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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Plan Approved to Formalize Mayor Emanuel's "Large Lots" Pilot Program**

A plan approved today by City Council will formally establish the "Large Lots" program to help streamline the sale of select parcels of vacant City-owned land for \$1.

"The Large Lots program enables community residents and stakeholders to take ownership of their blocks, one parcel at a time," Mayor Emanuel said. "It's an effective, cost-friendly tool to redevelop concentrations of City-owned land for private and community uses."

Pilot versions of the program were launched this spring in greater Englewood and this summer in East Garfield Park by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD). Initiated under Mayor Emanuel's "Five-Year Housing Plan" and the Green Healthy Neighborhoods Plan, each pilot provided homeowners, block clubs, and nonprofit organizations the opportunity to purchase vacant, City-owned, residential lots for \$1 per parcel. Most are planned as side yards and gardens.

The formal program will provide an electronic application process through the LargeLots.org web site. To qualify as a buyer, an applicant must own property on the same block, be current on property taxes, and have no outstanding debt to the City, among other requirements. Up to two properties will be available per application; each would be sold in "as is" condition through a quit claim deed.

"This program will allow residents to clean up vacant lots and transform them into community assets, which complements our work to strengthen Chicago neighborhoods," said Ald. Ray Suarez, chair of City Council's Housing and Real Estate Committee. "We also envision this program to potentially create more affordable housing, as community groups could build new developments on what was once vacant, City-owned land."

The program will be offered in select neighborhoods based on demand and availability of vacant City-owned land.

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**South Side Fire Station Will be Converted into Culinary Business Incubator**

A former fire station in Grand Boulevard will be sold and converted into a food business incubator through a plan approved today by City Council.

Sparks Shared Kitchen LLC will purchase and renovate the vacant two-story structure at 4005 S. Dearborn St. as a shared commercial kitchen that provides mentoring services to start-up food businesses.

The first floor of the 2,600-square-foot building will be rehabilitated as a main cooking and production room. The second floor will house additional production spaces, a dining and presentation room, walk-in freezer, and offices. Total project cost is estimated at \$725,000.

Built in the 1930s by the Chicago Fire Department for Engine Co. 16, the masonry building closed in 2012 after a new, larger fire station was constructed nearby. Appraised at \$60,000, the property will be sold for \$15,000.

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) issued a request for proposals (RFP) for the structure earlier this year. Six proposals were received, primarily for residential and commercial uses.

Sparks' current Grand Boulevard facility provides production and support space for 60 full- and part-time employees affiliated with mostly minority and women-owned businesses. The new location will increase capacity for another 40 full- and part-time workers.

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### **Land Acquisition Process Authorized for Development of New Hospital Campus**

City Council approved the City's acquisition authority for a 9.2-acre site in South Lawndale today.

The land, located at 3200 S. Kedzie Ave. and 3230-3354 W. 31<sup>st</sup> St., is adjacent to an 11-acre parcel of public property that is already designated for the development of a new St. Anthony Hospital and community services campus.

Together, the two sites will provide more than 20 acres for the project, which will include medical facilities, retail space, community center and recreational amenities.

Acquisition authority will start the process that would allow the City to take ownership of the three parcels.

In October, the Community Development Commission approved the acquisition of the parcels.

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