

Statement in Support of Local Food Economy in Chicago

As proponents and practitioners of urban agriculture and healthy local food, we are advocates not only of food production in cities but also of local, community-centered ownership and control of the local food system.

The “food desert” problem is a function of historic disinvestment in neighborhoods. It is only one feature of a phenomenon that includes high rates of poverty, schools that fail their students, and persistent high unemployment. The economic base needed to support good quality food stores and other retail products and services – all indicators of a healthy local economy – simply does not exist. The “solution” to “food deserts” requires attention to and investment in local, neighborhood-based ownership of food enterprises. This includes a full spectrum of activities, from all scales of food production through processing, distribution, and sales, inclusive of the associated goods and services that accompany a full-fledged food economy. A rich, textured, and comprehensive economy will grow the health and wealth of people in their neighborhoods.

As advocates and practitioners of urban agriculture, we are committed to developing and operating successful sites, systems, and enterprises, and the local skills base to operate and manage them. We support the establishment of neighborhood-based systems that provide residents with access to fresh healthy food – not simply as consumers but as active participants, employers, and workers in a fully realized local food economy.

By dedicating their attention – and the significant funds embodied in direct food assistance, subsidies and business investment – to develop stable, locally owned and operated food system enterprises, all levels of government could support the accompanying physical infrastructure and work skills training required to generate a community food environment that sustains both the physical and economic health of the community over the long term. We believe that an approach that relies primarily on subsidies and incentives for large retail supermarkets or chain stores is insufficient. Instead, we advocate for robust and innovative community food environments, in which local complexity, relationships, and redundancy of roles will provide greater job and business opportunity, and more resilient food security.

In the context of community master planning, multiple strategies are needed to help solve the problems that plague urban and rural communities described as food deserts. These include many ways that urban agriculture and local food system sites, systems, and skills can provide diverse sources and kinds of healthy food; use vacant and blighted land productively; clean up contaminated soils and water; anchor neighborhood business districts; teach entry-level through professional skills and develop jobs in production, processing, and distributing, and associated services; and foster healthier cooking and eating practices with individuals and families.

This is a moment for redefinition of the city’s economic vision and policy, a window of opportunity for the establishment of neighborhood-based models and institutions. We urge that the City of Chicago:

- Direct the majority of federal, state, and local funds and investment mobilized for healthy food access to medium-scale and neighborhood-based owners and operators of food enterprises.
- Incentivize and expedite infrastructure for sites and systems, business ownership and ongoing support for neighborhood enterprises; and
- Hire a Food System and Enterprise Coordinator at the level of the Mayor’s office to oversee an inter-departmental accountability team and navigate among city, county, and extended region staff and functions: to solve problems, interpret between and among departments, and seek coherent, comprehensive application of services and resources within all dimensions that impact the local food system.

- Complete a multi-stakeholder analysis of demand and supply chains to propose ways to provide as much food locally as needed and possible, produced at scale from hyper-local to regional and beyond.
- Work with a Chicago Food Council that is more fully representative and comprises practitioners, governmental officials, and neighborhood residents, and that operates within a responsive, transparent, and accountable communication and democratic decision-making structure.

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS:

Name	Organization or Affiliation
Nick Adam	Firebelly Design
Simone Alexander	Enlace Chicago
Mark Allen	National Black Wall Street
Ryan Anderson	AUA: Advocates for Urban Agriculture, Delta Institute
Joseph A. Antolin	Executive Director, Heartland Human Care Services
Angela Bailey	Chicago Jobs Council; Resident, 43rd Ward
Adjoa Barbara Baker, M.Ed.	N'COBRA, Chicago Chapter
Sydney Barton	AUA, Chicago Honey Co-op
Sarah Batka	EllisView Garden, Inspiration Kitchens
Patsy Benveniste	AUA, Chicago Botanic Garden
Kelly Berry	Resident, 25th Ward
Jim Bloyd, MPH	Chair, Food and Nutrition Section, Illinois Public Health Association
Jeannie Boutelle	Edible Chicago
Martha Boyd	AUA, Angelic Organics Learning Center; Resident, 20th Ward
Beth Braun, M.A., Ph.D.	Biology - City Colleges of Chicago
Hon. Carol Moseley Braun	Ambassador Organics, Inc.
Greg Brown	Breaking Ground
William Burdett	Dill Pickle Food Co-op
Javonna Burton	Board Member, Growing Home
Conor Butkus	FamilyFarmed.org
Rev. Dr. Clare Butterfield	Faith in Place
Helen and Michael Cameron	Uncommon Ground
Sheila R. Castillo	Center of Excellence in the Elimination of Disparities, UIC
Irv Cernauskas	Irv and Shelly's Fresh Picks
Robin Cline	Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
Coalition	Chicago Neighborhoods First
Jadine Collingwood	Resident, 25th Ward
Maureen Collins	UIC School of Public Health
Amandilo M. Cuzan	Bronzeville Alliance Education Task Force
Suzanne Davenport	North Park Village Community Garden
Naomi Davis	BIG/Blacks in Green; Resident, 20th Ward
JoLynn Doerr	Resident, 50th Ward
Hazel Domangue	Progressive Community Center, the People's Church
Fenell Doremus	Resident, 45th Ward
Chef Curtis Drane	Real Men Charities, Inc.
Kath Duffy et al	Dill Pickle Co-op Board of Directors
Christopher Fagnant	Dill Pickle Food Co-op
Mark Fick	Chicago Community Loan Fund
Tracy Fleshman	Resident, 2nd Ward
Glenn Ford	Praxis Marketplace, Inc.
Jeanette Foreman	Real Men Charities, Inc. and SOS

