



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 21, 2023

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**CITY COUNCIL PASSES URBAN AGRICULTURE BUSINESS LICENSE
ENHANCEMENT ORDINANCE**

Modifications to existing business licenses will reduce barriers to urban agriculture, improve access to local fresh produce, and support economic activity in neighborhoods throughout Chicago

CHICAGO — Today, the Chicago City Council passed an ordinance to support the business activities of urban agriculture. The Urban Agriculture Business License Enhancement Ordinance, which was introduced by the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protections (BACP) and co-designed by the City's [Food Equity Council](#), will reduce barriers that exist for growers to sell their produce to local neighborhoods. With these changes, community gardens and urban farms that apply for and receive a produce merchant license are now able to sell whole, uncut, and unprocessed produce directly to community residents, restaurants, food stores, and wholesalers from an on-site produce stand. The Urban Agriculture Business License Enhancement Ordinance creates a pathway for more viable business models while also providing access to healthy produce to communities across the city.

"The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of our food system and the inequities embedded within it," **said Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "Urban agriculture has the potential to create a more equitable and resilient urban food system and supply food insecure residents with healthy and abundant options. The passage of this ordinance increases the potential for urban agriculture to build local wealth, support Chicago's local economy, and increase access to local fresh produce across the city."

"The ordinance enhancement will make positive, long-term impacts on the health and well-being of Chicagoans," **said BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer**. "By addressing the need for urban agriculture licensing, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure growers are recognized and supported as small businesses, while at the same time, consumers have access to fresh, locally grown produce for their families."



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



Chicago's first-ever Food Equity Council is a cross-sector collaboration to create an equitable local food system by addressing immediate needs and the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity, including reducing barriers to urban agriculture.

"This small change has the potential to significantly impact Chicago's nutritious food landscape," said **Viviana Okakpu, Co-Operations Steward for Advocates for Urban Agriculture and co-lead for the Food Equity Council**. "By allowing community focused growers to be compensated for their labor, we can continue to chip away at the health and environmental inequities in our neighborhoods through culturally relevant food while honoring the work it takes to produce it."

"After 20 years of advocacy, Chicagoans who grow food now have the opportunity to build economic food sovereignty by being able to establish businesses with a legit license," said **Erika Allen, Co-founder of Urban Growers Collective**. "Being able to sell food that is grown at the community level recognizes the importance of these economies and is a significant advancement for urban agriculture and food access. We hope that this encourages local production at a time when shortening supply chains for food is good for business, the environment, and our public health."

The [2023 annual report](#) outlines other successes of the Food Equity Council, including the Community Growers Program. Designed in partnership with the City of Chicago Food Equity Council, the program 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 with more options for accessing fresh produce, while also creating wealth-building opportunities for growers.

To learn more about the City's commitment to food equity and the Food Equity Council visit: chi.gov/foodequity.

BACP ensures a fair and vibrant marketplace for businesses, workers and consumers in the City of Chicago. BACP licenses businesses. Learn more by visiting Chicago.gov/BACP.

###

LANDMARK STATUS APPROVED FOR "THE WAREHOUSE" BUILDING, KNOWN AS BIRTHPLACE OF HOUSE MUSIC AND LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY SPACE



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



CHICAGO — A historic building at 206 S. Jefferson St. received landmark status by the City Council today.

The building was home to The Warehouse from 1977 to 1982, a dance club with cultural significance to the City of Chicago and the United States as the birthplace of house, a genre of dance music characterized by a driving beat, emotive lyrics and lush orchestration drawn from a number of genres including disco, R&B, gospel and techno.

The Warehouse is also a historically beloved space for Chicago's LGBTQ+ community and served as an inclusive, welcoming club, particularly for Black and queer communities, for decades.

"Chicago's landmarks illustrate the story of our history and culture. I'm proud that the City Council approved landmark designation for The Warehouse, a space regarded as the birthplace of house music and a safe haven for Chicago's LGBTQ+ communities," **said Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "Everyone who celebrated at The Warehouse — no matter how they identified or where they were from — felt like they belonged. And that is truly indicative of our city, a place where all are welcome, and all should feel like they belong."

"The Warehouse is an important part of the LGBTQ+ community's story in Chicago and I'm grateful that we are able to give this building the historical designation it deserves," **said Alderman Carlos Ramirez-Rosa**. "For decades, The Warehouse represented a safe and inclusive space for our Chicago's Black, Latinx, and queer communities to celebrate. I'm proud to honor their legacy during this Pride Month."

