



2026 Designation Steps For New Business Improvement Districts

This document is prepared by the Department of Planning and Development (“DPD”) and serves as the public guide outlining the timeline and action steps sponsoring organizations will need to complete to submit a Business Improvement District (“BID”) application and associated exhibits (“BID Designation Packet”) for a designation date as soon as January 1, 2026.¹ This process may take more than a year to complete. Active applicants may continue for a January 1, 2027 start.

During the process outlined below, DPD staff will be assigned to your organization to assist you through the BID designation process, so this document will be one of several resources available to you as a source for information and answers to questions or concerns.

In addition to the basic requirements to apply for a BID designation from the [State of Illinois BID Law](#), this document will also define your obligations for working with the City of Chicago, including City rules and regulations, City Council Legislative requirements, and DPD policies. However, this guide is not definitive, and additional requirements may be requested depending on community and stakeholder input DPD receives during the designation process.

Note that this is not a complete review of the State of Illinois’ BID Law or City of Chicago policies and should not be interpreted as legal advice.

STAGE 1: FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT (November 2024–December 2024)

1. **(November 2024) Prepare BID Feasibility Assessment:** The BID Feasibility Assessment is a self-assessment prepared by the sponsoring organization to see if a BID is right for your area and if the sponsoring organizations have the capacity and resources to sponsor the BID formation and support the creation of a BID Non-Profit Corporation. The template for the Feasibility Assessment, including required exhibits, will be emailed to applicants who contact DPD and will also be posted on the DPD website at: http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/special_service_areassaprog ram.html

This document must be completed and submitted to DPD **by December 31, 2024.**

2. **(November 2024–January 2025) DPD Interview with Sponsoring Organizations:** For new applicants, DPD will coordinate an interview with the BID sponsoring organizations to

¹ For simplicity, all community stakeholders are referred to as the sponsoring organizations within this document. Specifically, property owners within a commercial district will generally take the lead in organizing the creation of a BID, and a chamber of commerce or other unincorporated non-profit organization (i.e., organized groups that hold regular community meetings such as a neighborhood association) assists with organizing and funding. All these groups are referred to as sponsoring organizations.

discuss your group and district's readiness for a BID. Be prepared to discuss some of the following topics:

- a. Commercial property types within the proposed BID, including vacancies, distribution, number of tax-exempt properties, the proportion of residential properties, etc.
 - b. History of collaboration and investment from property owners, commercial tenants, and other stakeholders to address commercial needs within the corridor.
 - c. Level of support from local alderpersons.
 - d. Level of support from local neighborhood associations, community development corporations, and other stakeholder groups.
 - e. Current capital improvements or public amenities that need to be maintained.
3. **(December 2024–January 2025) Determine Designation Management:** The sponsoring organizations should prepare for sponsoring the BID in the event they are supported by the City by determining what aspects of the designation process they will do themselves and which they will outsource to consultants. Sponsoring organizations will generally provide administrative and technical support to the BID process, such as:
 - a. Provide expertise services for community revitalization and explain how non-profit organizations are created and managed.
 - b. Assist the advisory committee and chair in developing meeting agendas, scheduling meetings, and taking and distributing minutes.
 - c. Coordinate communication and outreach with DPD, property owners, community members, and alderpersons.
4. **(December 2024–January 2025) City Notice Regarding Support to Proceed:** DPD will notify the sponsoring organizations within 14 days after submission of the Feasibility Assessment of the City's approval or denial of their proposal to sponsor a BID formation. Applicants who are denied may be provided with alternatives to the BID designation process by DPD upon request.
5. **(December 2024–January 2025) Select a Qualified Consultant:** The sponsoring organizations must conduct a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to select a qualified consultant. If any selection method is used to select the consultant other than an RFP, the sponsoring organizations must justify their method to the City's satisfaction.² The RFP announcement must be posted on the sponsoring organizations' websites at least 30 days before the submission deadline. **The RFP should be posted by January 15, 2025.**
6. **(January 2025) Form a BID Advisory Committee:** Recruit an advisory committee of property owners, tenants, and representative groups subject to the proposed BID assessment. The Advisory Committee must choose a chairperson to lead it through the planning and community outreach phases of BID formation.
 - a. Participants on the BID Advisory Committee shall include primarily property owners/tenants in the proposed BID. Residents, elected officials, and community

² The requirements of the RFP process, including templates and examples, can be provided by DPD upon request.

organizations may also be on the Advisory Committee. The Committee should consist of between 10 and 20 members.

