



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

EMBARGOED FOR 4AM

March 20, 2013

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

[312.744.3334](tel:312.744.3334)

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL LAUNCHES FIRST NEIGHBORHOOD SMALL BUSINESS STRATEGY AND
APPOINTS SMALL BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

New Initiatives will Support Small Business Growth in Neighborhoods Across Chicago

Today, Mayor Emanuel unveiled the *Neighborhood Small Business Growth Strategy*, the City's first strategy designed for neighborhood small business growth and his latest initiative to ensure that every part of the city share in its economic growth and success. The *Neighborhood Small Business Growth Strategy* will make new resources and services available to small businesses via the City's 73 neighborhood chambers of commerce, strengthen the ties between entrepreneurs and their communities, unveil new approaches to driving customers to commercial corridors, and enlist small business in making their communities safer.

"I am committed to bringing economic growth and vitality to every corner of Chicago, and the city's small businesses are critical to the health of our neighborhoods," said Mayor Emanuel, "My administration will work with the Small Business Advisory Council, our neighborhood chambers of commerce, and our federal and state partners to implement this strategy and expand upon our other efforts to make this city a great place to start and grown a small business."

The *Neighborhood Small Business Growth Strategy* has multiple components and approaches that are designed to strengthen and support small businesses in every neighborhood in Chicago. First, the Emanuel Administration will revamp its relationship with the City-funded chambers of commerce to provide them with additional tools and resources to deliver better services to our small businesses. The City will also provide each chamber with a City Hall point of contact to help eliminate unnecessary City roadblocks and expedite applications that are caught in backlogs. Next, the Small Business Center will partner with local chambers of commerce to facilitate networking, education, and mentorship efforts at the neighborhood level and unveil new initiatives to drive new businesses and foot traffic to neighborhood commercial corridors. And finally, the neighborhood chambers of commerce will coordinate with the Chicago Police Department to help empower small businesses to take steps that will help reduce and prevent crime. The strategy can be accessed [HERE](#).

Mayor Emanuel also announced today that he is appointing a Small Business Advisory Council consisting of leaders across the small business community including, entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, business education groups, and small business lenders. The council will report directly to the newly appointed Chief Small Business Officer, Roxanne Nava. The Committee includes Jonathan Brereton *CEO, Accion*; Helen Cameron *Co-owner, Uncommon Ground*; Lori Carter *Owner,*

[121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602](#)

the Original Soul Vegetarian; Ken Coats President, KENTECH Consulting Inc.; Steve DeBretto Executive Director, the Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago; Emilia DiMenco Chief Operating Officer, Women's Business Development Center; Omar Duque CEO, Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Nilda Esparza Executive Director, Little Village Chamber of Commerce; Melinda Kelly Executive Director, Chatham Business Association; Donald Laackman President, Harold Washington College; Lou Manfredini Retail Store Owner/ Television Personality; Marianne Markowitz Regional Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration; Bruce Montgomery Vice President, Black Metropolis Technology Commission; and Mary O'Connor, Alderwoman 41st Ward.

“With the expertise and diverse background of this incredible group of individuals, the Small Business Advisory Committee will ensure that the voices and needs of the small business owners from every corner of the City are heard and that City Hall is responsive to their needs,” said Nava. “Our efforts will help keep small business owners focused on running and expanding their businesses, not navigated through red tape at City Hall. I look forward to hearing from and working with the Committee on this critical goal.”

“I am pleased to be working with the Mayor's Office on exploring new ways to better utilize our local Chambers of Commerce. The Neighborhood Small Business Growth Strategy will provide Chambers with the resources they need to create an ongoing dialogue between our local business districts and our residential communities, which in turn will foster economic growth for each of our neighborhoods,” said Alderman Mary O'Conner, who serves on the Small Business Advisory Committee. “I am very much looking forward to working with Chief Small Business Officer Roxanne Nava and the committee to retain the small businesses our residents treasure while still working to attract new businesses to our City.”

The Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team worked with the Small Business Center and over 200 small businesses and small business community leaders to develop the Neighborhood Small Business Strategy. Over the course of this year, the Innovation Delivery Team met with leadership from over a dozen neighborhood chambers of commerce as well as many of the City's sector-based chambers of commerce to identify and assess challenges faced by neighborhood small businesses.

Chicago is one of five cities to receive an Innovation Delivery Team grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies. Since launching in November 2011, the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team has spearheaded a business license reform ordinance that reduced the number of license categories by 60 percent, launched the Retrofit Chicago Residential Partnership to help home and apartment building owners save thousands of dollars on their energy bills, and helped design the Small Business Center to serve as a one-stop-shop for small businesses. Part of Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Project, Innovation Delivery Team grants were also awarded to Atlanta, Louisville, Memphis, and New Orleans.

