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**MAYOR EMANUEL LAUNCHES NEW "FARMERS FOR CHICAGO" NETWORK FOR CHICAGO
URBAN FARMERS**

New collaboration will provide farm trainees with support to launch food enterprises, make five acres of vacant city lots available to farm, and expand local supply chain for food retailers

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Growing Power, a leading local urban agriculture organization, today announced the launch of Farmer's for Chicago, a new program that will make available up to five acres of City-owned vacant lots for urban farming activity, and help expand the supply chain for local neighborhood-level food production and wholesale. The city lots will be prepared for local nonprofits that will be able to install food growing equipment, and train up to 20 people in urban farming and skills.

"Once made available, these vacant lots will help stabilize communities by bringing productive activity to areas that need it around food deserts," said Mayor Emanuel. "Farmers for Chicago will give local residents a chance to not only learn how to grow food in their communities, but also build their own food enterprise."

One of the first programs of its kind in the nation, Farmers for Chicago will be implemented over a three year period. With support from the philanthropic sector, Farmer's for Chicago will help establish the nuts and bolts of a strong local food sector in neighborhoods lacking fresh produce by preparing urban growers with the skills necessary to succeed at food commerce, including growing and packaging fruits and vegetables, and distributing them to up to 20 retailers, including farmer's markets, local corner stores, grocery chains, and restaurants.

As part of the new city collaboration and with the support of the United States Department of Agriculture and the City of Chicago, Growing Home, Heartland Human Care Services, Angelics Organic Learning Center, and the Chicago Botanic Garden have begun training residents, especially those with limited work history, in how to grow local food. Specifically, Growing Home is expanding growing facilities in Englewood, while Angelic Organics Learning Center will soon break ground on an urban agriculture facility in Greater Grand Crossing and Heartland Human Care Services continues to develop two and a half-acre farm in Humboldt Park.

Farmers for Chicago will recruit 25 trainees from those programs and provide them with technical assistance needed to start a food business, including help with obtaining General Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification required for retail wholesales, building a farm operation, hoop house

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construction, and building a distribution plan. Trainees will have access to shared tools, space, compost, financial literacy, and other enrichment at Growing Power's Iron Street Farm.

"I am excited that the City is partnering up with the community on such an important initiative," said Erika Allen, Executive Director of Growing Power. "Our new pipeline will take Chicago's local food sector to the next level."

Growing Home helps empower people and communities with Chicago's first USDA-Certified Organic, high-production urban farms. With farms in the Englewood and Back of the Yards neighborhoods, as well as the 10-acre Les Brown Memorial Farm in Marseilles, Illinois, Growing Home seeks to operate, promote, and demonstrate the use of organic agriculture as a vehicle for job training, employment, and community development.

In 2011, Growing Home's Wood Street Urban Farm grew and sold over 13,000 pounds of local, USDA Certified Organic produce, with over \$45,000 in earned income. Growing Home sells its produce at the Green City Market, through a Community Supported Agriculture program, and to fine Chicago restaurants. Additionally, Growing Home holds a weekly farm stand for Englewood residents and provides programming on healthy cooking and nutrition to bring healthy options to this food desert.

The city's role will be to identify clusters of city-owned land at appropriate locations that can be made available to farmer trainees, typically through the land's transfer to a land trust or through a lease with one of the community-based training agencies that are identified as participants.

The city will make sites available to foster productive uses for formerly vacant land, improve community access to healthy food, help participants to supplement their incomes, and to foster workforce training.

The incubator network will help train people interested in farming, processing, marketing, selling and distributing produce. Specific skills training will range from hoop house construction and compost development to business plan development and retail sales.

There are about 15 acres in the network that either already operating as farming and training sites, being planted this year, or breaking ground next year.

Today's announcement is another ingredient in the Emanuel Administration's ongoing support of the emerging urban agriculture sector, both addressing the workforce development needs of residents with limited work history, and bringing opportunities to food desert communities. The Administration has made an annual investment of \$750,000 in transitional jobs programs with Chicago nonprofits in the urban agriculture sector. This includes support for innovative social enterprises such as Beeline Beauty Products in urban beekeeping, and Neighbor Carts, which distributes fresh produce in food deserts. These investments are intended to provide training for more than 200 hard-to-employ individuals per year – including ex-offenders and the formerly homeless, and job placement for more than 160 trainees.

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