Sustainability Leadership & Innovation at McCormick Square
Our Commitment to Sustainability Runs Deep

Sustainability isn’t a trend. For us, it is a crucial part of being a responsible business and a good neighbor. While we don’t do this for the recognition, our efforts have generated international recognition and help call attention to this vitally important issue.

McCormick Place was the first convention center in the world to receive Green Seal certification for environmentally responsible food purchasing, operations and management. To this day, SAVOR...Chicago continues to maintain and expand this important and demanding certification. In addition to other accolades, we’ve been named a five-time Food Recovery Challenge Award recipient by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
A Sustainable, Urban Agriculture Leader

The garden atop McCormick Place began as part of the West Building’s LEED certification process and quickly grew to embody our commitment to sustainable operations. While the rooftop garden and its bounty are a centerpiece of our sustainability program, our commitment has grown to include promoting sustainable urban agriculture and training city residents interested in careers as well as sharing our harvest and knowledge with our neighbors.

Half-Acre of Fresh Innovation

Fresh menu choices and innovation aren’t words frequently used to describe convention center fare but the MPEA and SAVOR...Chicago have raised the stakes with their commitment to providing interested visitors a fresh and healthy taste of Chicago. From our half-acre rooftop garden, SAVOR...Chicago harvests the freshest of ingredients.

The rooftop garden is the crown jewel of our sustainability program and yields 8,000+ pounds of seasonal, farm-fresh plenty every year. This bounty is used in SAVOR...Chicago’s restaurants, shared with our neighbors and used to showcase McCormick Square on the world stage to demonstrate what can be done with a simple convention center roof.

8,000 lbs.

Four tons of seasonal, farm-fresh produce harvested each year

95 varieties planted

Nearly 100 different varieties of vegetables, fruits, herbs, edible flowers, perennials and bushes were planted last season

Three bee hives

The rooftop garden is home to 20,000 bees that pollinate the garden’s crops and produce 50 lbs. of honey each year.
A Sustainable, Urban Agriculture Leader

SAVOR...Chicago recognized early on that the rooftop garden represented a unique opportunity to partner with leading agricultural experts to showcase Chicago’s commitment to sustainability. The Chicago Botanic Garden and its Windy City Harvest program have been instrumental in the strategy, design, management, and growth of the rooftop garden. The hard work and expertise of both groups fuel the rooftop garden’s bountiful yields and community integration.

The Importance of Biodiversity

SAVOR...Chicago has grown the half-acre rooftop garden into something much more than a few cooking herbs, tomatoes and lettuce. In the 2017 growing season, SAVOR...Chicago expanded beyond more common vegetables and added 16 heirloom varietals identified in the Slow Foods Arc of Taste. The Slow Foods Arc of Taste is a living catalog of heirloom varieties at risk of extinction. These varietals are culturally or historically relevant, sustainably produced, and unique in taste.

In 2018, SAVOR...Chicago collaborated with Slow Food Chicago and the Chicago Botanic Garden to plant the first Convention Center Arc of Taste Orchard, featuring the historically significant Republican Black Cherry trees. The rooftop garden is a celebration of biodiversity made possible with the help of three active hives of honeybees that pollinate crops and produce honey.

Local & Sustainable

More than 33% of all food purchased at McCormick Place is local, organic or environmentally preferred. This includes sustainable seafood, meats raised without antibiotics and other farm-to-fork favorites from local businesses.

Farm-to-Fork Dining

As a hospitality company, SAVOR...Chicago is all about culinary excellence and great taste. That’s why we’ve raised the stakes by providing fresh, farm-to-fork dining choices for visitors interested in a taste of Chicago.

Picture heaps of vegetables and herbs, varieties that were selected because of their great taste, then picked at the peak of ripeness and prepared within hours of being harvested. This is the true value of hyper-local produce. Whether artfully crafted into a high-end catered event or incorporated in a fresh garden salad to be enjoyed by a retail customer, this is what SAVOR...Chicago chefs live for!

Creative Innovation: Rooftop Hops

The garden is an endless source of ideas. One tasty example that conference-goers rave about is McCormick Place Everyday Ale. Working with a local craft brewer, Brickstone Brewery, we created the country’s first branded ale brewed for a convention center using locally sourced ingredients and hops grown in the rooftop garden.

Gardens for All

The true value of an icon such as the Rooftop Garden is the opportunity to inspire visitors with what can be done in their own environments.

