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Proposal Would Formalize "Large Lots" Pilot Program

A proposal introduced to City Council today by Mayor Rahm Emanuel would formally establish the "Large Lots" program to help streamline the sale of select parcels of vacant, City-owned land for \$1.

"The Large Lots program enables community residents and stakeholders to take ownership of their blocks, one parcel at a time," Mayor Emanuel said. "It's an effective, cost-friendly tool to redevelop concentrations of City-owned land for private and community uses."

Pilot versions of the program were launched this spring in greater Englewood and this summer in East Garfield Park by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD). Initiated under Mayor Emanuel's "Five-Year Housing Plan," each pilot provided homeowners, block clubs, and nonprofit organizations the opportunity to purchase vacant, City-owned, residential lots for \$1 per parcel. Most are planned as side yards and gardens.

The formal program would provide an entirely electronic application process through the LargeLots.org web site. To qualify as a buyer, an applicant must own property on the same block, be current on property taxes, and have no outstanding debt to the City, among other requirements. Up to two properties would be available per application; each would be sold in "as is" condition through a quit claim deed.

"This program will allow residents to clean up vacant lots and transform them into community assets, which complements our work to strengthen Chicago neighborhoods," said Ald. Ray Suarez (31st), chair of City Council's Housing and Real Estate Committee. "We also envision this program to potentially create more affordable housing, as community groups could build new developments on what was once vacant, City-owned land."

The program would be offered in select neighborhoods based on demand and availability of vacant, City-owned land.

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Land Acquisition Would Support Development of New Hospital Campus

Mayor Emanuel today introduced a measure to City Council that would give authority to the City of Chicago to acquire a 9.2-acre site in South Lawndale for the development of a new St. Anthony Hospital and community services campus.

The land, located at 3200 S. Kedzie Ave. and 3230-3354 W. 31st St., is adjacent to an 11-acre parcel of public property that is already designated for the project.

Together, the two sites would provide more than 20 acres for the development, which would include medical facilities, retail space, community center and recreational amenities.

Acquisition authority would start the process that would allow the City to take ownership of the three parcels.

In October, the Community Development Commission approved the acquisition of the parcels.

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