###

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES ANNETTE C.M. GUZMAN AS BUDGET DIRECTOR

CHICAGO — Today, the City Council approved Annette C.M. Guzman as Budget Director.

"I'm confident that Annette Guzman will effectively serve the City of Chicago as Budget Director and lead the city through a transparent budgetary process that makes critical investments in people and communities," **said Mayor Brandon Johnson**.

"I'm honored to serve as the City of Chicago's Budget Director and look forward to collaborating with Mayor Johnson's administration and the City Council to ensure a transparent, efficient budget process," **said Annette Guzman**. "We will work



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



together to present a budget that reflects the values of Chicago and effectively delivers for residents.”

Guzman brings to this role significant experience with managing government budgets, after serving as Budget Director for Cook County, where she oversaw Cook County’s budget during the COVID-19 pandemic and the distribution of COVID-related financial aid, including \$428M in CARES funding, over \$200M in FEMA aid, and \$1B in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

She previously served as Deputy Assessor in the Office of the Cook County Assessor and Deputy Chief Administrator and Chief of Staff for the Civilian Office of Police Accountability. Prior to her time in government, Guzman served as legal counsel to banking institutions and corporations at Sidley Austin LLP. She holds a JD from the University of Chicago Law School and a bachelor’s degree in English and Economics from Emory University.

###

CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING PARTNER TO PILOT NEW STABILIZATION HOUSING CENTER AIMED AT ADDRESSING CHICAGOANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

The Chicago Department of Public Health and Department of Housing introduced an ordinance to move forward with the purchase of the former Diplomat Motel in Lincoln Square, to launch a Stabilization Housing Pilot Program, which will provide behavioral health and housing support for people experiencing homelessness.

“Today’s introduction is a significant step forward to provide behavioral health and housing support to our unhoused neighbors and to address our city’s housing crisis,” **said Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “I know personally how important it is for families to have this type of support for friends and loved ones. By creating the city’s first Stabilization Housing Pilot Program and housing center, we can deliver critical supports and stability to our neighbors in need and deliver on the promise for all residents of our city to have safe, stable housing.”

“This will be the first long-term City of Chicago program solely focused on stabilizing people experiencing homelessness who also have major untreated health needs, especially related to mental health and substance use,” **said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady**. “It’s about breaking the cycle of homelessness by first providing transitional housing while focusing on addressing these acute health needs, with a longer-term goal of eventually moving individuals into both permanent housing and ongoing health care.”



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



The Stabilization Housing program aims to address the needs of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and complex behavioral health conditions in Chicago. These individuals, who often cycle between jail, emergency departments, and homeless services, face significant challenges due to unmet mental health and substance use disorder needs. The initiative builds upon the successful Hotel 166 program and aims to provide transitional housing and behavioral health support to stabilize individuals.

“We learned a lot during COVID about the benefits of private space and services for people experiencing homelessness with behavioral health needs,” **said Department of Housing Commissioner Marisa Novara.** “Simply put, people got better faster. Now Chicago Department of Housing is working with CDPH to acquire a space (currently a hotel) for City ownership and CDPH's own ongoing ability to triage people with highest needs.”

In 2020, Chicago implemented a hotel-based protective housing intervention to provide health care to people experiencing homelessness. This program, called Hotel 166, provided on-site health care workers to monitor SARS CoV-2 symptoms and provide medical care for chronic health and behavioral health conditions. A study of the program found that participants reported that their mental health improved or stabilized during their stay and 51% successfully transitioned into some type of housing after leaving Hotel 166. This approach has also been implemented successfully in other cities, with positive impacts on housing stability and health outcomes.

The Diplomat Motel was selected based on program needs, location accessibility, and aldermanic support from Andre Vasquez. The motel provides a non-congregate setting which supports higher participant engagement, limits the spread of infectious disease, and decreases the utilization of crisis services due to individual rooms for each participant. Additionally, the Diplomat Motel is easily reached through public transportation.

“This Stabilization Housing Pilot, the first of its kind, when successful, will transform the way our city addresses the challenge of homelessness,” **said Alderperson Andre Vasquez.** “It centers those experiencing it and lets them know that we are on the journey with them, providing the support and dignity that they deserve, while building community and safety for all, together.”

###