



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**CITY OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY GROWERS PROGRAM**

*Program to increase availability of healthy food in communities facing food insecurity while developing essential business skills and strategies for urban growers; Applications are live for Community Growers grant and technical assistance program*

**CHICAGO** — Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) and partner agency NeighborSpace announced the first round of applications for the City's Community Growers Program are open until April 1, 2023. Through a competitive Request for Proposal process, BACP selected NeighborSpace to administer the program alongside a collective of partner organizations: Chicago Food Policy Action Committee (CFPAC), Community Food Navigator, DePaul Steans Center, Grow Greater Englewood, Advocates for Urban Agriculture, Urban Growers Collective, and Windy City Harvest. The first round of applications is open through April 1, 2023. Interested urban growers can start applying for assistance through the Community Growers Program at [Chicago.gov/BACPrecoveryPlan](https://chicago.gov/BACPrecoveryPlan).

"The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of our food system and the inequities embedded within it," said Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "Through the Community Growers Program, we will enable us to use our urban agriculture to create a more equitable and resilient food system and supply food insecure residents with healthy and abundant options."

This program, designed in partnership with the City of Chicago Food Equity Council, is a \$2M investment in urban agriculture with the goal to increase food equity in communities with a history of disinvestment by encouraging the development of urban agriculture sites by local growers. This support for urban agriculture in communities with limited food access will provide residents more options for accessing fresh produce, while also creating wealth-building opportunities for growers.

"Through the Community Growers Program, we're looking forward to working with NeighborSpace to support a more inclusive, sustainable urban agriculture ecosystem," said BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer. "Chicago has a long history



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of urban agriculture and with an increased investment of resources, we are continuing this tradition.

NeighborSpace is a nonprofit urban land trust in Chicago that preserves and sustains gardens on behalf of dedicated community groups. They support community gardens — through property ownership, insurance, water, stewardship, education, tool lending, project planning, fundraising support, troubleshooting, and more — so that community groups can focus on gardening and on their community-building vision, generating food, beauty, play, health, and safety for their neighborhoods.

“This program builds on the work of countless farmers and gardeners who have been growing food in Chicago for generations by permanently expanding the footprint of urban agriculture in our City,” said Ben Helphand, Executive Director of NeighborSpace. “Importantly, the program will target its support to those growers who have not previously had access to a lot of resources and institutional support.”

Through this program, BACP and NeighborSpace expect to reduce the barriers to urban agriculture by supporting urban growers with access to land and water, resources to build long-term sites, and technical support. This program will increase equitable community-access to healthy foods by creating new food access points in neighborhoods experiencing food insecurity.

“Grow Greater Englewood is proud to come together to collectively administer the Chicago Community Growers Program. There is so much pent-up demand for growing in our communities,” says Anton Seals Jr., Lead Steward of Grow Greater Englewood. “This program will jump start several dozen grassroots growing operations, increasing hyper local food access while building up small businesses.”

As the lead delegate agency of the Community Growers Program, NeighborSpace will provide grants and ongoing technical assistance to growers, understand the specific needs of each project site, and provide the appropriate guidance. As a part of this program, NeighborSpace will be responsible for managing the development of multiple urban agriculture sites. By providing financial and technical assistance to urban growers, NeighborSpace can best support existing urban agricultural sites and build urban gardens and farms on vacant lots.

The Community Growers Program is part of the Chicago Recovery Plan, the City’s plan to create an equity-based investment strategy to catalyze a sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Holistic investment in communities and industries hardest hit by the pandemic is paramount toward supporting equitable economic recovery across the city.



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To learn more about the Community Growers Program and BACP's Recovery Plan efforts, please visit [Chicago.gov/BACPREcoveryPlan](https://Chicago.gov/BACPREcoveryPlan).

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