

Beleaguered Gramercy store reopens; but it's burglarized

By Todd Malsel

Chung Yim, proprietor of the beleaguered Eden Farms in Gramercy Park finally reopened this week after being closed for two months because a building next door was teetering on collapse. But adding insult to injury, two alleged thieves broke the front door of his store this past Thursday in attempt to burglarize what was left in the store.

The popular grocery store was able to reopen on Saturday after more than two months after being ordered closed by the city.

Eden Farms, at 252 Third Avenue, was closed since June when the Dept. Of Buildings issued a vacate order because the neighboring building south wall was in danger of falling onto his store. Since then, community leaders and residents, led by Arlene Harrison, president of the Gramercy Park Block Association, have

been pushing the city to get the hazards removed and have been leaving messages for Yim and his employees, with large posters and notes taped across the windows of his establishment.

But when Yim and his employees came to inspect the store Thursday morning, they were greeted by a smashed front door and police officers standing guard. Apparently early Thursday morning, two men were arrested by police from the 13th Precinct as they broke into the store and were seeking to steal items.

"I can't believe this," Yim said as workers swept the debris from the store. "I can only hope I can reopen soon."

Harrison was at the scene and took Yim to the Manhattan District Attorney's Office on Monday to have the two men prosecuted.

The two men were identified as Justin Wojno, 19, and Jared Blake, 18, both

said to be homeless.

Police allegedly saw the two kick in the front door and hide inside when police approached at about 12:30 a.m. Thursday. Both were nabbed by Police Officers Chris Jacobelis, Kevin Horak, Ana Matos and Daniel Prunty as they hid inside the store.

Both are being charged with attempted burglary, police said.

"I am gratified that Mr. Yim was finally able to reopen his store because we missed his service to the community," said Harrison.

Since the beginning, Har-

rison has been working closely with the Dept. Of Buildings to complete his work on the neighboring property to eliminate the perceived danger. This past week, workers tore the top of the building off and allowed Eden Farms to reopen.

"People in the community really missed Mr. Yim because he provided great service and was a part of our neighborhood that cared," Harrison said. "He contributed to all our events and always there for us. So we had to be there for him. We are now on a mission to get

people to go back to the store so Mr. Yim could make up for his enormous losses for the last two months."

Yim was outside his store Monday, watching as an employee set up a flower

stand of fresh roses. Next door, workers continued to excavate the inside of the dilapidated building for future use.

"I am happy to be open it's been a long time for me," Yim said.



Activist Arlene Harrison talks with officials from the Manhattan DA's office about the break-in this past week.



Det. Murphy talks on the phone during investigation of the break-in at Eden Farms as owner Mr. Yim stands nearby