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Press Release
For Immediate Release
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DCBIA Build Day: Hundreds of Volunteers to Create East Capitol Urban Farm The City's Largest-Scale Urban Farm and Aquaponics Facility

(Washington, DC) – On Saturday, September 26, 2015, hundreds of volunteers will come together to build the East Capitol Urban Farm – a model for temporary use of vacant lots – as part of DCBIA (the District of Columbia Building Industry Association) 23rd Annual Community Improvement Day.

The Day is a result of a major local, federal, public and private alliance between the University of the District of Columbia, the District of Columbia Housing Authority, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, several District of Columbia government agencies, community organizations, churches, and businesses to transform a vacant, three-acre parcel of land to become the city's largest-scale urban farm to increase access to local and sustainable produce and fish for Ward 7. Features of the Farm also include community garden space, demonstration area, exercise trails, nature discovery area, public art, rain and pollinator gardens, market place and later this fall, an aquaponics facility.

"DCBIA members are laser-focused on building community and adding to the fabric of this vibrant City," said Sean C. Cahill, President of DCBIA and Senior Vice President of Property Group Partners.

"This year's Build Day is bigger than ever bringing in more local and federal partners than one could have ever imagined, resulting in a Ward 7 community asset that can become a model for access to fresh produce and fish, sustainability, and the use of vacant land."

Over a year ago, the University of the District of Columbia's College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES) partnered with the DC Housing Authority (DCHA) to lease the vacant lot located at 5900 East Capitol Street SE, Washington, DC to transform the parcel into a remarkable community asset. Select agencies of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership - 14 federal agencies working collectively to address environmental and economic challenges in cities across the country in underserved communities also partnered in the effort.

Specifically, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry have contributed to the vision of and provided resources for the Farm which will promote urban agriculture, improve food access and nutrition through a community-centered farmers market, offer nutrition education, youth engagement, provide community gardening, and create opportunities for entrepreneurship.

The challenge and opportunity with the site is to develop the Farm as a model for temporary use of vacant lots while demonstrating on-site storm water management and local food production. To that end, the project's designer and DCBIA member, Bradley Site Design, created a leaf-design for the site that includes raised beds and portable aquaponics/fish tanks. UDC has also mapped the District's underused properties to ensure a continued, viable future of the site. Bradley Site Design will also evaluate the farm's social, economic and ecological impacts.

"The East Capitol Urban Farm is one of the Urban Food Hubs pioneered by UDC to improve Food Security and Sustainability in DC neighborhoods through food production, food preparation, food distribution, and waste and water management," said Dr. Sabine O'Hara, Dean of the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES) of the University of the District of Columbia. "We are thrilled to see this project become a reality."

"This unique project exemplifies the very best of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership and how government is working with communities to help address their priorities--whether its job development, more green space, or improving public health," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "By working collectively local, state, and federal partnerships can help communities transform abandoned or underused urban spaces into community assets like the East Capitol Urban Farm - improving quality of life and improving the local environment."

"Groundwork Anacostia River DC greatly looks forward to the East Capitol Urban Farm's build out as to engage our Green Team youth and the larger community in the farm's service learning aspects and opportunities," said Dennis Chestnut, Executive Director of Groundwork Anacostia River DC.

DCBIA members Forest City Washington, Hines, HITT Contracting, and Property Group Partners provided funding for the construction of the project. Additional funding provided by Balfour Beatty Construction, Clark Construction, Fidelity National Title Insurance Company, Fort Lincoln New Town Corp., Grunley Construction, JLL, Quadrangle Development, and WC Smith. Through community engagement and partnership which began earlier this year, DCBIA design and general contracting teams held design charrettes to envision the site. Companies who have volunteered their time to this effort include individuals from Cunningham Quill Architects, David M. Schwarz Architects, HOK, RTKL Associates, SmithGroupJJR, Balfour Beatty Construction, Clark Construction, Corenic Construction, DAVIS Construction, Gilbane, HITT Contracting, Langan Engineering, LendLease, Monarc Construction, Turner Construction, among others.

"We are pleased to partner with UDC and DCBIA on this innovative project, said Adrienne Todman, executive director, District of Columbia Housing Authority. "It will benefit this neighborhood by bringing together volunteerism, sustainable practices, and fresh produce."

"Reflecting our denomination's historic commitment to social justice, Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church is very excited to be part of a project that promises to bring economic opportunity and food security to the residents of Ward 7, said Reverend Dottie Yunger, Associate Pastor. "We join with the churches in Ward 7 in seeking to ensure that our city's economic prosperity is shared by all of her residents."

"Walmart and the Walmart Foundation are committed to increasing access to healthier foods and eliminating hunger in all of the communities we serve," said Nina Albert, Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations, Walmart. "We are proud to support the East Capitol Urban Farm Project because it has a holistic approach to local food sourcing and community

entrepreneurship, which can truly make a difference in sustaining food access in our community.”

Build Day begins at 7:30 am at 5900 East Capitol Street, SE. A ribbon-cutting will take place at 11:45 am with District and Federal Officials and representatives of the following partners: American Forests, DC Building Industry Association (DCBIA), DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, DC Housing Authority, Department of Energy & Environment, Groundwork Anacostia River DC, Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, Urban Waters Federal Partnership, and Walmart.

“The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities is pleased to be a partner in this amazing effort,” said Kay Kendall Chair of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. “We are honored that this distinguished alliance recognizes the arts and public art as essential elements of the project – and the city’s overall landscape. We hope that this inaugural project becomes a spring board for additional urban farms throughout the District of Columbia and look forward to continued service to all wards of the city!

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The District of Columbia Building Industry Association (DCBIA) is the voice of the DC real estate development industry providing educational, social, research, and community service programming for a membership of over 500 member companies representing thousands of real estate development industry professionals, including developers, general contractors, subcontractors, architects, engineers, lenders, attorneys, brokers, title companies, utility companies, community development organizations and other real estate development industry professionals. DCBIA also advocates on behalf of its members before the District of Columbia and federal governments.