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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

Jersey City Launches First Food Rescue Mapping; Saving Taxpayer Dollars, Fighting Hunger, and Promoting Sustainability

Jersey City to Identify Major Organizations that Engage in Food Waste in Partnership with the NRDC and the Center for Ecotechnology

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Steven M. Fulop joins the **Department of Health & Human Services** to announce the launch of a citywide initiative to combat food waste and food insecurity by rescuing it from local businesses. The findings of which will be shared with other cities around the nation and used as a model for municipalities interested in addressing these issues.

In 2020, Jersey City was selected to become a partner city for the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC) Food Matters Regional Initiative. The collaboration with the NRDC and Center of Ecotechnology announced today will produce a multitude of measurable impacts to help reshape the landscape in food accessibility for those who need it most. Additionally, reducing the tons of waste for hauling translates into quantifiable savings for the municipal budget and taxpayers.

“These types of innovative partnerships highlight Jersey City’s ability to use dignity as a driving force for dealing with challenges that emerge from food insecurity and historically marginalized communities,” said **Mayor Steven M. Fulop, City of Jersey City**. “Additionally, we are once again serving as the optimal urban incubator for piloting these types of innovative approaches and sharing the lessons learned with other cities and towns to help improve their own communities.”

With technical advisory support and NRDC funding, Jersey City’s Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) is working with nationally recognized leaders in the field of food waste reduction.

The Center for Ecotechnology has designed a methodology to identify significant players in the area of community food banks, food pantries, and other food distributors to vulnerable residents. With this data, HHS can better direct its efforts to improve access to food for exposed populations through the Division of Food & Nutrition with support from the Department of Public Works.

“This is part of a larger effort with NRDC, which chose Jersey City to participate in this important program. This data will improve our understanding of food waste areas for HHS and DPW to focus on, as this is a joint issue. Food that is rescued will go to community agencies, and the rest will get composted to significantly reduce waste,” added **Stacey Flanagan, Director of Jersey City’s HHS**.

The program to reduce food waste compliments other efforts already underway in Jersey City, including the successful implementation of the Division of Recycling’s new composting program, which, in just six months, has already saved nearly \$1 million by diverting and reducing food waste.

“In Jersey City, we believe that every resident plays a valuable role in the local and global environment. We strive to empower residents with the resources needed to reduce their environmental impact through the ease of access to food waste receptacles,” added **Sonia Marte-Dublin, Director of the Division of Recycling**. “The diversion and repurposing of food waste is critical to reducing greenhouse gasses, which are released from rotting food and ultimately contribute to the effects of climate change. By increasing accessibility to composting, we are making significant strides in community sustainability by encouraging participation by people of all walks of life.

Building on its first-in-the-nation collaboration with AeroFarms to deliver equitable access to nutritious greens in historically marginalized communities, Jersey City’s latest effort to reduce waste and improve access to healthy foods expands upon these efforts by the HHS to continue making strides toward closing food access gaps that disproportionately affect urban areas most.

Alexander Mirescu, who manages this latest project at HHS, highlights that “the goals for reducing social vulnerabilities and social risk, as well as achieving sustainability goals, can be measurably reduced by something as simple as engaging local businesses to rescue and redirect food, the majority of which are small or medium enterprises in our vibrant immigrant community.”

Understanding the work of the most impactful local food waste organizations will empower Jersey City’s thousands of food-related businesses with useful tools and practices to reduce their own costs of refrigeration, water, storage, and waste removals. With data from the Center of Ecotechnology, HHS can better understand how local organizations generate positive social impacts for Jersey City’s communities.

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