The complete bios of the **Small Business Advisory Committee** members are below:



Jonathan Brereton *CEO, Accion*

Jonathan Brereton has served as Chief Executive Officer of Accion since October 2004. During his tenure the organization has made more than 1,500 loans and disbursed \$12 million into the local economy, supporting small business owners and stabilizing

neighborhoods. Accion Chicago is one of the top ten microlenders in the country and is a member of the Accion U.S. Network. Mr. Brereton also manages Accion's new initiative, the Chicago Microlending Institute (CMI), which trains organizations to help meet the growing demand for microlending in the region. He joined Accion in November of 2000 as a Community Outreach Coordinator through the AmeriCorps*VISTA program. Following his year of service, Mr. Brereton became Director of Operations. In addition to his Chief Executive role, Mr. Brereton is also the organization's Chief Lending Officer. Mr. Brereton graduated from Wheaton College with a degree in Business and Economics.



Helen Cameron *Co-owner, Uncommon Ground*

Helen Cameron is the co-owner of Uncommon Ground in Wrigleyville and Uncommon Ground on Devon in Edgewater, the "Greenest Restaurants in Chicago" as certified by the Green Restaurant Association. The 22-year-old Clark location is home to a newly built micro-farm of 34 earth boxes bordering the outdoor cafe, producing a variety of organic vegetables, greens and herbs for use in the restaurant. It connects guests to the idea of growing your own food, knowing where it comes from, and enjoying the beauty, variety, flavor, and freshness of locally harvested food.



Lori Carter *Owner, the Original Soul Vegetarian*

In 2012 Lori Carter purchased the Soul Vegetarian East Restaurant located on the Southside of Chicago, IL; the restaurant was originally founded by her parents in 1982. She is now the business owner of The Original Soul Vegetarian, Inc. After living in Israel for 31 years Ms. Carter moved back to Chicago in 2008 and started working at the Soul Vegetarian East restaurant. While working, Ms. Carter was also a full-time student at Robert Morris University and a single mother of two. Currently, Ms. Carter holds a BA in Business and continues to be creative by expanding the business, reaching out and providing her customers and community at large a healthier alternative.



Ken Coats *President, KENTECH Consulting Inc.*

Ken Coats was born and raised in Gresham district of Chicago, and is a life-long South Side resident. Both of his parents were entrepreneurs in Chicago, and he is proud to continue the tradition as President of his own technology firm KENTECH Consulting Inc., which provides background checking solutions throughout the US. KENTECH employs over 80 full-time staff, part-time staff, and independent contractors. The company was recently nominated for the Illinois Small Business of the Year Award and Inc. 5000 fastest growing companies in America list for 2013. Mr. Coats graduated from Goldman Sachs' 10,000 Small Businesses Program in June 2012.



Steve DeBretto *Executive Director, the Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago*

Steve DeBretto is the Executive Director of the Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago (ICNC). ICNC owns and operates a 416,000 square foot small business incubator and represents business interests in the manufacturing districts of the city's bustling West Side. ICNC specializes in matching skilled workers with open positions for local companies, management consulting for new and existing businesses, and advocacy for improvements to transportation, infrastructure, and policy. Prior to assuming the Executive Director role at ICNC, Mr. DeBretto co-led the launch of the organization's Illinois International Trade Center and was the new center's first director.



Emilia DiMenco *Chief Operating Officer, Women's Business Development Center*

Emilia DiMenco became the Chief Operating Officer of the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) after completing a 32-year career as an executive vice president with the Harris Bank Corporate and Commercial Banking team. Throughout her 32-year tenure at Harris, Ms. Dimenco has held line of business, relationship management, and leadership positions in Corporate Banking, Capital Markets, Corporate Cash Management, Business Banking, and Marketing. As an Executive Vice President, Ms. Dimenco reported to the CEO or Vice Chair of Harris for over a third of her career and served on the Bank's Management Committee. Ms. DiMenco had P&L responsibility for 80% of her career and managed budgets in excess of \$200 million with revenues multiples greater. Her areas of responsibility included up to 600 commercial employees. She holds B.S. and M.B.A. degrees in finance from DePaul University. She also studied international finance at Loyola University's Rome Center.



Omar Duque *CEO, Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce*

Omar Duque is the President & CEO of the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (IHCC), the leading Hispanic business networking, advocacy, and development organization in Illinois. Mr. Duque is a member of the Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University where he serves as the Secretary of the Board as well as Chairman of the University's Finance Committee. Duque is a member of the state of Illinois' Business Enterprise Council as well as a Mayoral appointee to the City of Chicago's Community Development Commission. He is also a member of the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus Foundation. He previously served on the State of Illinois Economic Recovery Commission and the City of Chicago Affirmative Action Advisory Board. Mr. Duque is a graduate of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and has studied strategic leadership and management at Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business and the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business.



