of Public Health and Director of the Southgate Institute of Health, Society and Equity; and Darren Ray (to be confirmed) a climatologist. For further information contact Sue Gilbey, 0431 112898, gilbeysue@hotmail.com

Books, articles... reviews

There are a multitude of books and articles 'out there' - so I have picked out some that seem to have relevance to Urban Ecology and our concerns.

And now I have to confess that a lot of what I have read has challenged many of my long-held beliefs about such things as nuclear power, GE ...

But perhaps the challenge is to open our minds to different beliefs and findings! I find it difficult to do! I hope readers will join in reviewing books, articles, DVDs etc that can go into a future newsletter! Joan Carlin

The Great Disruption

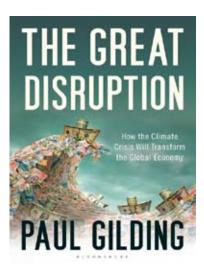
by Paul Gilding

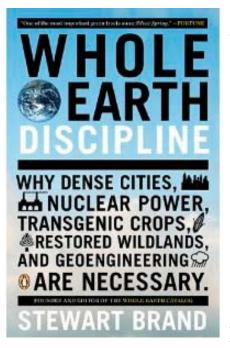
"If presented with a choice between making some dramatic but vital changes to how we live — or the end of our economy and our civilisation — we won't consider it a choice at all. We will act."

This book sounds like a very depressing read but in fact it is not!

"One of those who has been warning me of [a coming crisis] for a long time is Paul Gilding, the Australian environmental business expert. He has a name for this moment-- when both Mother Nature and Father Greed have hit the wall at once -'The Great Disruption.'" Thomas Friedman in the New York Times

{Paul Gilding was a speaker at the Womad Festival in Belair National Park last August)





Whole Earth Discipline: an Ecopragmatist Manifesto

The author of this challenging book is Stewart Brand who many of you (older people anyway!) may remember as the author of *Whole Earth Catalogue*.

In Stewart Brand's words: "We are as gods and HAVE to get good at it".

He writes about cities being the longest-lived of all human organizations and although they are horrendously expensive, both environmentally and economically, they more than earn their keep.

Later in the book he talks about nuclear power and declares that we need to reassess our fears in the light of new evidence. Below are a couple of reviews.

'Brand is talking about climate change and in particular the possibility of rapid, difficult to reverse, tipping points in climate. Brand has a challenging message for environmentalists: If we take the threat of climate change seriously we must recognize that Cities are Green, Nukes are Green and Genetic Engineering is Green.

'Brand's long history with the environmental movement should give his message credibility with that group. Brand's rationalism, reasonableness, and pro-technology, pro-civilization outlook gave his environmental message credibility with me.' Alex Tabarrok

'Whole Earth Discipline shatters a number of myths and presents counterintuitive observations on why cities are actually greener than countryside, how nuclear power is the future of energy, and why genetic engineering is the key to crop and land management. With a combination of scientific rigor and passionate advocacy, Brand shows us exactly where the sources of our dilemmas lie and offers a bold and inventive set of policies and solutions for creating a more sustainable society.

'In the end, says Brand, the environmental movement must become newly responsive to fast-moving science and take up the tools and discipline of engineering. We have to learn how to manage the planet's global-scale natural infrastructure with as light a touch as possible and as much intervention as necessary.

'Stewart Brand's timely and down to Earth new book gives me hope that his wisdom will help us prevent the Earth system breaking as the economic system has done. The last things we need are more theoretical models or visionary hitech. This book is truly important and a joy to read. It is a practical guide to damage limitation and a sustainable retreat to a far more efficient society.' James Lovelock

Books, articles,... reviews

The Windup Girl – (A Genetically Modified madness novel.) Paolo Bacigalupi Reviewed by Michael Dwyer

Why not speculate on where GM Genetic Modification, will lead and how it will evolve in a world imperilled by global warming, rising seas and the peak and decline in world oil supply? And food? Most businesses today paint rosy pictures of the future and the benefits companies produce for everyone. Here is an author who speculates upon a different stark profit driven possibility.