- b. The BID Advisory Committee shall select a chair with a history of involvement and experience in the community. The chair will:
 - i. Lead the BID Advisory Committee through the remaining steps of the BID designation process.
 - ii. Ensure target dates are met.
 - iii. Represent the committee throughout the designation process.
- c. The committee shall meet regularly to keep the BID designation process moving forward. The committee should maintain continuity in membership while also allowing interested stakeholders to be involved in the planning process.
- d. An Excel spreadsheet of the BID Advisory Committee Members shall be created and submitted to DPD by January 6, 2025. The list shall contain each member's name, affiliation (property owner, business name, resident, nonprofit name, etc.), mailing address, PIN in the proposed BID, ward, phone, email, and whether the person is a current board member of the sponsoring organizations.

7. (January 2025) Ensure the Sponsoring Organizations and the Advisory Committee Have a Clear Understanding of Responsibilities and Costs

- a. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders and sponsoring agency during the pre-establishment stages of BID formation. Reasonable expenses in this phase frequently range from \$20,000 to \$60,000.
- b. BID start-up costs are reimbursable to the sponsoring agency in the 2026 BID budget during the creation of the District Plan.
 - i. All parties should determine what services the sponsoring organizations will provide during the BID designation process, the amount of cost reimbursement, and ensure it is recorded as a service expense in the District Plan
 - ii. If additional information on cost reimbursement of services is required, the sponsoring organizations should consult an independent attorney or other legal counsel.

STAGE 2: PLANNING AND RESEARCH (January 2025–March 2025)

1. **(January 2025–February 2025) Initial Planning and Visioning:** The following steps are often facilitated and prepared by a consultant and should be included in an RFP for a consultant.
 - a. **Project Plan:** The BID Advisory Committee, in partnership with the sponsoring organizations, shall draft a project plan that sets target dates for the completion of action items needed to complete the application process by May 14, 2025. The project plan should be revised as needed to keep on schedule.
 - b. **Vision Statement:** The BID Advisory Committee shall prepare a Vision Statement for the BID, which will answer questions such as: What kind of place do they want the BID to be? Which goals are most widely held for the BID? Why did they

join the committee? The sponsoring organizations will help the committee prepare a Vision Statement to be available to the public.

- c. **Define Tentative Boundaries for the BID:** Although the boundaries may change through the designation process, a reasonable boundary should be defined to estimate services and costs. The boundaries should state exactly which streets to include, specifying the range of property addresses. Properties should be contiguous (adjacent, with no gaps in between).
- d. **Develop a Database of Property Owners and Commercial Tenants:** The PIN database is one of the most important research tools of the BID designation. The database will include information on properties within the proposed BID boundaries and will allow you to contact taxpayers and do tax analysis.
- e. **Conduct a Needs Assessment Survey:** A needs-assessment survey helps identify which services and programs property owners and commercial attendants feel are the highest priority for the BID to provide. The Needs Assessment Survey can be prepared via an online survey program, distributed via email, and posted on the agency's website. The sponsoring organizations shall make every effort to conduct in-person surveys with taxpayers, tenants, residents, and shoppers to get a "district user" perspective.
- c. **Establish metrics and baseline data:** The sponsoring organizations in coordination with the BID Advisory Committee and City shall determine what baseline data is needed to track the BID's impact. The sponsoring organizations may conduct studies in advance of creating or reconstituting the BID district, such as market studies, economic impact studies, land use inventories, etc. Examples of metrics that can be used include:
 - 1) Business profitability and enhanced property values
 - Number of new and renewing business licenses in the district
 - Assessed values of business improvement district properties
 - Property tax valuation of district properties
 - Rates of vacancy and occupancy
 - Overall retail performance
 - 2) Cleanliness and maintenance
 - Garbage removal, in total bags and tonnage of garbage
 - Square footage of new plantings and replacement plantings
 - Number of incidents of graffiti removal
 - Number of maintenance calls to 311
 - 3) Safety
 - Number of crimes reported
 - Number of vacant lots and abandoned buildings
- d. **City and Other Governmental Services Inventory:** The sponsoring organizations shall work with government agencies to create an inventory of current and proposed services in the district as well as gain an understanding of how to work with the respective governmental entity on service delivery. The purpose of this

step is to avoid service duplication/gaps and ensure compliance/coordination with procedures. Inventories may include such things as: maintenance programming with Dept. of Streets and Sanitation, streetscape elements with Dept. of Transportation, and security programs with the Chicago Police Department.

