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# St. John's Bread and Life Soup Kitchen is First in Country to Implement Green Design

2009  
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by [Stephen Del Percio](#)

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Over the weekend, St. John's Bread and Life's new 22,000-square-foot soup kitchen in Bedford-Stuyvesant was featured during the seventh annual [openhousenewyork](#), an event that provides free public access to New York City buildings and spaces of design and/or historical merit. The soup kitchen's new home, which is actually located in a former warehouse, is located at 795 Lexington Avenue in Brooklyn and was completed in 2008 after a \$5 million, 10-month renovation that was designed by Rogers Marvel Architects. RMA's design accommodated a tight budget by reorganizing the factory building's interior and connecting individual programming spaces; the Manhattan-based firm earned a 2009 Award of Excellence for the project from AIA's New York chapter. Although it does not appear to be seeking LEED or other third-party certification, the soup kitchen does incorporate various green design features, including a recycling program, natural daylighting, and an efficient industrial-strength kitchen. Patrons can also access a

digital food pantry by "shopping" for items using an electronic card and point system that also teaches them about nutrition; healthy items cost fewer points than non-healthy items.

The space also includes a meditation room, for which Brooklyn-based steel artist Miya Ando has created "Fiat Lux" (Let There Be Light), a grid of 144 steel canvas squares that aim to create a visual symbol of hope for St. John's patrons. As you can see in the images, Ms. Ando "wanted to create something spiritual but non-demoninational. The piece provides a meditative environment to encourage introspection." St. John's was founded in 1982 and is the largest provider of emergency food services in New York City, serving over 1000 meals daily and providing literary classes, job placement services, nutrition counseling,

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and a legal clinic, among other services.


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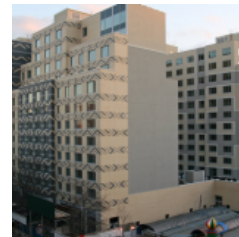
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