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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES PLAN TO CREATE JOBS, SPUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INCREASE URBAN AGRICULTURE THROUGHOUT CHICAGO

Proposed reforms will expand access to healthy food options in food deserts

Today, Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced that the City will introduce an ordinance on Thursday to expand community gardens and urban farms to promote economic development, job creation and increase access to healthy food options in food deserts.

"It is unacceptable that thousands of Chicagoans live in communities that lack access to fresh foods," said Mayor Emanuel, while at the ribbon-cutting for the urban farm Iron Street Farm. "I am committed to adopting innovative solutions that will increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables while creating jobs in order to ensure Chicagoans have the food options they need to lead a healthy lifestyle."

Emanuel discussed his commitment to increasing urban agriculture as a critical step toward eliminating food deserts across the city while also creating green jobs such as those at Iron Street Farm. The seven-acre farm will create up to 150 jobs. Local food production also provides recreational opportunities and helps bring down energy costs.

Mayor Emanuel first visited Iron Street Farm earlier this year during the campaign to announce his goal to eliminate food deserts and increase access to healthy foods for residents across the city.

If passed, the proposed ordinance will:

- Expand the size limit on community gardens to 25,000 square feet;
- Relax fencing and parking requirements on larger commercial urban farms in order to hold down overhead costs for the entrepreneurs and community organizations that launch and maintain these enterprises; and
- Create green jobs and provide fresh produce in communities.

Emanuel stated that this ordinance is another step in the City's comprehensive plan to increase food access and eliminate food deserts and recounted the steps the City has already taken:

- Convened a food desert summit in June with the CEOs of major grocery chains in Chicago and asked them to build stores in food deserts and increase healthy foods options;
- Announced Walgreens initiative to build more than a dozen new stores, include fresh produce in 39 existing stores currently in food deserts, while creating 300 new jobs in those communities; and
- Hosted a pre-planning workshop with stakeholders from the community health, neighborhood development and urban growing sectors.

Over the next 10 months, the City will continue to address issues of food access, growing and distributing food, food enterprises, supplemental food programs, nutrition education and public awareness, with the overall goal of increasing public health and reducing childhood obesity.

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