

The world's first biocellar could be the start of the urban renewal Cleveland needs

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[The Plaid Zebra](#)

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When race riots broke out across America in the 1960s, they resulted in disturbing violence and devastating loss of life and property. In Cleveland, Ohio, these riots aggravated the job losses and hardships due to the shrinking of its once powerful industrial sector. It wasn't until the late 1990s that the city began to rebuild. Driving through the neighbourhood of Hough today, you can still see some of the 100-plus-year-old homes crumbling and vacant—an eerie reminder of the past. But when Jean Loria drives along the streets, she sees Cleveland's future.

Situated behind a neighbourhood vineyard is the world's first biocellar. In 2006, Loria created the term to describe the finished product of a torn down abandoned home with a reinforced basement and a covered, slanted greenhouse-inspired roof that becomes a perfect environment for indoor crop production. This is only the beginning of the city's urban renewal, as entrepreneurs and "urban pioneers" are moving into previously abandoned properties.



One of these visionaries for Cleveland's bright future is resident Mansfield Frazier, who runs the nonprofit Neighborhood Solutions, which manages the vineyard and biocellar behind it. He hopes to challenge people's assumptions of what they'll see in the Hough neighbourhood. Frazier began growing grapes on this lot in 2010, naming it Château Hough. He always had a dream greater than food production; he sought social justice and aimed to create new steady jobs for the area's marginalized populations. Needless to say, an inner city vineyard created curiosity. A few years later, Loria made plans to turn the vacant house behind the property into a biocellar for growing food year-round.

Even in the coldest months of winter, the temperature past the frost line, which is about 42 inches below ground in Ohio, would be between 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit in the biocellar. This enables the growth of many hardy plants like kale, strawberries, mushrooms, or even raising tilapia fish. Compared to a greenhouse, the biocellar is more secure and also requires far less energy thanks to the natural insulation.



The biocellar behind the vineyard serves as a trial for the viability of growing different crops. Although it is not a production facility yet, the success of its design shows real potential for uplifting the deteriorating urban landscape, both physically and economically. Frazier would like at least 10 per cent of the 15, 000 discarded houses to be turned into biocells to support future agriculture projects. The end goal is to produce hops and sell to local breweries, continuously reinvesting and creating more jobs.

Image Sources: consciouscompanymagazine.com, ediblecleveland.com, inhabitat.com

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