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Capital District Community Gardens Launches The Urban Grow Center

Urban Agriculture and Fresh Food Distribution Hub Bolsters Access to Healthy Food for Local Communities

Capital District Community Gardens announced the launch of The Urban Grow Center at a press conference, held at the project's site today. CDCG's Urban Grow Center will feature a rehabbed green building, prominently displaying alternate power generation and conservation; a fresh produce market, providing the neighborhood with year-round access to healthy food; a food hub, supplying our region's cities with the products of local farms; a commercial kitchen, providing space for food-based micro-enterprisers and nutrition education programming; and one acre of greenhouses, providing job training for at-risk youth and adults.

"The Urban Grow Center will triple CDCG's ability to deliver local food and services to underserved neighborhoods and low-income families," said CDCG's Executive Director Amy Klein. "By connecting urban markets with area farms, businesses and educational institutions we can build a lasting infrastructure for our regional food network and provide a replicable model of sustainable urban agriculture."

Last July CDCG purchased the 100-year-old building located at 594 River Street, which sits directly across from the historic Mooradian's building in north central Troy. The site satisfies CDCG's most crucial needs: It is moments from 787, easing rural-to-urban produce transport; it is located on one of CDTA's trunk bus lines; and it sits in a neighborhood in need of revitalization. The facility, designed by Albany-based Envision Architects PC, will serve as a model for innovative, environmentally friendly technologies, including a green roof, solar power, porous pavement and water reuse.

CDCG has launched a \$2.5 million capital campaign to fund The Urban Grow Center's first phase of development. CDCG will relocate its headquarters to the property this fall, providing the space the rapidly growing organization needs to operate existing programs and to develop a local food hub with loading bays and cold storage. The 39-year-old non-profit employs 25 staff

members and serves more than 170,000 residents throughout our region's four counties with 50 Community Gardens, The Veggie Mobile and Veggie Mobile Sprout, The Produce Project, The Healthy Convenience Store Initiative, Squash Hunger, The Taste Good Series and Urban Greening programs – all of which nourish healthy communities by providing access to fresh food and green spaces for all.

"It is important to us that we support community organizations who are working to make our region a better place," said E. Stewart Jones, partner in the Jones Law Firm and Co-Chair of Capital District Community Gardens' Urban Grow Center Campaign with his wife, Kimberly Sanger Jones. "We are proud to give our time, energy and dollars to CDCG and its latest innovation which will have a lasting impact on the health and well-being of our family, friends and neighbors."

The Urban Grow Center will impact four counties with direct services and ten counties of farmers – and as a result has garnered widespread geographic support.

"The Urban Grow Center is more than a building or a product," said Assemblyman John T. McDonald III. "In fact, it is a convergence of ideas grown in the community that focuses on supporting the growth of local produce to support healthy lifestyles. Key to the support of this program is the education component because it is through learning that we provide the tools to change lifestyles and lives one person at a time."

"The Urban Grow Center is truly an exciting project that will help provide access to healthy food for those living in this urban area and the surrounding communities while creating a marketplace for our local farmers to sell their fresh locally grown products," said Rensselaer County Executive Kathleen M. Jimino. "As has been shown, a nutritious diet is vital to good health and especially vital for children who are establishing the eating habits that will follow them into adulthood. I want to congratulate Capital District Community Gardens for this venture that I am certain will be a great success."

"I want to commend Capital District Community Gardens on its plans for the Urban Grow Center and bringing fresh food to the region," said Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy. "This is a worthy initiative that will provide a foundation for the future. I am looking forward to working with CDCG to bring the message to Albany County. This is a great start for this regional effort to help underserved communities."

"The City of Schenectady is delighted with the expansion of Capital District Community Gardens' Urban Grow Center," said Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy. "Many more of our residents will benefit from the services and knowledge provided by CDCG; agriculture plays a vital role in our life."

"The City of Troy is looking forward to our continued partnership with CDCG as they launch this

great new project,” said Troy Mayor Lou Rosamilia. “This new effort is in keeping with the organization’s mission to benefit public health by providing access to fresh food and green spaces. We look forward to collaborating with CDCG to develop north central Troy – providing nutritious food, education and other resources that will benefit the residents of our city and the entire Capital Region.”

“I am thrilled to stand behind Capital District Community Gardens and the establishment of the Urban Grow Center,” said Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan. “By pooling the resources of our municipalities, we can work together to keep our citizens healthy, engaged and educated while supporting local producers. I believe the Urban Grow Center will be a major asset to residents of Albany and the entire region, and I look forward to working with Capital District Community Gardens as they move forward on this project.”

Capital District Community Gardens has already raised more than 50 percent of their first phase goal with broad support from corporate sponsors, grantors and private donors, as well as 100 percent of CDCG’s board and staff members.

“MVP Health Care is committed to the vision of creating the healthiest communities in the United States. Our support of the Urban Grow Center and the Capital District Community Gardens program provides a better opportunity for local residents to include fresh fruits and vegetables in every meal,” said Denise Gonick, President and CEO of MVP Health Care.

“SEFCU is proud to support Capital District Community Gardens’ Urban Grow Center that will serve as a hub, giving much-needed access to fresh produce to those in need, including children and the elderly,” said Michael J. Castellana, president and CEO of SEFCU. “This project is a wonderful example of the importance of buying local and how we can both feed the economy and nourish our neighbors at the same time.”

“First Niagara is committed to doing all we can to make our community a place where all citizens have the opportunities to learn, to grow and to achieve their dreams,” said First Niagara Eastern New York Market Leader Nina Tyzik. “We are thrilled to support Capital District Community Gardens, an organization that clearly shares our passion for our community.”

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Capital District Community Gardens is a 39-year-old nonprofit organization that nourishes healthy communities with nearly 50 Community Gardens, The Veggie Mobile, The Healthy Convenience Store Initiative, The Produce Project, Squash Hunger and more
