



# NYC Green Cart Initiative

## GRANT BACKGROUND

In Spring 2008, the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund seeded the NYC Green Cart Initiative with a leadership grant to increase the availability of fresh produce in low-income neighborhoods throughout New York City. Through the Green Cart Initiative, the New York City Council and Mayor Bloomberg authorized 1,000 new street vending permits to enable entrepreneurs to sell fresh fruits and vegetables exclusively in low-income neighborhoods where consumption of fresh produce is low and rates of obesity, diabetes and heart disease are high. The Initiative addresses an urban issue with an innovative blend of public policy, private philanthropy and grassroots entrepreneurship.

“**Access to healthy foods varies widely throughout New York City, and in many lower-income neighborhoods, supermarkets are few and far between...The Green Cart legislation will also provide opportunities for vendors to make a living selling fresh fruits and vegetables in communities where healthy food can be difficult to find.**”

- MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG

The Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund’s grant supports vendor training, business development assistance and low-interest loans, as well as design, marketing and community outreach and nutritional education to promote consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables from Green Cart vendors. The public/private partnership with the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has created a new model for health promotion and economic opportunity, using mobile vending to reach communities where access is otherwise limited.

Hundreds of new jobs have been created, and today vendors are on the streets of New York City providing thousands of households with better access to healthier food choices. Food consultants from Karp Resources provide vendors with training to start-up and run these independent businesses, and nonprofits including Montefiore Medical Center, Vamos Unidos and the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SOBRO) provide assistance in local neighborhoods.

“**Green Carts are an exciting, entrepreneurial model that speaks directly to the Fund’s mission of increasing access and opportunity. We are delighted that our first Illumination Grant launched an empowering effort to reduce disparities by making healthy food and new job opportunities available to more New Yorkers.**”

LAURIE M. TISCH,  
PRESIDENT, LAURIE M. TISCH  
ILLUMINATION FUND



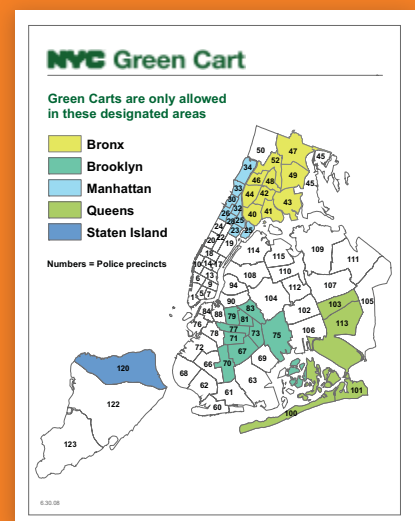
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## QUICK FACTS ON THE NYC GREEN CART INITIATIVE

- The goals of the NYC Green Cart Initiative are to **promote access to healthy food and increase economic opportunity**. The initiative creates new, individually-owned and managed businesses to sell fruits and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods.
- Nearly 500 Green Carts are deployed throughout all five boroughs and instructional workshops on **business development**, provided by Karp Resources, teach vendors about bookkeeping, marketing, laws regulating food carts and running a produce business.
- With permission from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the Farmers Market Federation, approximately **30 Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) machines** – essentially debit cards for Food Stamp benefits – have been approved for use by Green Cart vendors. EBT terminals make it much easier for people with low-income to buy nutritious foods and they increase sales for the vendors.

**The Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund is supporting the documentation of the NYC Green Cart program to educate New Yorkers about healthy food, increase awareness of the issues of food access and obesity and spread the word about an innovative strategy.**

- In partnership with the Aperture Foundation, the Fund commissioned a set of five New York-based emerging photographers to engage with vendors over a year, chronicle their efforts and illuminate the communities and customers they serve. An exhibition of the photographs, *Moveable Feast: Fresh Produce and the NYC Green Cart Program*, premiered in 2011 at the Museum of the City of New York.
- Recognizing the need for educating customers about incorporating fresh produce into their diets, the Fund created the **NYC Green Cart Cookbook**, featuring recipes from celebrity chefs, health partners and vendors themselves. The cookbooks are being distributed by vendors and community health agencies.
- The Fund underwrote ***The Apple Pushers***, a documentary by filmmaker Mary Mazzi, whose previous films include the award-winning *TEN9EIGHT*, *A Hero for Daisy*, *Lemonade Stories*, *Apple Pie*, and *we are BlackRock*. ***The Apple Pushers***, narrated by Edward Norton, highlights the challenges faced by five immigrant NYC Green Cart vendors from Bangladesh, Russia, Mexico and Ecuador who left their homelands in search of the American Dream.



**The Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund seeded the NYC Green Cart initiative with a leadership grant in the Spring of 2008 to bring fresh produce to underserved New York City neighborhoods.**



Photo by Will Steacy, Aperture's *Moveable Feast* exhibit

## Want to learn more?

For more information about the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund visit, [www.lmtilluminationfund.org](http://www.lmtilluminationfund.org)

For more information about the NYC Green Cart Initiative visit, [www.nyc.gov/greencarts](http://www.nyc.gov/greencarts)

**The Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund** is a New York City-based foundation dedicated to improving access and opportunity for all New Yorkers. Founded in 2007 by philanthropist Laurie M. Tisch, the Illumination Fund supports innovative solutions to long-standing problems in the city through programs and initiatives such as NYC Green Cart, the Children's Museum of Manhattan's Healthy Lifestyles Initiative and the NYC Civic Corps. While the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund does not limit grant making to specific issues or organizations, the Illumination Fund has championed innovative solutions to long-standing city problems in education, the arts, healthy lifestyles and community service in order to illuminate solutions that transform our urban landscape.