



March 5, 2014

Dear Task Force Members:

University Settlement (US) respectfully requests a \$275,000 grant from the Consolidated Edison Settlement Fund, to develop and implement the Beacon-Campos Youth Gardening and Healthy Food Initiative, in partnership with NYC Foodscape and the Campos Community Garden. As outlined below, our proposed initiative will be a robust and impactful greening and gardening initiative that works to preserve, enhance and expand green spaces and garden locations for youth and other community members in Manhattan's Community Business District 3.

### **Organizational Overviews**

**US Society of New York, Inc.**, the nation's first settlement house, provides comprehensive neighborhood-based services to low-income communities of Manhattan and Brooklyn. Our mission is to empower residents by building on their strengths and knowledge through holistic, quality services that meet the current needs of the community; innovative programs that anticipate future needs; and advocacy on behalf of the community and its residents. Each year, we serve over 30,000 low-income and at-risk people with our diverse programs, helping them build better lives for themselves and their families. Our comprehensive network of services includes early childhood and after-school programs, academic support and college advisement, adult ESOL classes, homelessness prevention, mental health services, arts programming, senior services, and community centers. The Settlement has a long list of achievements that speak to our leadership in the field of youth development. We operate 13 after-school programs across the city, and assumed management of several of these sites at the direct request from the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development and/or community residents. The After-School Corporation, one of the most respected youth-development agencies in the country, selected one of our Brooklyn after-school sites to be a part of their national ExpandedED pilot program; that program has since become a national model for excellence, was visited by a Congressional delegation and is being featured on the U.S. Department of Education website. US has a particularly strong presence in the East Village. We operate a Beacon Community School program at East Side Community High School (ESCHS), which provides high quality, after school programming to over 150 low-income, at-risk middle and high school youth, as well as an afterschool program at P.S. 19 that serves approximately 200 elementary students. Our Cornerstone Community Center at Campos Plaza, just opened in early January and provides a range of services and support to community members of all ages.

**Campos Community Garden** is a sunny 5,000-square-foot community garden at 640-644 East 12th Street between Avenues B and C in Manhattan's Community Business District 3. Campos Community Garden was founded in 1983, and reorganized in 2004 by community activists. The garden is especially focused on serving neighborhood kids and growing food. The garden has held numerous environmental workshops, festivals and events for the public, from Earth Day to plant giveaways to harvest festivals.

**NYC Foodscape** was founded in 2010, providing consulting, technical assistance and advocacy services for start-up and emerging local enterprises and nonprofits in sustainable food and farming, school and youth gardening and related educational or sustainable food system fields. Founder Carolyn Zezima has over 8 years of urban agriculture, community gardening and food systems experience. The organization features a unique combination of legal training, nonprofit management, gardening and culinary expertise that can help steer nascent and emerging food and farming enterprises into its next phase of development, from early visioning to an on-the-ground, sustainable existence.

### **Project Description, Activities and Goals**

US, Campos Community Garden and NYC Foodscape propose to implement a comprehensive greening, gardening and healthy food initiative, which improves the air quality, health and overall quality of life for Community Business District 3 community members by leveraging the expertise and capacities of all three organizations. Working collaboratively, our initiative plans to significantly expand access to and knowledge on green spaces and green lifestyles. The locations for the gardens, greening projects, and programming are all within a quarter mile of the Con Ed plant, and will benefit a

significant number of East Village/Lower East Side youth and community members, including aiding in a reduction in asthma and diet-related diseases, an increase in physical activity, and the opportunity for youth to engage in community and vocational activities. We estimate that our initiative will directly benefit several hundred youth, community garden members, residents of Campos Plaza, participants at Campos Community Center, senior and disabled residents, as well as reaching area youth groups, schools and other community members. The overall goals of this initiative are to:

- 1) Increase and improve overall green space in a highly populated and dense area to improve air quality and community health;
- 2) Give youth and other community members access to and ability to grow, taste and cook as many types of healthy food and herbs as possible to inspire them to make healthy food choices;
- 3) Employ community members and youth in greening, gardening and healthy food-based activities;
- 4) Inspire community pride and environmental stewardship; and
- 5) Give youth vocational and leadership skills to mentor peers into making healthy food choices and taking responsibility for the future of our environment.

In order to achieve the above goals, we have developed the following key program components:

**Build a youth market garden and greenhouse at Beacon:** The location of Beacon Garden and Greenhouse, at 104 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, once served as a bus depot. Through generous support of the community, it was revitalized as a garden, called Open Road Park, for the benefit of a local junior high school. There is currently a small gardening program run by the school's science teacher, but this grant would significantly expand gardening capability and include a greenhouse for starting plants and late-season growing. The garden would serve as a major programmatic and employment activity for the middle and high school-aged youth participating in US's Beacon Program and would be utilized as a market space for youth to sell their produce and plants.