- e. Prepare a draft legal description:** The sponsoring organizations shall retain a surveyor to prepare a meets-and-bounds legal description for the BID. This document shall be submitted in MS Word format. DPD GIS staff will use the draft legal to prepare the draft map. DPD will also confirm the legal description with the Cook County Clerk's office.
 - f. Determine BID Governance and Operations:** The organization described in the District Plan that will approve services and contracts and lead the BID is a non-profit corporation. The sponsoring organizations and Advisory Committee must take the necessary steps to set up the organization, including identifying an initial board to execute start-up functions. For specific requirements on board composition, see Section 50 of the State of Illinois BID Law: [65 ILCS 125/50](#).
- 2. (February 2025) Draft the District Plan:** The District plan is the principal governing document for the BID and is similar in function to a business plan. It describes how the BID will be organized and governed, how services will be delivered, identifies the formula used to calculate the special assessment, and the length of time the BID will be authorized. The full BID District Plan requirements are in Section 15 of the State of Illinois's BID Law: [65 ILCS 125/15](#). See appendix for a list that summarizes the information required for the district plan.

STAGE 3: COMMUNITY OUTREACH (March 2025–April 2025)

- 1. Send Community Information Mailing and Hold Public Meetings:** Once the BID District Plan is drafted, DPD policy is that the BID Advisory Committee must hold at minimum two community meetings along with the sponsoring organizations, DPD, and all aldermen whose wards overlap with the proposed BID. These meetings will educate stakeholders about the BID, allow for feedback, and gauge support for the BID.

 - a.** The informational mailing summarizes the BID proposal to property owners within the proposed BID boundaries.
 - b.** Representatives from DPD and the local aldermanic office(s) will attend the two community meetings.

 - i.** The sponsoring organizations and BID Advisory Committee will work with DPD to prepare the community meeting presentation. Typically, the local alderperson(s) begins the presentation, followed by DPD providing a general introduction to BIDs. Then, the sponsoring organizations, the BID Advisory Committee, and the consultant will present the specifics of the BID.
 - ii.** Any of the presenters may answer public questions.

- iii. As per DPD policy, the sponsoring organizations will take notes from both meetings and post them on their websites promptly following the meeting dates.
2. **Distribute a Second Informational Mailing and Host Additional Community Meetings (as needed):** A second mailing and additional community meetings may be necessary based on feedback from the first two community meetings and other factors. The sponsoring organizations shall host additional meetings as needed for the community and/or specific stakeholders.
3. **Prepare and Collect a Written Petition:** The sponsoring organizations and BID Advisory Committee shall prove that there is support for the community the BID will serve.
 - a. A petition supporting the BID must be signed by property owners in the proposed business improvement district (or proposed expanded area of a business improvement district) who cumulatively are expected to pay more than 50% of the total amount of the proposed district charges.
 - b. All signatures for a petition to establish or expand a business improvement district must be collected within a period ending **no more than 120 days** from the initiation of the petition, which date shall be specified on the petition (see [65 ILCS 125/75](#)).

STAGE 4: APPLICATION REVIEW (May 2025)

4. **Prepare the BID Proposal:** The BID proposal must include the following information according to the requirements of Section 30 in the Illinois BID Law: [65 ILCS 125/30](#)
 - 1) Written petition satisfying the requirements of 65 ILCS 125/75.
 - 2) Name and legal status of the filing party.
 - 3) Information specifying where the complete district plan can be obtained.
 - 4) A summary of the district plan that includes:
 - i. The boundaries of the proposed business improvement district.
 - ii. The proposed activities and improvements and the estimated amount of annual funding required.
 - iii. The method of assessment.
 - iv. The business improvement district's governance structure.
 - v. The total amount of the proposed district charges.
 - 5) The amount that will go to operations, administration, maintenance, and improvement of the district.
1. **(May, 19, 2025) District Plan Due to DPD:** Provide an electronic copy (thumb drive, dropbox, etc.) of the BID application documents, organized so that each section of the application is saved in separate folders and as PDF files. The application must include support signatures from taxpayers of record.