Paolo Bacigalupi describes a future where the anti-hero's long dead grandparents experienced the end of 'The Expansion'. The end of expansion is the end of economic growth. With the end of the Expansion comes the tumult of 'The Contraction'. The anti-hero is not a 'salary' man as the Japanese now call them but a 'calorie' man. Calorie men work for huge multi-national food companies who genetically modify crops and sell the seed throughout the world. But that's not the full picture. In order to increase market penetration, a good marketing strategy is to create GM diseases which devastate every country's own natural food crops. Countries are then forced to buy the disease resistant GM strain - or die.

This horror future is fiction and will never happen, will it. It is one end of a spectrum of possibilities and very unlikely. Isn't it. Monsanto would never turn to such immoral behaviour even though their reason for existence is profits; good men in the company would never allow it, would they.

The story is set in Thailand, one of the few countries where the diseases have been kept at bay by draconian measures such as burning a whole infected village or town. Environmental laws are enforced by the feared 'white shirts' who work for the Department of the Environment. They ride their bicycles to problem areas and to prayer. Creating greenhouse gases is heavily taxed and megadonts, GM elephants, put power into wind up springs which are strong enough to power motor bikes. The seawalls hold back the rising seas and the people of Bangkok look with fear at the walls and hope that the, allowed, coal powered royal pumps keep running so they don't drown. A delightfully black scenario set in a third world country amidst the rubble of the skyscrapers of the expansion, economic growth period.

The characters are real and human and appeal to the

reader even though every player is tainted with degrees of corruption. Perhaps even the Windup Girl, a genetically modified geisha with the strength of ten and the short speed of a cheetah.

Paolo Bacigalupi comments almost invisibly on the state of the world today. Religion has taken over in east and west; the Grahamites are a feared dominant force who brook no opposition and the green headbands rule in



former Malaysia, stripping and killing the ethnic Chinese.

Transport is environmentally sound because of course, creation of greenhouse gases is a crime punishable by death and war. But coal is still used where it must be and the coal wars rage up north. Dirigibles float across continents and extremely high tech wind powered sailing ships cross the oceans. Some remember when the last 747 took off from Bangkok airport never to return.

Every character, from the Windup Girl, to the refugee fleeing the green headbands, to Anderson the calorie man want something badly. These wonderful characters draw the reader into the unfolding and suspenseful story.

Events will never happen this way in real life but a glimpse of the possibility helps us set our own more likely thoughts of the future. (though I once came across a short story written in 1910 which gave a fairly good description of the internet.) GM will never go the way of The Windup Girl but as the book often points out, accidents do happen.

The Windup Girl by Paolo Bacigalupi is available in the Adelaide City Council library. It is for the reader looking for a good yarn, the Peak Oil enthusiast who understands the inseparable connection between cheap abundant oil and civilisation and the politically aware environmentalist.

Variously priced from about \$23, this book is the perfect gift for the person who loves a good read but doesn't want to know about that boring environmental stuff.

Michael Dwyer m.dwyer6@gmail.com

Man-Made World: choosing between progress and planet Quarterly Essay by Andrew Charleton

Andrew Charleton's essay uses mathematics (The Kaya Identity) to discuss emissions reduction targets: total emissions are made up of population; consumption per person; energy efficiency and energy emissions (measured as the emissions released per unit of energy). So he argues that it will be extremely difficult to clean up our energy supply to reach targets set by governments. This doesn't mean we shouldn't be trying!

He looks at nuclear power as well as renewable alternatives and argues that for some countries nuclear power will be an essential weapon in the fight against climate change..

Books, articles,... reviews But Will the Planet Notice?: How Smart Economics Can Save the World Gernot Wagner



Gernot Wagner, in an interview with Joanne Myers (director of Public Affairs Programs at the Carnegie Council), makes several points:

One, climate science is clear; the globe is, in fact, warming. Given that the science is clear, the second point is that there is often this amazing disconnect between what we know is the case when we look at the science, and what we, the most committed among environmentalists, are doing or

willing to do in response. And, three, the only solution for this, or almost any other environmental problem at this scale is, in fact, to listen to the economics.

