

Gov. Pritzker Announces Ten State-Designated Cultural Districts

by Submitted by Gov. Pritzker's Office
February 26 2024 3:58 PM



CHICAGO — Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today joined the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and local leaders in Humboldt Park to celebrate ‘Puerto Rico Town’ as an official State-Designated Cultural District. Through the State-Designated Cultural Districts Program, ten recipients were designated for 2023 and 2024, with additional recipients to be named in 2025.

“Illinois is full of vibrant communities that help make us who we are,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “I’m excited to announce our State-Designated Cultural Districts —

communities, towns, and geographic areas that have a distinct shared historical and cultural identity that binds them together. Today’s designations aim to promote greater growth, development, and opportunities throughout our state’s cultural hubs and encourage them to flourish over the coming years.”

Launched in 2023, the State-Designated Cultural Districts program aims to uplift the unique contributions of historic cultural districts with the overarching goal of increasing economic development opportunities.

“This is a celebration of our people and an investment in our future. If we fail to preserve the unique cultures that make Illinois so rich, we risk losing key pieces of our collective story,” **said Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton.** “Through these designations, we are ensuring our children have spaces to learn from and engage with cultures outside their own.”

“These Designated Cultural Districts will amplify economic development opportunities while preserving the historical and cultural significance of these communities,” **said DCEO Director Kristin Richards.** “These communities are important to the Illinois story, and DCEO is proud to issue this designation.”

State-Designated Cultural Districts are communities, towns, or specific geographic areas that have a distinct shared historical and cultural identity that binds the community together. The intended purpose of the program is to encourage economic development; support the preservation and development of history and culturally significant structures, traditions, and languages; foster local cultural development and education; provide a focal point for celebrating communities’ unique cultural identities; and promote equitable growth and opportunity without generating displacement.

"Today's announcement is a momentous occasion for the Puerto Rican community of Chicago," **said Jose E. Lopez, Executive Director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center.** "This designation is truly reflective of how policy can be informed in an organic and collaborative way, while addressing the most critical needs of the community. I want to thank Governor Pritzker for prioritizing the preservation of our community's cultural identity while combating historic disinvestment. Illinois becoming the first State in the Union to recognize the importance of culture as a catalyst for economic development is a testament to the Governor's leadership."

State-Designated Cultural Districts for 2023 & 2024:

Entity	Location/District Name
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City of Champaign	Champaign- North First Street Cultural District
City of Chicago	Chicago- Bronzeville District
Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community	Chicago- Chinatown
DevCorp North dba Rogers Park Alliance	Chicago- Clark Street/Camino Clark
Greater Chatham Initiative	Chicago- Mahalia Jackson 79 th Street Cultural District
Little Village Community Foundation Corp	Chicago- Little Village
Puerto Rican Cultural Center	Chicago- Puerto Rico Town
SkyART NFP	Chicago- South Chicago Cultural District
Springfield Urban League Inc.	Springfield- Central East Cultural District
The Springfield Project	Springfield- The Southtown Cultural District

As outlined in statute, DCEO selected ten recipients (five for 2023 and five for 2024) and will be selecting an additional five recipients in 2025, with a focus on downstate and rural communities.

Recipients will be eligible to apply for \$3 million in funding that will be tailored to fit the needs of individual Cultural Districts and support the goals of the program to foster economic development and help communities preserve their unique cultural identities. The state will launch the funding opportunity following the selection of the final five cultural districts.

The State-Designated Cultural Districts opportunity was made available to localities, municipalities and community based non-profit organizations, through a competitive Notice of Designation Opportunity (NODO). Eligible applicants had to be historically impacted and at risk of losing their cultural identity due to gentrification displacement, or the COVID-19 pandemic and also have a history of economic disinvestment.

"Bringing State-Designated Cultural Districts to Springfield is a monumental step in the right direction for the community and for the state," **said Senator Doris Turner (D-Springfield)**. "These official designations are essential to preserving the history of our state, highlighting the legacy and significant contributions of Black Illinoisans from the Great Migration and onward."

"The Humboldt Park Community has such a rich and vibrant culture," **said Senator Natalie Toro (D-Chicago)**. "The State-Designated Cultural Districts Program and this official designation allows us to share and preserve our heritage and traditions while building a critical foundation for continued investment."

"In Illinois, diversity is our strength, and the State-Designated Cultural Districts Program is shining a much-deserved light on some of our state's most culturally and historically rich communities, including Puerto Rico Town," **said Majority Caucus Chair Omar Aquino (D-Chicago)**. "These designations will help Illinoisans celebrate our lineage and traditions of our communities."

"Bronzeville is an epicenter for Black history and culture in Chicago," **said Assistant Majority Leader Kam Buckner (D-Chicago)**. "The State-Designated Cultural Districts Program ensures the preservation and celebration of communities like Bronzeville without the fear of gentrification and erasure of Black culture."

"The Paseo Boricua we all know and love is expanding to Borinquén town officially designated and celebrated Cultural District under the State of Illinois' new program," **said Rep. Lilian Jimenez (D-Chicago)**. "Through the State-Designated Cultural Districts, Illinois is protecting our heritage and putting our communities on a path toward continued investment."