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RE-IMAGINING NEW YORK: DESIGNING URBAN FARMS TO FEED NEW YORK CITY

*Annual Jane Jacobs Forum asks:
“Is farming amidst the concrete jungle a realistic possibility?”*

New York, October 15, 2009 – The Municipal Art Society of New York, in collaboration with the Penn Institute for Urban Research, will present the 2009 Jane Jacobs Forum, “Re-Imagining New York: Designing Urban Farms to Feed Our City” on Tuesday, November 3, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at The John E. Reeves Great Hall at F.I.T., at West 28th Street and Seventh Avenue in Manhattan. This program is supported by the Rockefeller Foundation.

A panel of urban planning experts will explore options for farming in the city and discuss the environmental and economic advantages of producing food close to those who will consume it. Is it possible that one day soon New York City will be spotted with urban farms on small plots of land, on rooftops and within buildings?

Washington Post columnist **Neal Peirce**, a long-time advocate for regionally-based agriculture, will serve as moderator for the evening. In his book, *Century of the City: No Time to Lose*, Peirce wrote that most US cities were founded “not simply as centers for commerce but areas of fertile fields,” and it was after World War II that farms surrounding cities were “converted to suburban development.”

Peirce will mediate a discussion on the economic development and urban design implications of the fundamental question: Can New York, a city whose population is growing while its available acreage is shrinking, eventually grow enough food within its boundaries or around its periphery to become self-sufficient?

Panelists will include:

- **Dickson Despommier, professor of microbiology, Columbia University.** Despommier is an infectious disease ecologist who has recently directed his efforts towards the Vertical Farming project as a solution to urban food crises and the environmental and health costs of modern industrialized agriculture.
- **Jennifer Nelkin, greenhouse director, Gotham Greens,** New York, NY. Nelkin is a plant biologist and expert in controlled environment agriculture, responsible for a commercial hydroponic rooftop farm. Previously Nelkin was part of the team that launched the Science Barge, a floating prototype of a sustainable urban farm.
- **Dan Albert, landscape designer and LEED accredited professional, Weber Thompson.** Albert’s team recently won a Greenbuild Conference award for a conceptual “living building” project that includes financially viable residential development, hydroponic garden, biological wastewater treatment system and more.
- **Colin Cathcart, principal, Kiss + Cathcart Architects** in Brooklyn. Cathcart is experienced in building sustainable architecture in New York, including Solar I and II, and is also an instructor of “Sustainable New York,” an undergraduate summer program at Fordham University.

Page Two – Designing Urban Farms

- **Nevin Cohen, assistant professor of environmental studies, The New School.** Cohen teaches courses environmental planning, food and sustainability, urban environmental policy, and environmental activism. He also co-founded environmental planning and development firm, Topology, LLC.
- **Ian Marvy, co-founder and executive director of Added Value** in Brooklyn. Added Value's initiatives include youth empowerment, urban agriculture, and developing a just food system. The organization's youth participants also help to run the Red Hook Farmers Markets.

Author and activist Jane Jacobs believed in the future of cities and in common sense solutions to urban problems. Through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, MAS' annual Jane Jacobs Forum brings together participants with lively minds and clear voices to challenge traditional assumptions about fundamental urban issues and propose innovative, yet sensible, ideas for the future. MAS continues to honor Jane Jacobs' legacy with tours and programs to encourage New Yorkers to learn from her examples of careful observation and civic involvement.

The Municipal Art Society of New York, founded in 1893, is a non-profit membership organization that fights for intelligent urban planning, design and preservation through education, dialogue and advocacy. For more information, please visit www.mas.org.

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