Ice is melting at the poles, and water is redistributing at the equator. And we can, in fact, measure its effects. The effects occur in fractions of a second, but days are, in fact, getting longer because of global warming. That's the situation we are in at this point.

This is not sometime in the distant future; it is happening right now. This is not about models showing that this will happen or could happen. There are satellite measurements right now telling us that this is, in fact, the case, that the polar icecaps are melting. So yes, this is happening, it's happening at a measurable rate, and it is happening at an accelerating pace.

Now, I am not saying that we know everything about this problem, that the science is settled. There are plenty of uncertainties. But that, of course, is exactly the issue here. There are all these black swans, ten-foot women, unknown unknowns here, that make it even more difficult to address this problem sensibly if we wait much longer.

So looking at this reality, the question then is: What are we doing in response? What are we as environmentalists, and as a society, prepared to do?

While our choices probably include equal part concern for the earth—as well as making a statement about what one believes in—it is arguable that while helping to define the current environmental movement, they and you may not necessarily have been helpful to the cause. Critics question the notion that we can avert global warming solely by buying so-called earthfriendly products. For example, they emphasize that while choosing more fuel-efficient cars is not bad, a far greater effect may be felt when fuel efficiency standards are raised for all of the industry.

In *But Will the Planet Notice?*,Gernot Wagner emphasizes this point by arguing that "no degree of personal environmental awareness *alone* will avert the global warming chaos humanity now faces."

With perhaps as little as a decade left for planet-saving action, Wagner points out that it is going to take the combined actions of several billion people to make a difference. *Thus, the*

question is: How do we get a critical mass of action that will save the earth? Gernot acknowledges that, at this late date, only an immediate, economic-driven redirection of market forces will make this happen. As he says, "Scientists can tell us how bad it will get, activists can make us pay attention to the ensuring instabilities, but it is only the economists that can help to navigate and take us out of this morass and save the planet. In the end, it is up to us to take personal responsibility for our world." We can do so, he says, by "demanding an economically sound solution that guides us with market forces in the right direction....

Now, that's not exactly comfortable, or comforting, for that matter. The point, of course, is not that we shouldn't be doing these all these good things, recycling and so on. The point is that we should be doing much, much more of that. We all need to do these things.

That is, I guess, the key point here. The real bummer, from the point of view of the science or the economics, is that even if we all did this, even if we all went all-out here and did the right thing—a billion environmentalists recycling, doing all the right things—the planet would still be toast.

So why bother? I work for an environmental group. Why? Why recycle? Why do we do all these things?

Well, on one level, because it makes us feel good. It's the right thing to do, even the ethical thing to do. We ought to be doing these things.

Psychologists call it *action bias*. You are facing these dramatic consequences; you want to do something personally, anything.

Now, unfortunately, there is also a fairly well-documented psychological phenomenon here called the single-action bias. You do one thing and then you move on.

Summing up:

Point 1: the science is clear. I'm happy to debate with anyone outside afterwards. But really, the science on this is as clear as it could possibly be, with something like 98 percent of climate scientists agreeing with the basic premise of global warming. And at this point, it is happening at a rate that is literally slowing down the rotational speed of the planet. And it is happening at this very moment.

Point 2: Absolutely keep recycling, keep refusing out-ofseason grapes, and carry home your local apples in an organic cotton/canvas bag, ideally produced locally, of course, too.

Do all these things. But only do these things if you are painfully aware of the single-action bias, if you are painfully aware of the fact that *we need to do more than just that one thing*.

And lastly, of course,

Point 3: Study up on your economics. Realize that we can't have a free market if we are socializing costs on a massive scale. In the end it's not just about changing light bulbs; *it is about changing laws*. This is the only way to make the planet truly notice.