2. **DPD reviews the District Plan with Coordinating Departments:** DPD will review the petition signatures and the BID Packet and contact the sponsoring organizations' contacts with questions.
3. **(DPD confirms Legal description and PIN Database:** With support from relevant City agencies, DPD will work with the sponsoring organizations to finalize and confirm the accuracy of documents for the BID designation ordinance, especially the legal description, PIN list, and map.

STAGE 5: LEGISLATION (June 2025–September 2025)

1. **DPD will Submit the BID proposal to the City Clerk:** DPD will submit the written petition to the City Clerk's Office. The Office of the City Clerk issues official approval of the signatures and petition. Within 90 days of receiving the petition, City Council will adopt a resolution of intention to consider the establishment of the business improvement district and provide the time and place of a public hearing to be held. Additional requirements for these steps are further detailed in the BID Law.
2. **Conduct public hearing:**
 - a. Public hearings shall be held before establishing the BID. It is City Council policy that these public hearings be conducted before the Council's Committee on Economic, Capital, and Technology Development. Additionally, a public hearing should be held in the event of the dissolution of or any changes to the BID. At a public hearing, any individual, including property owners within the BID, may file with the clerk written statements of support or objections and can speak to this if they focus on any matter for or management of the BID.
 - b. The governing body can adjourn a public hearing and reschedule it for another date without further notice other than a motion stating the time and place of the next hearing.
3. **Opportunity to Remedy Certain Deficiencies:**
 - a. The petition organizer may make small technical corrections to the district plan after it has been filed with the city, within 30 days after the public hearing.
 - b. Substantive changes in the BID plan (e.g., sources of financing, method or amount of assessment, boundaries, renewal processes, governance, or activities) require the collection of signatures again. If the district plan is amended by this process, the City Council is required to hold another public hearing.
4. **(June-October 2025) Establish a BID non-profit corporation:** After the public hearing is held, the advisory committee will officially create a nonprofit corporation for the BID where the advisory committee member will become the interim board of directors.
5. **(August – October 2025) Establishment and Funding Ordinances:** After public hearings, an ordinance adopting the BID term, annual work plan, budget, district plan, among numerous other details, will be introduced to and voted upon by City Council (DPD will be heavily involved assisting the organization this point), but see 65 ILCS 125/40 for a detailed list of the requirements of the ordinance. DPD will provide a checklist to the agency to prepare documentation needed for the designation and funding ordinances.

APPENDIX

BID Database

Prepare the BID Database in one Excel workbook to include, but not be limited to:

1. Worksheet describing the data collection/analysis method
2. Worksheet of summary data
 - a. Confirmation that 2023 board certified data is being used (NOTE: Accommodation will be made for updating data depending on timing of when 2024 board certified data is available)
 - b. Total number of PINs and of these:
 - i. Total taxable PINs
 - ii. Total non-taxable PINs
 - c. Total EAV used to calculate the tax bills and of this:
 - i. Total EAV captured in the Base EAV by each TIF (if applicable)
 - ii. Total EAV captured in the TIF Increment by each TIF (if applicable)
 - iii. EAV not captured in TIF(s)
 - iv. Delinquent PINs
 - v. Any other relevant data
 - d. Worksheet(s) of the Cook County Land Use List and Pie Chart: list each county land use in the BID, each land use's dollar amount and percent of the total Tax Year 2023 (payable in 2024) levy and maximum levy. Create a pie chart for the Tax Year 2023 (payable in 2024) and maximum levies showing the \$ and % of totals. Include a legend explaining what the county classification types mean.
 - e. Worksheet(s) with the following data columns for each PIN with totals at the top as relevant:
 - i. 14-digit PIN
 - ii. property address in the BID
 - iii. Name and mailing address of the taxpayer who paid taxes for the last preceding year. If the taxes were not paid, note this and list the name and mailing address of the property owner (not taxpayer, but property owner)
 - iv. Board certified 2022 or 2023 EAV used to calculate the tax bill
 - v. Board certified 2022 or 2023 EAV captured in the Base EAV for the respective TIF (if applicable)
 - vi. Board certified 2022 or 2023 EAV captured in the TIF Increment by each TIF (if applicable)
 - vii. Board certified 2022 or 2023 EAV not captured in TIF
 - viii. Non-taxable PINs
 - ix. Columns showing the BID levy (\$ amount) generated from multiplying the EAV in items 4.d. – 4.g. above with:

