



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON AND DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS AND
CONSUMER PROTECTION LAUNCH \$2.7 MILLION SMALL BUSINESS STOREFRONT
ACTIVATION PROGRAM**

The program allows small business owners to test their business ventures in vacant storefronts while enhancing local options for residents and visitors.

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Brandon Johnson and the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) announced 15 community and economic development organizations have been awarded grants as part of the Small Business Storefront Activation Program.

“Small businesses are essential components of thriving communities,” said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “We need to invest in our small businesses to generate economic activity, and the Small Business Storefront Activation Program will bring to life storefronts across the city and much-needed economic stimulus to business corridors in historically disinvested communities.”

The selected organizations, known as “grantees,” will work with small business owners and landlords to provide rapid relief to small businesses by activating vacant storefronts into burgeoning business spaces, like a retail incubator, an art gallery, and an indoor farmer’s market. The grantees will work to transform commercial corridors citywide, from the renowned Michigan Avenue to corridors in Pilsen, Humboldt Park, Uptown, and Chatham. Full program details can be found by visiting Chicago.gov/BACPRecoveryPlan.

“The Small Business Storefront Activation Program transforms storefronts and communities by stimulating entrepreneurship, creating jobs, and attracting new consumers,” said **BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer**. “The selected grantees will assist local business owners and entrepreneurs to positively impact commercial corridors.”

Small Business Storefront Activation Program Grantees:

- Calumet Area Industrial Commission
- Coalition For a Better Chinese American Community
- DishRoulette Kitchen NFP
- Garfield Park Community Council
- Greater Chatham Initiative
- Greater Southwest Development Corporation
- Lakeview Roscoe Village Chamber of Commerce
- Midway Chamber of Commerce
- Portage Park Chamber of Commerce
- Rogers Park Business Alliance
- The Far South Community Development Corporation
- The Magnificent Mile Association
- The Puerto Rican Cultural Center
- Uptown United
- West Town Chicago Chamber of Commerce

The grantees will be responsible for identifying vacant storefronts in their respective community areas, negotiating leases with landlords, sourcing participating small businesses, managing preparation and operations for the space, and providing ongoing support to small businesses operating pop-up stores. The goal of the Small Business Storefront Activation Program is to boost local spending and draw additional foot traffic to commercial corridors across the City.

“The 2023 Storefront Activation Program will enable Uptown United to lease a long vacant storefront on Wilson Avenue and host a weekly indoor market in 2024,” said **Sarah Wilson**, Executive Director of Uptown United. “Many vendors will come from the Chicago Market’s Uptown Farmers Market during the winter months and makers and additional vendors in the summer and fall months. The 2023 Storefront Activation Program will allow us to educate and incubate local food producers and new ideas. Cross-promotion with the Uptown Farmers Market will encourage foot traffic along the Wilson Avenue Commercial corridor, supporting both the pop-up vendors and existing bars, restaurants, and other businesses.”

"In Chinatown, I hope our storefront activation program is bringing “renao热闹”, a term cherished in Chinese culture for its connotation of a lively and bustling atmosphere, back to the streets,” said **Jiaxi Clayton Xu**, Community Manager of the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community. “I think this program is not just about filling empty spaces, it's about rekindling the lively spirit that Chinatown is renowned for. Together, we're writing a new chapter of prosperity and vibrancy for our neighborhood, infused with the unique “renao” that makes our area so special.”

“The Storefront Activation Program grant will allow us to provide an affordable space for new and current business owners to test out their ideas without the overhead and expense of opening a solo brick and mortar location,” said **Florence Hardy**, Chief Development & Innovation Officer of the Far South Community Development Corporation. “It also provides an opportunity for our entrepreneurs to network and learn from other entrepreneurs with whom they share the space. In the end, this is a very important step on Far South CDCs goal of revitalizing our business corridors while ensuring our residents are at the front of the line to reap the benefits.”

The Small Business Storefront Activation Program is part of the Chicago Recovery Plan, the City’s plan to amplify once-in-a-generation federal funding to create an equity-based investment strategy to catalyze a sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chicago Recovery Plan invests holistically in communities and industries hardest hit by the pandemic to support equitable economic recovery across the city.

To learn more about this Program and BACP’s Recovery Plan efforts, please visit Chicago.gov/BACPRRecoveryPlan.

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