



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2014

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CHICAGO NAMED 2014 EARTH HOUR CAPITAL OF THE U.S.

Global Panel of Experts Selects Chicago in Competition with 60 U.S. Cities

Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced today that Chicago has been named the 2014 Earth Hour Capital of the United States by the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Earth Hour City Challenge, a year-long competition among cities to promote renewable energy and prepare for climate change. Cities that participate are recognized for their efforts in creating more sustainable, resilient cities, and compete for the title of U.S. Earth Hour Capital as well as grants from WWF.

"Building on a legacy of innovation and action, I am proud that Chicago and its residents are being recognized for their national leadership in sustainability and environmental issues," said Mayor Emanuel. "Fostering economic opportunity and job creation through sustainability will ensure Chicago's long-term livability and competitiveness. We all have a stake in our climate and the world we will leave for future generations."

To expand awareness of Mayor Emanuel's *Sustainable Chicago 2015* action agenda, grant money will be awarded to the top submissions for a new poster design contest, "City in a Garden". Winning posters will be displayed on bus shelters throughout the city, serving as public art, enhancing daily life in Chicago, and encouraging residents to live more sustainably. Learn more at www.cityofchicago.org/CityInAGarden.

Building on the success of the Chicago Solar Express, an initiative to make rooftop solar as easy and economical as possible for Chicago residents and businesses, the City will use some of the grant award funding to launch a partnership to help reduce purchase costs of solar arrays for Chicago residents.

163 cities entered into this year's Earth Hour City Challenge, including 60 in the United States. An expert climate-change panel selected 33 finalists from 14 participating countries. They named one sustainability leader per country as the Earth Hour Capital award winner. Chicago will now compete with the other international Earth Hour Capital cities for the title of Global Earth Hour Capital for 2014, which will be awarded at a ceremony on March 27, 2014 in Vancouver, Canada.

"Chicago has shown the country that even major cities can kick the coal habit, and it continues to raise the bar for what local governments can do to fight against climate change," said Keya Chatterjee, Director of Renewable Energy and Footprint Outreach at WWF. "The City's efforts to make renewable energy accessible, like the one-day turn-around for residential rooftop solar

project permits, along with its work to strengthen the public transportation system make it a 'first city' in climate-smart policy."

Mayor Emanuel has long made climate change a priority for the City of Chicago. In the fall of 2012, he released *Sustainable Chicago 2015*, the City's action plan that defined initiatives, metrics and strategies that would advance Chicago's goal of becoming the most sustainable city in the country. The roadmap defined seven categories critical to sustainable improvement in the city and set 24 specific goals and key actions to achieve them by 2015.

"Residents and organizations of all types are driving results in delivering Mayor Emanuel's vision to make Chicago the most livable, competitive and sustainable city," said the City of Chicago's Chief Sustainability Officer Karen Weigert. "We are honored that WWF has recognized this tremendous level of engagement and impact."

In the past year the Mayor has made impactful strides toward a greener and healthier future by building off of the goals set out in *Sustainable Chicago 2015* such as expanding curbside bluecart recycling citywide, establishing the Divvy bike share system, procuring municipal power coal-free, and giving more than 900,000 Chicagoans access to electricity from renewable energy such as wind and solar amongst other accomplishments.

In March, 2013, Mayor Rahm Emanuel was recognized as an Earth Hour Climate Leader by the World Wildlife Fund. This award included a grant to support efforts to engage Chicagoans in environmental action. Among other outreach activities, this funding has supported the Chicago Cleanweb Challenge, a citywide competition to promote and support sustainability-related digital applications. Through local meet-ups and hackathons the effort brought developers and entrepreneurs together to build mobile devices and web applications from publicly available city data. This spring, winning teams from 2013 sustainability hackathons will compete in a "playoff" event, with opportunities to win prizes, support, and a chance to pitch their application to Mayor Emanuel.

For more information about Earth Hour City Challenge, visit worldwildlife.org/pages/earth-hour-city-challenge. You can also follow Earth Hour Illinois on Facebook at www.facebook.com/EarthHourIL or on twitter: [@EarthHourIL](https://twitter.com/EarthHourIL).

Click [here](#) to learn more about Chicago's environmental priorities and download a copy of *Sustainable Chicago 2015*, the Mayor's environmental action agenda.

###