[edited from 2012 Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs]

'Pocket Neighborhoods: CREATING SMALL-SCALE COMMUNITY IN A LARGE-SCALE WORLD'

by Ross Chapin (Pub. Taunton Press, 2011) Price: \$39.95

(reviewed by Norm Rohde)

This new international title features *Paul Downton and Christie Walk*

This timely, highly readable and beautifully presented book is, in essence, about creating walkable and livable communities in urban, suburban or rural areas. The book profiles an eclectic range of communities from USA, Europe and Australasia (Adelaide & Auckland)

'Pocket Neighborhoods' marries the key elements from the 'Not-So-Big House', the 'New Urbanism' and 'Cohousing' movements to shed light on how to foster a strong sense of place through small, close-knit, sustaining communities.

It is an invaluable reference for urban planners, architects, designers, builders and environmentalists.

Chapin progressively lays out a comprehensive description of a pocket neighborhood, its key ideas and design principles.

Pocket neighborhoods are clustered groups of neighboring houses or apartments gathered around a shared open space - a garden courtyard, a pedestrian street, or a series of joined backyards - all of which have a clear sense of territory and shared stewardship. Residents surrounding this common space take part in its care and oversight, thereby enhancing a felt and actual sense of security and identity.

These are settings where nearby neighbors can easily find friendship or a helping hand nearby.

A pocket neighborhood is a 'community' of 15-40 or so, people who interact on a daily basis around shared spaces - a kind of secluded neighborhood within a neighborhood.

The shared outdoor space at the centre of a cluster of homes is a key element of a pocket neighborhood. During the daily flow of life through this common space, nearby neighbors 'connect' via greetings, or stopping to chat. These casual conversations can eventually grow to caring relationships and a meaningful sense of community — all fostered by the simple fact of shared space.

The key idea is that a limited number of nearby neighbors gather around a shared commons that they all care for. There are a number of design principles that make pocket neighborhoods successful, but style is not one of them.

Design principles:

Successful pocket neighborhoods start with the central idea of a limited number of dwellings gathered around a shared commons. When the number gets larger than 8 or 12, other clusters form around separate shared commons, connected by walkways. Multiple clusters can form a larger aggregate community. These communities are not isolated to themselves, like a gated community, but connect and contribute to the character and life of the surrounding neighborhood. It is essential that cars and traffic do not invade the shared pedestrian space. The active rooms of the homes, including front porches, face the commons rather than turning their back to neighbors. There is a layering of public to private space, and careful placement of windows to ensure privacy for each dwelling. These are core design principles.

The book dovetails with a substantial website: www.pocket-neighborhoods.net which gives: an overview of key principles and design features; blog entries from the author and others in the field; recent media articles, archives, case studies and site plans; tools to improve community dynamics and decision making and links to related publications, organisations and online resources.

The website also offers a useful range of focusing questions for consideration:

How is a Pocket Neighborhood different than a regular neighborhood?

Why is shared outdoor space so important?

Community sounds good, but does it come at the expense of privacy?

Why are pocket neighborhoods so good for children?

Why are pocket neighborhoods important in contemporary living?

(Article adapted from Pocket-Neighborhoods website)

'So many people today are looking for a stronger sense of community. Pocket neighbourhoods offer a remarkably simple and deeply satisfying solution that will appeal to a wide range of households. Anyone who's looking for a way to live both simply and beautifully will love Ross Chapin's notions about creating community'

-- SARAH SUSANKA, Author of The Not So Big House

'Awakening the Dreamer Symposium' and associated 'Action Circles'

A lively group based in San Francisco who spent time with indigenous people in the forests of Peru and Ecuador were told: "We have lived this way for thousands of years. All of a sudden our trees are being cut down, our rivers polluted and our fish killed. There is nothing we can do about this. The only possibility to reclaim our traditional way of life is that the modern world changes its dream."

Taking this message back home and linking it with observations from many other parts of our little planet 3rd from the sun, the group – now called the Pachamama Alliance – created 'Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium.' This is an educational experience designed to change the collective 'dream of the modern world' from one rooted in consumption and competition to one of sustainability, justice and fulfillment for all.

