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GREATER NEW YORK

## Farm-to-Condo Movement Hits Brooklyn

At a Vanderbilt Avenue building, owners will sign up for rooftop plots and harvest edible crops

By JOSH BARBANEL

**I**T WAS ONLY a matter of time before the farm-to-table movement merged with the Brooklyn condominium boom.

On a large south-facing terrace on the eighth floor of 550 Vanderbilt Ave., an 18-story brick and concrete building near the Barclays Center in downtown Brooklyn, crews are erecting three large metal boxes and filling them with soil suitable for high-altitude farming.

### PROPERTY

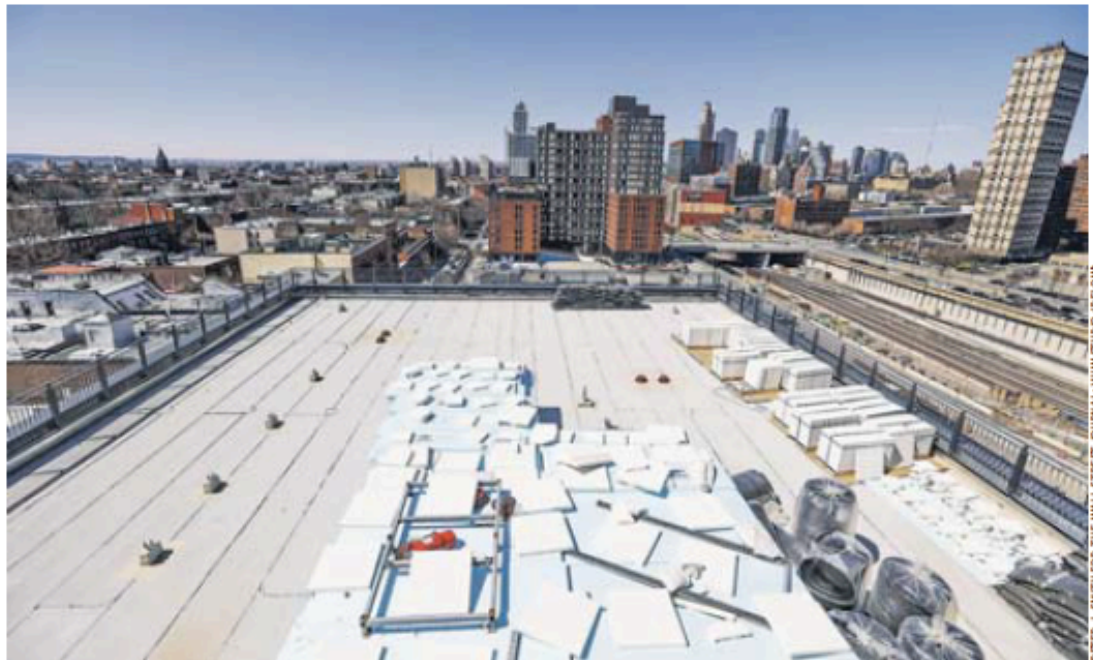
Condo owners will be able to sign up for a small plot to grow their own vegetables there, alongside Ian Rothman, a farmer and co-owner of Olmsted, a trendy farm-to-table restaurant a few blocks away.

Mr. Rothman has been promised a large subdivision of the plots, and is planning an initial crop of hot peppers for the restaurant's home-made aji dulce sauce served with oysters. The restaurant is named for Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect who designed the nearby Prospect Park.

"We plan to develop a substantial amount of our space to peppers," Mr. Rothman said. It will augment the restaurant's modest rear yard, where he grows garlic, radishes, herbs and edible flowers.

Farm-to-condo is an extension of the flowering urban farming movement that has produced crops on the grounds of public-housing developments and on the sprawling rooftops of commercial buildings in the city.

Last year a 5,000 square-foot farm opened in a courtyard between two rental buildings at Urby, a development near the waterfront in Stapleton on Staten Island. That farm is tended by a resident farmer, who receives a salary and a free apartment to tend the fields.



Rooftop view of 550 Vanderbilt in Brooklyn, above, where tenants will be able to grow crops. Below, a rendering of the finished space.



By contrast, 550 Vanderbilt is providing a terrace for do-it-yourself farmers who can afford condos priced at an average of \$1,500 a square foot, with one-bedroom units starting at \$890,000 and two-bedrooms at \$1.495 million. The building is being developed by a joint venture between Green-

land USA, a subsidiary of Shanghai-based Greenland Group Co., and Forest City Ratner Cos., a subsidiary of Forest City Realty Trust Inc.

Condo owners will be able to sign up each season for plots of at least 7 feet by 10 feet in the 1,600-square-foot farm, enough to harvest a significant edible crop, said Ash-

ley Cotton, executive vice president for external affairs at Forest City Ratner Cos. The largest farm bed will be about 30 feet by 21 feet and will be divided by plank walkways.

Mr. Rothman founded a boutique farm in Massachusetts and then raised herbs, vegetables and edible flowers in a subterranean garden beneath Atera, a Tribeca tasting-menu restaurant that charges \$275 per person, not including beverages.

The idea for the 550 Vanderbilt Ave. vegetable garden came from COOKFOX Architects, which designed the building. The firm follows a principle it calls "biophilic design," or the creation of spaces that promote human well being by enhancing the connection between people and nature, said architect Brandon Specketer, who worked on the building.

The building includes decorative boxes on many windows that will be filled with native plants and flowers. Greenery will spill over the top of the raw concrete entrance to the building. The building also will include piped-in fresh air, and a skylight and glass walls on stairs to encourage walking, and natural materials such as marble and wide-plank oak floors.

The condos at 550 Vanderbilt are part of the 22-acre \$4.9 billion Pacific Park development anchored by the Barclays Center. It eventually will include 14 residential buildings with 6,430 apartments, many like 550 Vanderbilt connected by a park open to the public.

The condos went on the market in mid-2015, and about 60% of the apartments have been sold, Ms. Cotton said, including seven in the month since the building opened.

PETER J. SMITH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL; VIEW STUDIO (BELOW)