Gerald Frazier	Real Men Charities, Inc.
Guadalupe Garcia	Bronzeville Community
Ben Garcia-Spitz	Resident, 25th Ward
Yvette Moyo Gillard	Real Men Cook ®, Real Men Charities, Inc.
Brian Gleichauf	Chicago Waldorf School; Resident, 40th Ward
Selene Gonzalez	Little Village Environmental Justice Organization
Brendon Gross	Resident, 47 th Ward
Claudia Gunter	Bronzeville
Ivan Handler	Board Member, Growing Home
Paul Hardej	farmedhere, LLC
Kitt Healy	Green City Market
Breanne Heath	AUA, Growing Home
Eddie Heinemann	Resident, 50th Ward
Seth Herr	Urban Habitat Chicago
Brad Hirn	Growing Home
Terry Hopkins	Resident, 17th Ward
Dan Hurowitz	Resource Center/City Farm
Mike Janecek	Resident, 20th ward
Susie Kauffman	60626
Suzanne Keers	Local First Chicago
Seneca Kern	AUA, WeFarm America
Wes King	Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Danielle Kizaire & Charles Sutton	Bronzeville Urban Development
Les Kniskern	Neighborhood Nutrition Centers
Sue Lannin	Rogers Park Farms
Kelly Larsen	AUA, Chicago Botanic Garden
Karen Lehman	Director, Fresh Taste
Freddrenna Lyle	Lyle for Kids, IL Fresh Food Advisory Council
Allison Mackey	Resident, 25th Ward
Jenny Magill	Resident, 42nd Ward
Margaret Mass	The Abundance Project
Andrea Mattson	Edible Alchemy
Carla McGarrah	The Plant/Alewyfe Farm Soaps and Sundries
Sid L. Mohn	President, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
Zina Murray	Logan Square Kitchen
Robin Nicolaus	Goodness Greeness, 3rd Ward
Tracy Noel	Rural Farm Manager, Growing Home
Mike Nowak	The Mike Nowak Radio Show, WCPT
Jenna Obluck	Gilasi Recycled Surfaces
Organization	Chicago Jobs Council
Organization	Chicagoland Green Collar Jobs Initiative
John Owens	President of the Board of the Shawnash Institute
Rev. Marilyn Pagán-Banks	A Just Harvest (formerly Good News Community Kitchen)
Valerie Paurus	Resident, 25th Ward
Neil Peck	Resident, 46th Ward
Marta Pereyra	Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly (CLESE)
Dr. Richard J. Perry, Jr., Ph.D.	Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Dan Peterman	Experimental Station, UIC; Resident, 20th Ward
Sedonia Phillips	Resident, 6th Ward
Harmony Picciuca	Resident, 1st Ward
Kevin Pierce	AUA, Resource Center
James Pirovano	FamilyFarmed.org

Alex Poltorak	Urban Canopy
Cheryl Pomeroy	eZing, Inc.
John Porterfield	eZing, Inc.
Kamal K Rashid	Farmer, Zanjabil Gardens
Perry Recker	Kennedy-King College Library, Pullman Christian Reformed Church
Lindsay Record	Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Renee Rehkemper & Family	Residents, 27th Ward
Eran Rhodes	Sacred Earth Edible Landscaping Initiative
Harry Rhodes	AUA, Growing Home
Lan & Pam Richart	Eco-Justice Collaborative
Barbara Rose	Angelic Organics Learning Center
Andy Rozendaal	Resource Center/City Farm
Craig Adam Sadur	Benton House, Bridgeport
Michael Sands, Ph.D	Farm Business Development Center/Liberty Prairie
Desire Sandus	Windy City Harvest
Linda Seyler	Refugee Agricultural Partnership Project/CLESE
Suzanne Shannon	Roots & Rays Garden
Ellen Shepard	Resident, 47th Ward
Jim Slama	President/Founder, FamilyFarmed.org/Good Food Festivals
Noah Stein	AgLab Instructor/Better Boys Foundation
Chuck Templeton	Chicago REgen, OhSoWe
Kristina Tendilla	Benton House, Bridgeport
Michael Thompson	AUA, Chicago Honey Co-op
Ray Thompson	Greater Englewood Urban Agriculture Task Force
Evelyn Tolliver	Certified Meeting Professional (CMP)
Greg Vaughan	Resident, 44th Ward
Kim Wasserman	Little Village Environmental Justice Organization
Cassandra West	Seeding Chicago
Katie Wiegman	Resident, 32nd Ward
Orrin Williams	Center for Urban Transformation
Jeannine Wise	60625
David Ziemba et al	BrilliantlyMad Collective