



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2024

CONTACT:

Elisa Sledzinska

312.744.1973

Elisa.Sledzinska@cityofchicago.org

**CITY OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF SECOND ROUND OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE
COMMUNITY GROWERS PROGRAM**

*Program continues to increase the availability of healthy food in communities facing food insecurity;
Interested urban growers to apply beginning May 1st.*

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Brandon Johnson, the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), and program partner agency NeighborSpace, announced the application opening for the second round of the City’s Community Growers Program.

Through this program, BACP and NeighborSpace are reducing the barriers to urban agriculture by supporting urban growers with access to resources to build long-term urban agriculture sites and technical support. The first round of the program saw 18 urban growers selected to help increase equitable community-access to healthy foods by creating new food access points in neighborhoods experiencing food insecurity. Urban growers interested in applying to participate in the program in this second round can do so from May 1st through June 30th, 2024, by visiting NeighborSpace.org. NeighborSpace is managing the application review and selection process.

“The continuation of this program reinforces my commitment to increase hyper local food access in historically disinvested communities,” said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “The Community Growers Program demonstrates the possibilities when collaboration and community intersect. Through the program, urban growers are provided with financial and technical support to grow produce on urban agriculture sites to provide access to healthy food in communities. After a successful first round, I encourage urban growers to apply to be part of this historic program.”

“Chicago has a long history of urban agriculture, and we are continuing this tradition through the Community Growers Program,” said **BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer**. “The program continues to address access to funding and resources, which are main barriers for urban growers. BACP, with program partner NeighborSpace, is creating a more inclusive, sustainable urban agriculture ecosystem.”

As a part of this program, NeighborSpace will provide financial and technical assistance to urban growers. This work is being done with the goal of increasing access to healthy food in communities facing high levels of food insecurity. NeighborSpace is collaborating with the following partner agencies to implement this program: 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.

“Farmers and gardeners across Chicago are already growing food that will help feed their communities. With an infusion of support for additional infrastructure, the second round of the Community Growers Program will invest in this hard work, enabling existing gardens to grow even more,” said **Ben Helphand, Executive Director, NeighborSpace**. “Support will include things such as water hydrants, fences, hoop houses, surveys, and design renderings. The goal of the Program is to get Chicago’s growers growing more, especially on the southwest and south sides, and we are excited to steward this work forward.”

“The Community Growers Program highlights the immense value of intentional collaboration between the City of Chicago departments, growers, and the organizations that support our food system,” said **Sydney Coyle, Community Food Navigator**. “The program has provided an opportunity to invest in this relational network and allows us to develop a tighter, deeply interconnected local food system. Through these collaborations, we can increase Chicago's capacity to grow and distribute fresh produce locally, create support systems and care for our growers, and work towards food justice with these growing spaces as community anchors.”

“With the support of the Community Growers Program, a collaborative team of community stakeholders in North Lawndale, called the Garden to Table Pipeline, have brought life back to a 17,000 square foot property that has been neglected for decades!” said **Mike Trout, Founder and Executive Director of Young Men's Educational Network** and a Community Growers Program first round recipient. “With a gift of recent water installation and satellite spickets, there is a new community farm that has been born. Urban farmers can now grow fresh produce 365 days a year! We could not have done this without our partnership with the NeighborSpace and the Community Growers Program!”

The Community Growers Program, designed in partnership with the City of Chicago Food Equity Council, is a \$2 million 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.

NeighborSpace is a nonprofit urban land trust in Chicago that preserves and sustains gardens on behalf of dedicated community groups. They have supported 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.

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

###