While the McCormick Place Rooftop Garden is a massive undertaking, we showcase ways that anyone with a few square feet and good intentions can replicate the garden’s impact by growing healthy, fresh vegetables.
McCormick Square and SAVOR...Chicago are committed to helping event planners, attendees and stakeholders lessen their impact on the environment. A key pillar to our commitment is waste reduction and diversion. From initial planning all the way through execution and clean up, we work closely with event planners and managers to minimize waste.

We’ve grown waste diversion rates from 35% in 2011 (the first year SAVOR...Chicago managed McCormick Place food and beverage services) to 59% in 2017. In 2018, working with GreenBuild show organizers we were able to achieve a nearly 90% waste diversion rate for this event that focuses on sustainable building practices.

This significant improvement is thanks to many different waste reduction initiatives including creation of the proprietary Green Angels™ post-consumer recycling and composting program, implementation of a rigorous back-of-the-house waste segregation program, changes in packaging and bulk condiments and recycling food grease to biodiesel.

59% diversion
SAVOR...Chicago has nearly doubled waste diversion rates at McCormick Square since 2011

1,000 lbs.
SAVOR...Chicago donates excess food to neighborhood charities, including 1,000 lbs in 2017

100%
All flatware and paper goods are 100% recyclable and made from plant materials
Recycling & Composting

Managing post-consumer waste in a convention center is an immense challenge. McCormick Square draws millions of guests each year and SAVOR...Chicago makes it a priority to clearly communicate to attendees proper waste disposal to limit the items that end up in a landfill.

Managing three post-consumer waste streams, SAVOR...Chicago uses easy-to-understand graphics on waste containers to help visitors easily understand what goes into each waste stream (recycling, composting and general waste). We know from experience that most people want to do the right thing when it comes to recycling and waste diversion. If we can make it simple and convenient for them to do it correctly, we all win.

Donating Locally

We work closely with our clients to manage the amounts of food ordered and minimize food waste, but when there is an over-abundance of food that is still good to eat, it is donated to neighborhood charities.

In 2017, we shared more than 1,000 pounds of food with local organizations including the Pacific Garden Mission. In total, more than three tons of food has been repurposed to folks who needed it the most since SAVOR...Chicago began its work at McCormick Place in 2011.

Fewer Toxic Chemicals

SAVOR...Chicago has incorporated revolutionary ECA (Electric Chemically Activated) technology that combines salt, water, and electricity into its operations to replace the use of toxic chemicals in ware washing, sanitizing and floor cleaning.

Our 23rd Street Café & Market operational plan incorporates lake conservation into the daily operation by producing Green Seal Certified™ chemicals onsite using ECA technology to replace standard cleaning supplies with a solution that is 100% effective, 99.9% water and completely safe for team members and customers.

Other Innovative Steps

The McCormick Square team is constantly on the look out for new opportunities for re-use and waste reduction. One of the newest additions is the Grind2Energy food-waste-recycling system that converts food waste into renewable energy through anaerobic digestion. Using Grind2Energy, SAVOR...Chicago will be able to divert nearly 100% of pre-consumer organic waste.

Achieving More Together

When we work together with event organizers, the results can be impressive. In 2018, event producers for the annual GreenBuild conference challenged SAVOR...Chicago, their exhibitors and attendees to focus on waste diversion.

With a plan in hand and staff focused on keeping recyclables and compostables out of the waste stream, SAVOR...Chicago’s waste diversion rate for GreenBuild 2018 reached 89%. This is a great example what can be achieved when we all work together.

Donating Locally

In the South Food Court and the West Food Court, we staff our proprietary Green Angels Program. In these locations, our customers simply bring their trays to the Green Angels Kiosk and leave it with our team members. Green Angels staff then sort the waste according to the three streams: compost, recycle or general waste.

Annual Diversion Rate

The efforts that SAVOR...Chicago has put into the reduction of waste have had a measurable impact. From the time SAVOR...Chicago took over the foodservice contract there has been a nearly twofold increase in the percentage of waste that has been diverted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Recycling Rate</th>
<th>Diversion Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>35% (.68)</td>
<td>64% (.22)</td>
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<td>2017</td>
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<td>59% (.29)</td>
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Food Scraps - Scrap Cups + Straws - Boxes, Napkins + Tableware - Paper Cups + Straws - Boxes, Napkins + Tableware

Plastic - Aluminum - Cardboard - Glass

Snack + Candy Wrappers - Condiments - Coffee Cup & Lid

Landfill

COMPOST

RECYCLE

LANDFILL
SAVOR...Chicago’s commitment to sustainability goes beyond the natural environment to prioritize efforts to improve the quality of life for our neighboring communities as well as the diverse guests who visit McCormick Square.