**Create employment, marketing and community food access opportunities for youth.** Through a youth employment program, young people will use the greenhouse to grow plants for the garden and for other community gardeners and will be able to both sell produce through a youth-led garden market program and/or donate it for use in the Community Healthy Food Program.

**Improve water harvesting and access and expanding a piloted at-risk youth therapeutic gardening program at Campos Community Garden.** The Children's Garden at Campos was a temporary straw bale and three sister garden for youth, created in 2013, in the wake of Hurricane Sandy's destruction. It was supported through a local school, who gave Campos funds to help repair the garden. The garden became a therapeutic and safe space for at-risk youth to grow food and do some basic in-garden cooking. For example, a group of girls from a local group home came to the garden with a background of family trauma and turmoil and found a sense of peace—and their palates—among the plants. The initiative will transform the temporary straw bale garden space of about 300 square feet into a permanent children's garden. It will also improve Campos Community Garden's water harvesting system and restore a previous permanent water source into the garden.

**Revitalize a nearby GreenThumb community garden and building an ADA-compliant enabling garden for disabled and senior community members.** Relaxation Garden, at 209 Avenue B, needs substantial revitalization and improvement and will be the location of an ADA-compliant enabling garden for disabled and senior community members to garden and get access to healthy food.

**Create a kitchen garden at US's Campos Plaza Cornerstone Community Center to use for community healthy food programs.** The garden will grow food and herbs for use in the Center's kitchen for the Community Healthy Food Program and other community nutrition needs for the Center.

**Create a series of small satellite container gardens at NYCHA Campos Plaza and several local US after-school sites.** These gardens will feature various planting methods and types of food and companion plants and trees to diversify the local ecosystem, improve air quality, improve soil, reduce storm water runoff.

**Create Community Healthy Food Program for youth and families.** Produce from the various gardens, including the Campos Community Center Kitchen Garden, will be used to conduct healthy food access and cooking programs at the

gardens and at Campos Plaza Cornerstone Community Center's kitchen, as well as to sell at an affordable Youth-led Market and to donate to local meal and nutrition programs.

**Environmental and Improved Community Health Benefits:** The initiative serves the goals of the ConEd Settlement Funding by: Improving air quality; improving community residents' health; increasing access to fresh, healthy food; employing community members and youth and create youth vocational and market program; encouraging water conservation, composting, waste reduction and recycling; reducing crime and drug activity; empowering and engaging seniors and disabled residents through outdoor activities and gardening; beautifying the community; increasing overall area property values.

**Measure of Success:** The success of the program will be measured in the increased square footage of green space, the number of youth engaged and employed, the number of community members engaged, the amount and types of vegetables grown, the number of healthy meals cooked, the number of healthy recipes and meal workshops conducted, amount of compost created, water retention v. water usage, etc. We will survey program participants and other community members on a variety of measures to gauge their knowledge, perception, usage, and get their input in improving the garden program. We will also use Photovoice, social media, writing projects and short films for youth and other participants to document and express their experiences.

**Critical Activities and Timeframe:** The Beacon-Campos initiative will unroll in stages, beginning with the planning and first stage installation of the Beacon Youth Market Garden and Greenhouse and the planning of the Enabling Garden and the Campos Community Center Kitchen Garden in the summer/fall of 2014. The Greenhouse program will begin upon completion of construction, and healthy food and youth employment program planning and development will occur during the winter of 2015. We will continue installation of the Beacon Youth Garden, the Enabling Garden and the Campos Community Center Kitchen Garden in the spring of 2015, with the help of Beacon youth and other community members employed through the initiative and begin the gardening programs for each of those upon completion. We will use the greenhouse to grow plants for use in the various gardens in 2015 and 2016. The other programs and activities, including improving the children's garden at Campos and other improvements will occur throughout the remainder of 2014 and 2015, as appropriate. The Community Healthy Food program will begin as food becomes ready for harvest and will take several forms, depending on where the food was grown, from low-cost sale at youth market, distribution to US and other community seniors, families and individuals in need, use in cooking and meal-planning workshops and events with youth and other community members, or food for youth or disabled adult groups who use the Children's Garden at Campos and the Enabling Garden.

**Estimated Budget:** We respectfully request a grant in the amount of \$275,000 to support the main costs associated with the Beacon-Campos Youth Gardening and Healthy Food Initiative. Those costs include: developing and improving our Market Garden and Greenhouse space; expanding water retention system; expanding the pilot at-risk Children's Garden; installing a Campos Community Center kitchen garden; installing satellite and container gardens; developing and offering community Healthy Food programs; and all staffing costs associated with implementing the initiative.

We are deeply grateful to the Task Force for the studied consideration and generous support of greening projects funded through the ConEd Settlement. We look forward to submitting a full proposal and discussing the initiative in more detail at an upcoming Community Board meeting.

Best regards,



Melissa Aase  
Executive Director