

State Of Illinois Announces \$8.4 Million In Small Business, Commercial Corridor Grants To Revitalize Communities

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CHICAGO — The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), announced \$8.4 million in additional grants for small businesses and commercial corridors located around the state to help rebuild and revitalize in the wake of last year’s civil unrest. The final round of Rebuild Distressed Communities (RDC) provides \$976,000 to 26 small businesses and \$7.45 million to help revitalize seven commercial corridors located across the state.

“A strong pandemic economic recovery includes recognizing that some communities have long been denied their fair share of resources,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Through the Rebuild Distressed Communities program, we are delivering \$8.4 million in direct grants to over two dozen small businesses and multiple regional economic corridors to build on the impact of our \$250 million Back to Business program with an equitable lens.”

"The Rebuild Distressed Communities program is another way for our state to recover, heal, and grow together," said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. "Our administration is committed to economic development that uplifts all of us, and putting our state's small businesses and vulnerable communities at the forefront through this funding is how we expand equity and opportunity across Illinois."

The RDC program was launched last year by the State of Illinois to help businesses and communities rebuild from civil unrest. In addition to awarding grants to help impacted small business repair damages and rebuild or expand, the program also requested proposals from communities seeking to deliver long-term improvements along commercial corridors where businesses experienced damages during civil unrest. Overall, the RDC program will deploy a total of \$9.2 million, including 58 small business grants announced earlier this year.

"Under Governor Pritzker's leadership, DCEO is committed to leveraging our federal and state resources to help small businesses and communities hardest hit build back better in the wake of the pandemic," said DCEO Acting Director Sylvia I. Garcia. "The investments made in this latest round of funding are twofold, helping small businesses repair immediate damages, while also making capital improvements in communities that will bring back foot traffic to commercial corridors and boost economic vitality."

The State of Illinois worked with grant administrators LISC Chicago and the Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives to select applicants to receive funding. Working with these local partners, DCEO developed a process to connect small businesses with qualified contractors. The program prioritized local and Business Enterprise Program (BEP) contractors to ensure that job opportunities created by performing repairs and improvements went to those based in communities impacted by unrest.

"LISC is honored to partner with the State to help Illinois' small businesses get back on their feet," said Meghan Harte, Executive Director of LISC Chicago. "The COVID-19 pandemic has already devastated small businesses across the state, undoing generations of economic and entrepreneurial equity that had been built up in our communities. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our neighborhoods, and the heartbreaking destruction experienced across Illinois in the summer of 2020 hurt small businesses the most. However, our state's small businesses are resilient, and we are proud to support them as they rebuild."

"CNI is proud to work with Governor Pritzker to help minority residents and businesses gain access to statewide repair and construction opportunities," said David Doig, President of CNI. "This has helped them compete and succeed in today's economy while making repairs and improvements to the commercial corridors that grow small businesses and create the jobs and amenities which our communities rely upon. It's been

a privilege to partner with the State of IL, LISC, and the other organizations to advance these critically important objectives.”

Funding awarded to small businesses will pave the way for an array of repairs as well as new construction projects to enhance the viability of local businesses and the communities they serve. Grants will help cover the cost of reimbursement for damages, insurance deductibles, and construction work related to repairs as a result of civil unrest. The entire list of business grantees are available on DCEO’s website, linked [here](#).

In addition to the small business grants, RDC grants include funding for seven community projects focused on boosting economic vitality in commercial corridors across the state. The commercial corridor projects are:

- Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council \$1,498,750 (affordable housing and commercial space),
- City of Aurora, \$1,200,000 (corridor enhancements)
- City of East St. Louis, \$900,000 (corridor enhancements)
- City of Peoria, \$1,200,000 (streetscape)
- South East Chicago Chamber of Commerce, \$1,450,000 (fiber optic cable enhancement)
- West Humboldt Park Development Council, \$300,000 (corridor enhancements)
- City of Markham \$900,000 (corridor enhancements)

“East St. Louis is excited to utilize the funding provided by this program to repaint the narrative of our community,” Mayor Robert Eastern III, City of East St. Louis. “This resource will be used to expand our efforts to enhance lighting along city streets and to provide new security cameras in one of the city’s busiest and most vibrant corridor, the State Street business district.”

“During the civil unrest that unfolded in the summer of 2020, 85 businesses and organizations throughout the City of Aurora were the victims of burglaries, criminal damage, and arsons,” said Aurora Police Chief Keith Cross. “This grant will allow us to protect our businesses, residents and visitors into the future and will provide real-time information that will help direct the daily response of our public safety personnel.”

Applications for corridor projects were reviewed and evaluated according to the extent of property damage due to civil unrest, with program priorities being projects that were located in distressed communities, had geographic diversity around the state, and an investment impact that will build resiliency and revitalize the business corridor. In order to qualify for funds, project proposals were required to demonstrate the project would

occur within the same block that experienced property damage or on contiguous blocks if required for project continuity. Funds for the RDC program are from the state's historic \$45 billion Rebuild Illinois Capital Program.

“The 4600 block of Ashland Avenue has been adversely impacted for decades by the lack of investment in the retail corridor. The result of the civil unrest in June of 2020 further exacerbated an already bad situation, leaving much of the block in physical disarray,” said Craig Chico, President & CEO of Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council. “The Rebuild Distressed Communities Grant is creating an opportunity to not only rebuild from those devastating unrest, but this will allow us to build for the future by investing in affordable housing, community, and commercial activities. The entire retail corridor will benefit from this development 4636 South Ashland, which would've not occurred without this State Grant.”

Projects for corridor improvements will repair and improve the surrounding area while increasing economic opportunities for impacted businesses. The projects were evaluated based on project need, capacity, quality, and societal impact.

“The City of Markham Small Business District will have the benefit of added safety and security through the RDC corridor revitalization funds,” said Roger A. Agpawa, Mayor for the City of Markham. “This investment will allow us to protect this corridor with cameras and programmable smart signage, helping us deliver additional services to local businesses and the community.”

“Thank you, Governor Pritzker. Amid the challenges of the pandemic, RDC funding has allowed us to restore multiple locations throughout Chicago,” said Michael Donaldson, Owner of NoContract Inc., a chain of cellphone retail stores. “This program provided the opportunity to reopen storefronts, keep workers employed, and offer telecommunication services in the areas we operate, the Southside of Chicago.”

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Pritzker administration has led with a swift response to the economic impacts facing businesses and communities across the state. To date, over \$1.5 billion in assistance has been provided by DCEO alone – including over 9,000 small business grants, workforce training grants, capital improvements, and other forms of community assistance.

Currently, DCEO is accepting applications for additional capital dollars aimed at revitalizing commercial areas in communities across the state. The recently launched Rebuild Illinois Main Street and Downtown program will provide up to \$50 million in grants for construction, repair and modernization of public infrastructure and amenities to boost jobs, improve quality of life and stimulate economic activity for areas hit hardest during COVID-19. The deadline to apply is today, January 10, 2022.

For more information on supports available for small businesses, or to learn more about ongoing capital programs, please visit [DCEO's website](#) or follow the department on social @IllinoisDCEO.