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CITY COUNCIL APPROVES ORDINANCE TO EXPAND CITYWIDE COMPOSTING PROGRAM

*Ordinance Expands Allowable Compostable Materials for Community Gardens and Urban Farms;
Twenty Urban Ag, Environmental Organizations Submit Letter of Support to Mayor Emanuel*

City Council today approved Mayor Emanuel's ordinance to expand composting operations at community gardens and urban farms across Chicago, as well as create a citywide community garden registry and urban farm accessory composting operation permit. The goal of the program is to expand the type of allowable compostable materials at both community gardens and urban farms, while implementing common sense measures to ensure public health standards are maintained.

"Urban agriculture is an important piece in making our communities more environmentally friendly and sustainable," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Expanding composting is an easy way to support our neighborhoods in growing their own fresh fruits and vegetables right in their own backyards."

In addition to landscape waste, such as grass or shrubbery clippings, community gardens will now be allowed to compost limited organic waste, including food scraps such as vegetables and eggshells. All community gardens will be required to register with the City at no-cost through a new online community garden registry. The ordinance also creates a new Urban Farm Accessory Composting Operation Permit, which will allow urban farms to apply for a permit with the Chicago Department of Public Health to compost livestock waste, in addition to landscape and limited organic waste.

"Composting supports the reuse of material that would otherwise be considered waste and sent to landfills," said Commissioner Julie Morita, Chicago Department of Public Health. "I look forward to implementing these new policies and other best practices with our community stakeholders in the upcoming composting season."

The ordinance was drafted with input from local urban agriculture and environmental stakeholders and the City will continue to work with these partners as the community is educated about new composting opportunities.

"We applaud Mayor Emanuel for introducing this ordinance, created with feedback from advocates and cooperative work with City departments," said Jen Walling, Executive Director, Illinois Environmental Council. "This ordinance positions Chicago as one of the top cities in the nation for

small scale composting sites, protecting the environment and introducing new tools for urban farmers and gardeners.”

On July 28th, the following community gardens, urban farms, and environmental and community organizations submitted a letter to Mayor Emanuel expressing their support of the ordinance:

- Jen Walling, Illinois Environmental Council
- Sarah Wochos, Environmental Law and Policy Center
- Jim Slama, Family Farmed
- Anne Comeau, Edgewater Environmental Sustainability Project
- Brian Sauder, Faith in Place
- Lenore Beyer-Clow, Openlands
- Nancy Klehm, Social Ecologies
- Mike Nowak, Chicago Recycling Coalition
- Wes King, Illinois Stewardship Alliance
- Michael Thompson, Chicago Honey Co-op
- Linda Seyler, Global Garden Refugee Training Farm
- Ross Outten, Greater Ravenswood Chamber of Commerce
- Andrea Stein, Ravenswood Community Council
- Lauralyn Clawson, Growing Power and Chicago Food Policy Advisory Committee
- Abe Scarr, Illinois PIRG
- Shelley Vinyard, Environment Illinois
- Michelle Carr, The Nature Conservancy
- Billy Burdett, Advocates for Urban Agriculture
- Greg Berlowitz, Chicago Market – A Community Co-Op
- Jack Darin and Christine Williamson, Sierra Club

Expanding composting is part of a larger strategy to support urban agriculture efforts in Chicago. In 2011, Mayor Emanuel passed the Urban Farm ordinance, expanding the size limit on community gardens, relaxing fencing and parking requirements on commercial urban farms to help reduce startup costs, and allowing for innovative new methods of farming such as hydroponic and aquaponic systems. Over the last four years, acreage devoted to urban farming has increased by a factor of 13, going from 1.4 acres to roughly 18 acres, and the number of urban farm operators from 2 to 13.

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