

For Immediate Release
Tuesday, October 1, 2019

Contact:
Whitney Barnes
217.638.3543
wbarnes@ilchamber.org

Urban Farmer receives 2019 economic development award for company expansion

CHICAGO— The Illinois Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with the Illinois Economic Development Association (IEDA), **awarded Urban Farmer** with the **11th Annual Economic Development in Illinois Award**. Known as the 'Edies', the awards recognize outstanding economic development projects completed in the calendar year 2018 that bring jobs, growth and prosperity to Illinois communities.

“We're proud to acknowledge Urban Farmer's dedication to being and staying a job creator in Illinois with this award,” said Illinois Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Todd Maisch. “Urban Farmer's expansion reinforces their commitment to growing their business for their families, workers and customers right here at home. We hope this Edie highlights significant impact local businesses can have on economic development in Illinois and throughout the country.”

Urban Farmer was an established Kankakee County business specializing in gluten-free pizza manufacturing when it purchased a former food production facility in Manteno, IL. The 111,000 SF facility, built in 1990, required a significant amount of renovation to bring it up to current food-grade standard. The Economic Alliance of Kankakee County worked closely with Urban Farmer in its real estate search and helped the company navigate the economic development incentives available through Kankakee County. Urban Farmer's investment in the new facility, including purchase cost, exceeded \$4 million. The expansion, completed in 2018, enabled the company to increase its output and grow its workforce from 50 to 250, and they currently employ more than 300 at their Manteno campus.

“Urban Farmer is honored to have been selected as a recipient of the 2019 Edie award,” said Urban Farmer Founding Partner Warren Ouwenga. “Thank you for this recognition when there are so many other great candidates across Illinois from which to choose. Thank you also to the Economic Alliance of Kankakee County for their nomination.

“Although Urban Farmer is a relatively new company, our deeply rooted heritage has been providing and producing healthy food products in Illinois and throughout the country for decades.

“Urban Farmer is a company committed to operating on the fundamental values of quality, integrity and fairness to our employees and customers and generosity to our communities.”

The Edies are divided into two geographical categories with Urban Farmer being honored with the award for the outside the metropolitan area category and Hart Schaffner Marx of Des Plaines awarded for the metropolitan area category.

“It’s evident by the project submissions and this year’s winners that Illinois truly is an economic powerhouse,” said IEDA Chairman Bryan Gay. “Thanks to their investment in our communities, we can continue to provide jobs and economic growth across Illinois.”

The awards were made possible by this year’s sponsor Nicor Gas and projects were judged based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative criteria.

“Nicor Gas is a proud sponsor of the Edie Awards and celebrates efforts to showcase economic accomplishments that have a real benefit to Illinois,” said Nicor Gas Director of Customer Development Marie LaPorte. “Working with partners like the Illinois Chamber and IEDA, Nicor Gas continues to support tangible investments that bring jobs and economic prosperity to our communities. It is a joy to support these awards and we congratulate the 2019 winners!”

About the Edies:

For more than a decade, the Edies have honored those who imagine, design, invest, build and bring jobs, growth and prosperity to Illinois communities. The awards showcase business accomplishments that often translate into more jobs and greater economic vitality in Illinois. You can find out more about the awards, including categories, criteria and past winners: [here](#).

Photo Attached

Caption: From left: Rick Trujillo of Nicor Gas; Bryan Gay of IEDA; Ryan Sparrow, Sharon Ouwenga, Warren Ouwenga, John M. Keigher, and Jonathan Keigher of Urban Farmer; Joe Hicks of Nicor Gas; and Whitney Barnes of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce

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