



For Immediate Release

\$4.7 MILLION URBAN AGRICULTURE EDUCATION CENTER PLANNED FOR VACANT LOT IN ST. LOUIS GAINS CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD APPROVALS

St. Louis, Mo., February 12, 2024 – A \$4.7 million urban agriculture education center planned for a vacant corner lot in the City of St. Louis has received all necessary approvals from City agencies and neighborhood organizations to move forward as fundraising for the new facility to be used by the Urban Education Alliance nears its goal to begin construction. The Green House Venture Education Center at 3966-3968 DeTonty Street in the Shaw neighborhood will provide technology enhanced opportunities for students in three nearby elementary schools – including Mullanphy Investigative Center, St. Margaret of Scotland and Tower Grove Christian Academy - in the Urban Education Alliance to gain hands-on experience in urban food growing as part of the nonprofit Green House Venture's STEM education program that focuses on addressing urban food production issues that will impact future generations.

The nonprofit Green House Venture purchased the tax-delinquent vacant lot from the St. Louis Land Reutilization Authority in 2017 with plans to build its Education Center adjacent to the 3.7 acre expanse of highway embankment it cultivates and leases from the Missouri Department of Transportation across the street. This 'Classroom Along the Highway' stretches for 1700 feet along the south shoulder of Interstate 44 where students actively plant, cultivate, study and harvest produce to cook with their families and scientists conduct a first-in-the-nation study of ways to reverse the decline of native pollinator populations in the Midwest by focusing on repopulating roadsides with native bees and flowering plants.

The 9,000 square foot Education Center will be a hub for hands-on experiences in bio-science, urban agriculture and nutrition/dietetics featuring classrooms, a greenhouse with aquaponic growing, sprout cultivation, and food processing. Supporting those spaces will be a multi-purpose gallery, volunteer space, audio-visual processing center, and offices. The exterior spaces include a roof terrace and "back yard" for different types of food growing, as well as a rain garden, sensory garden, and composting area. It will also feature advanced communication technology to allow programming to be streamed to schools around the region and beyond.

Principal project architect UIC has worked with the Green House Venture Board and committees over the past two years to complete the approval process for building the Education Center, having obtained zoning and other approvals from The City of St. Louis. The Board of Adjustment agreed to consolidate the properties into one lot, the Board of Public Service agreed to grant the conditional use for the property, and the design was approved as part of the Shaw

Historic District by the Preservation Board, as well as the Tower Grove Neighborhood Community Corporation and Shaw Neighborhood Improvement Association.

“This shovel-ready facility will be a beautiful addition to the neighborhood, as well as a living, breathing, flexible space that serves area students, its partner schools and the community,” said Sarah Gibson, Design Principal at UIC. “It will provide a community-accessible greenhouse that neighbors can interact with on an everyday basis.”

UIC worked with engineers, landscape architects, and aquaponics systems designers to create a building that is as energy efficient as possible, balancing a well-constructed building envelope with highly efficient heating and cooling systems that can be tracked to measure performance. Other measures will be taken to conserve water, such as high-efficiency plumbing fixtures, and in the landscape, rain barrels, green roofs, and a rain garden. Solar panels will also be installed on the two-story portion of the building

“Our Growing Forward campaign has raised more than half of the money needed to break ground and start construction of this unique STEM education facility,” said Tom Purcell, President of Green House Venture. “With urban populations across the country expected to explode by mid-century, cities like St. Louis need to produce more food supplies closer to their urban cores to supplement the nation’s traditional food supply system. Our Education Center will help our region meet this future challenge.”

More information about the Venture can be found at their website: www.greenhousetl.org.

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