Part of being a good neighbor is helping to create education and job opportunities. We are proud to support the Windy City Harvest Community Job Training & Education urban agriculture program that provides job training for at-risk youth and others. We also support hospitality career training through job shadowing and as the host site of the Illinois Restaurant Association’s annual ProStart® Competition.

Chicago is home to many diverse communities and our team works hard to be both a good neighbor and a host to our many visitors. From sharing fresh recipes and tastings at our neighborhood farmers’ market in the summer to giving millions of visitors a taste of Chicago, SAVOR...Chicago is determined to help share the vibrant bounty and hospitality of McCormick Square.

90% finish high school

90% of participants in the Windy City Harvest urban agriculture program finish high school and more than half enroll in college

Company of the Year

SAVOR...Chicago was named the Illinois Restaurant Association’s Company of the Year in 2016 for our support of hospitality career training.
Community Job Training & Education
SAVOR…Chicago’s partnership with the Windy City Harvest program has been a pivotal part of our community integration. This program is dedicated to urban agriculture education and job training for at-risk youth, local apprentices, and individuals with significant barriers to employment. Working together, we are achieving sustainability goals, but most importantly, we are providing career paths and education to local youth.

Future Food & Beverage Leaders
SAVOR…Chicago proudly supports ProStart®, an education program of the National Restaurant Association that helps educate tomorrow’s restaurant and foodservice leaders. Our ProStart involvement directly benefits Illinois high school students by hosting the annual Illinois ProStart statewide competition at McCormick Square with 14 high schools competing for scholarships in culinary and food & beverage management. We also provide hands-on, job-shadowing opportunities for local high school students. For our commitment to foodservice education, SAVOR…Chicago was recognized with the prestigious Illinois Restaurant Association Company of the Year Award.

In Our Neighborhood
SAVOR…Chicago participates in many programs beyond the walls of McCormick Square that contribute to the city of Chicago. We’re proud to be one of many vendors at the South Loop Farmers Market, a unique sustainable-foods marketplace in the Prairie District community of Chicago. Each week during the summer months, our SAVOR…Chicago stall is staffed by our volunteers who share samples and recipes from our menus. Our aim is to help the community expand their palate and learn new recipes featuring locally grown, sustainable ingredients available at the South Loop Farmers Market.

We also work closely with a number of local organizations such as the Chinese American Service League in Chicago’s Chinatown. At WindPower 2018, SAVOR…Chicago organized a community service project for WindPower volunteers to prepare and plant 30 vegetable garden planters that were ultimately distributed to the Chinese American Service League’s Culinary School.

An Inclusive World View
We know that most of our visitors want to have a Chicago food experience while they are here and we delight in providing fresh, local food and classic Chicago dishes to choose from. At the same time, we realize that our millions of visitors have diverse tastes and needs. Respect for people’s beliefs and world views is at the heart of SAVOR…Chicago’s approach to foodservice. More fundamental than our experiences in preparing authentic flavors for our customers is the environment that we provide visitors with different religious backgrounds. Our culinary and service teams are adept at preparing and serving both Halal and Kosher foods and also prepare foods for visitors with Hindu and Jain requirements.

Since 2015, we have had the privilege to manage all Halal food at McCormick Place each December for MAS-ICNA, one of the largest and most diverse Islamic conventions in North America. In 2018, we introduced a new Kosher Jerusalem Street Food offering that, in addition to addressing the needs of Jewish customers has become one of our most popular menus with PURE…SAVOR.

We are proud that SAVOR…Chicago’s cadre of chefs has a broad range of international experience that allows us to meet visitors’ needs for international flavors prepared with local ingredients. Our team is passionate about sharing great Chicago hospitality and fresh cuisine with visitors to McCormick Square.
Awards and Recognition

- Green Seal certified since 2013
- APEX/ASTM International Food & Beverage Sustainability Certification
- 5-time U.S. EPA EPA Food Recovery Challenge award winner
- Illinois Governor’s Sustainability Award

Actions speak louder than words and, through our every day actions, we strive to demonstrate our commitment to being a responsible steward of the environment, our community and our neighborhood.

Using sustainable practices is a responsibility we can all embrace – as organizations and individuals – with the hope that we can leave the next generations a world that is as good – or better – than the one we inherited.