Nilda Esparza *Executive Director, Little Village Chamber of Commerce*

Nilda Esparza has served as the executive director for the Little Village Chamber of Commerce since September 2010, where she has worked to promote and support the growth and success of businesses in Little Village and to leverage the community's unique cultural identity to generate new business opportunities. Previously, Ms. Esparza worked as an Executive Assistant at the LaSalle Network, a Project Manager at Dot Press, LLC and spent eight years at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Ms. Esparza is a 2010 graduate of the Metropolitan Leadership Institute, a year-long training program aimed at engaging young Hispanic professionals in the public arena, including political, corporate, governmental, and non-profit spheres. She received a B.S. in Management from DePaul University.



Melinda Kelly *Executive Director, Chatham Business Association*

Melinda Kelly is the Executive Director of Chatham Association Small Business Development (CBA) where she advocates for and provides viable, effective support to small businesses. Ms. Kelly led the creation and funding of a model community center in the heart of Chatham that uses state-of-the-art technology to prepare and train young people, under-skilled residents, and small businesses for the future. Under Ms. Kelly's leadership, CBA provides technical assistance to non-for-profit start-up sister business organizations in an effort to create a forum of shared, organized and strategic thinking focused on establishing and identifying resources to businesses in other wards within the City of Chicago. Ms.

Kelly is also the Chairperson for the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce Energy & Environmental Committee.



Donald Laackman *President, Harold Washington College*

Donald J. Laackman was appointed the president of Harold Washington College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), in March 2011. Harold Washington College educates more than 13,000 credit students each year, helping them advance their education and careers. Since his appointment Mr. Laackman has worked to support the Reinvention of City Colleges, ensuring more HWC graduates transfer successfully to four-year universities and obtain credentials that lead to meaningful employment. Before his appointment, Mr. Laackman was a principal at Civic Consulting Alliance, where he managed Civic Consulting's workforce and education program areas. Mr. Laackman previously served as a managing director at Accenture, a global technology, consulting, and outsourcing firm. Mr. Laackman received his AB in politics, economics, rhetoric, and law and a Master in Public Policy from the University of Chicago.



Lou Manfredini *Retail Store Owner/ Television Personality*

Lou Manfredini is a television and radio personality and home improvement expert. He is the host of House Smarts TV, Chicago's WGN (AM) Radio's Mr. Fix-It program. He is also a home improvement contributor for NBC's "Today Show" and a contributor on NBC 5's morning show in Chicago. Mr. Manfredini founded and operated his own construction company in Chicago for eight years prior to beginning his media career. In addition to his media engagements, Mr. Manfredini represents Ace Hardware, 3M, and Marvin Windows and Doors and other companies related to the home. He continues to run his own hardware store in the Edgebrook neighborhood of Chicago.



Marianne Markowitz *Regional Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration*

In August 2009, Marianne O'Brien Markowitz was named Regional Administrator for SBA's Midwest Region. As Regional Administrator, Ms. Markowitz provides interface with regional, state, and local elected and appointed officials, trade organizations, and small business communities across the region. Ms. Markowitz recently served as the Chief Financial Officer for Obama for America and was previously a financial operations consultant for the launch of the Obama Exploratory Committee and resulting Campaign. For more than 17 years, Ms. Markowitz provided finance and risk management expertise to a host of leading global institutions including Switzerland-based Corporation Syngenta, Inc. Prior to that, she served as a treasury and risk manager for one of the largest pharmaceutical benefit management companies, Express Scripts, Inc. Ms. Markowitz received her B.S. in business administration from the University of Missouri and her MBA from DePaul University.



Bruce Montgomery *Vice President, Black Metropolis Technology Commission*

Bruce Montgomery is the Founder and President of Montgomery & Company, a digital media, information, and communications technology company based in Chicago. Mr. Montgomery is also the founder, executive producer and host of Technology Access Television, Chicago's longest running weekly TV show covering Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship news. Mr. Montgomery is the Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer of The Urban Innovation Center @ IIT, a community economic development and business accelerator initiative. He serves on the boards of the Bronzeville Community Development Partnership, SCORE

Chicago, and the TechAdvantage Program at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Mr. Montgomery majored in marketing at Northwestern University and attended Amos Tuck Graduate School of Business at Dartmouth College.



Mary O'Connor, Alderman 41st Ward

Mary O'Connor was sworn in as alderman of the 41st Ward on May 16, 2011. Prior to being elected to public office, Ms. O'Connor's commitment to community, values and sense of responsibility propelled her into a life of public service as a civic leader. A local business owner for over 20 years, Ms. O'Connor recognizes the vital role that small businesses play in the economic well-being of our neighborhoods. As Alderman, Ms. O'Connor is focused on advocating for her constituents and working to improve the quality of life for all residents. A former six-term president of the Edison Park Chamber of Commerce, Ms. O'Connor presided over the rejuvenation of downtown Edison Park and co-founded the Edison Park Turkey Trot.

#