I undertook training to facilitate the Symposium, while living recently in Hong Kong, and did this several times there and also in Manila. This was with early versions, which were somewhat cumbersome to operate.

And so am delighted to know that there have been two developments which are likely to make the Symposium more widely available - through being more user friendly – and of more value to people who view it.

One is the recent release of an *updated version* which is very suitable for home viewing and small group gathering. I have a copy of the DVD. A digital version is also available.

The other is the *collaboration* with a Vancouver based organisation called '*Be the Change – Earth Alliance' and their Action Circles.* These are for a group of 8-12 people, who meet for 2 hours a week or bi-weekly for about 8 sessions to explore personal values and establish new habits in a fun and personal way. Circle members use the trusted and well-researched Action Guide to track their lifestyle changes while connecting with like-minded people in their communities.

My feeling is that such Action Circles would be a natural, constructive and fun way to follow up from experiencing the Symposium.

Would you wish to be a pioneer in such an adventure in Adelaide?

Alan Stewart, PhD alan@multimindsolutions.com

Myths & Realities

Below are common misconceptions about green and green development.

Myth: The design and construction of green housing is expensive.

Reality: Most green buildings can be cost competitive with traditional building structures and save a substantial amount of money and energy over the long-term with proper planning from the outset. Over the building lifecycle, a green structure will save money on energy costs. As these prices continue to increase, the cost savings will increase.

Myth: It has to be recycled to be green.

Reality: Just because a product is recycled, doesn't mean it's green. For example, a product made from recycled content can be shipped across the world to be assembled in a facility that pollutes and then is packaged in a petroleum-based packing material before it's shipped to your project site. With the multitude of resources used to get the "green" product to your project, you would be better off purchasing a non-recycled product that was manufactured close to home.

Myth: "I can't make a difference."

Reality: Simple changes to your lifestyle or project scope can have a profound impact on the future of the environment. Examples include changing traditional water fixtures to low flow (saving you thousands of gallons of water a year) and swapping out traditional light bulbs with compact florescent lights (again saving you hundreds of watts of electricity). For more ideas, contact us directly. (link to email)

Myth: A new home is always a green home.

Reality: Most new homes are built to meet the current building code of your area using at least 30% more energy than a "green house". While the building codes have made great strides to be more energy conscious, they are not very energy efficient and contain many materials that release toxic gases called VOC's.

Myth: Going green is overwhelming and time consuming.

Reality: Going green is a matter of integrating methods and the proper materials into your building project. Start by educating yourself with the Insight section of our website. In addition, many architects and builders who design and build green homes are a great source to help you understand and organize your ideas and the process. Many ways to go green are easy and, in fact, are less complicated than traditional building methods.

[from Spire Architecture in New York - www.spirearchitecture.com]



New green developments Saving energy & producing it!

Not only will this tower duo save energy, but they will actually produce it. Aeolian and photovoltaic power has been introduced to compliment the buildings' natural carbon dioxide filtering system (we often forget these are also known as trees), acoustic insulators, and grey water irrigation system in order to create living buildings that offer to leave as small a carbon footprint as possible.

Located in the centre of Milan, on the edge of the Isola neighbourhood, the two towers are but the first stage of Boeri's BioMilano, which will involve the redevelopment of up to 60 abandoned farms in the area to be used in a sustainable community sense.

This concept is not new. In fact, it's not even surprising. Concepts of this nature, such as Edouard François' 'Flower Tower' and more refined 'Tour Vegetale De Nantes' are original concepts that share this green ideology and inbuilt tree structured

component. In Brooklyn, a new

proposal by the Department of City

Planning would allow commercial buildings throughout the city to be topped with rooftop farms or greenhouses without increasing the building's floor area ratio and height restrictions. According to a study by the Urban Design Lab, this amendment could bring almost 1,200 acres of rooftop farms to the city. The zoning proposal was spurred by the popularity of rooftop farms such as the expanding Brooklyn Grange.

Food glorious food on the Brooklyn skyline