1. the proposed maximum tax rate cap - the column header should state the tax rate cap % and % increase in tax bills this tax represents
2. the estimated tax rate for 2024 levy payable in 2025 - the column header should state the tax rate cap % and % increase in tax bills this tax represents
3. for existing BIDs: the tax rate for 2023 payable in 2024 - the column header should state the tax rate cap % and % increase in tax bills this tax represents
 - x. Columns to track the positions of taxpayers (support or oppose)
 - xi. Cook County class code (land use)
 - xii. Other data columns as relevant

BID District Plan

The BID District Plan should be a one PDF file and include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. **BID District Plan Executive Summary:** This shall serve as a “one-pager” on the BID and include a brief overview including, but not limited to:
 - a. **Why the BID?** Provide a summary as to why the new or reconstituted BID is being proposed. Include the BID Vision Statement.
 - b. **BID Contacts.** List the Sponsor Agency and BID Advisory Committee contact information.
2. **The full BID District Plan requirements:** Requirements are in Section 15 of the State of Illinois’s BID Law: [65 ILCS 125/15](#). The following list summarizes the information required for the district plan:
 - 1) The name of the BID.
 - 2) A map of the BID with boundaries and property parcels.
 - 3) A list of property owners or businesses included in the assessment and those exempt.
 - 4) A description of any desired processes by which exempt properties may elect to participate in the BID and be levied an assessment.
 - 5) A description of the BID’s governance structure and how directors are determined.
 - 6) A statement identifying any district management association and its anticipated liability insurance coverage.
 - 7) The assessment formula and any other sources of financing.
 - 8) Information about assessment calculations and caps sufficient to allow a property owner to estimate the maximum amount it would be charged annually and over the term of the BID.
 - 9) A statement of the activities that may be conducted and whether the activities vary from year to year or differ by class.

- 10) A statement identifying the maximum amount of the annual district charge (or whether the maximum annual amount may vary from year to year).
- 11) A statement identifying the maximum amount of total district charges to be levied for the term of the BID.
- 12) The anticipated annual percentage of district charges will be allocated for administrative expenses.
- 13) A statement identifying how unspent revenue collected from district charges may be carried over from year to year or returned to property owners.
- 14) How a property owner may contest the calculation of a specific district charge.
- 15) A description of any interest or penalties that may be imposed for delinquent payment of a district charge.
- 16) The length of the initial term (The initial term for BID is 5 years).
- 17) The process for renewal (Renewal terms can be a maximum of 10 years).
- 18) Any proposed rules and regulations for the BID.

2. **Exhibits.** Exhibits shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. BID Feasibility.
- b. List of the BID Advisory Committee and Sponsor Agency Board and Staff assigned to the designation of the BID.
- c. BID Designation Timeline.
- d. BID taxpayer list (highlights from the BID Database and note which ones have letters of support on file).
- e. Map with parcel, ward, and TIF detail.
- f. Copies of materials sent out in informational mailings..
- g. Minutes of BID Advisory Committee Meetings and Community Meetings.
- h. Copies of media articles written about the BID designation effort.
- i. List of the first slate of BID Commissioners and the BID Commissioner Qualifications and Recruitment/Renewal Procedures.
- j. BID Operations Plan (shall include, but not be limited to: management plan, job descriptions, financial procedures, narrative of cost allocation planning, communication procedures, request for proposals for key BID services, assessment methods, etc.).

Note: Sponsor Agency should brief local aldermen on their BID application package.