

UMBRELLA HOUSE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former Squat Builds Rooftop Garden Already Starting to Harvest Will Host “Rooftop Open House” on July 18

NEW YORK – On Saturday July 18 from 4:00pm to 7:00pm the former Lower East Side squat Umbrella House will host an open house to inaugurate its urban farming project. At 5:00pm members of Umbrella’s Rooftop Garden Committee will speak briefly about the development of the project. EVENT RAINDATE: Sunday July 19; 4:00 — 7:00pm.

This 820 square foot intensive green roof serves as a source of fresh produce for building residents, as a means to assist in storm water management, and as a model for other New York City buildings.

The garden was initially conceived in early 2012 and construction was completed in December 2014. Now in its first growing season, the garden is producing swiss chard, broccoli, white onions, eggplant, okra, spinach, zucchini, basil, sugar snap peas, jalapeno peppers, lamb’s quarters, and several varieties of tomatoes; as well as medicinal plants: hyssop, lemon balm, chamomile, calendula, and passion flower.

Umbrella’s Rooftop Garden involved extensive construction: structural steel framing and concrete planking were required to build the raised 8” planting bed. Construction cost was \$150,000. Area architect Paul Castrucci was the project architect.

Umbrella House members believe that this project is a worthy example for other co-ops and property owners to emulate. Umbrella House Garden Committee and Co-op Board Member Parker Pracjek states: “Access to healthy food through Farmer’s Markets, Green Food Carts, and Farm to Table initiatives have made some improvements to food health literacy in New York City, but more must be done. Food justice should be expanded to urban farming to transform underused spaces into productive environments. The benefits of urban farming are far-reaching and include decreased carbon footprint, responsible use of natural and human resources and community health.”

About Umbrella House:

Umbrella House is one of the former Lower East Side squats. Since 1988 dozens have called it home, struggling to survive harsh conditions while creating a viable alternative community and housing model. Over the years members repaired joists, laid floors, installed windows, plumbing, and electrical distribution, and at times defended the building from eviction and demolition. In

the early 2000s, the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board approached Umbrella House and other LES squatted buildings with a plan to go legal. Members of the building elected to join this process. Umbrella House is now a limited-equity co-op that will provide affordable housing at 21 Avenue C for many decades to come.

The launch of the Umbrella House Rooftop Garden is an exciting new chapter in the building's long story from ruin to renewal.

