

LET'S CULTIVATE OUR LOCAL BUSINESSES



Photo Credit: Garret Gomez



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When our small businesses thrive, so does West Town. For every dollar you spend at a locally owned, independent retailer, 34 cents are returned to the community. While Chicago Avenue is already a destination for shoppers from around the city, local businesses are still missing out on over \$100 million dollars in unmet grocery, food, and alcohol sales.

We've come a long way, but there are still opportunities to help our small business community flourish like never before. The demand is here, the customers are here, but to take advantage of this untapped potential we must encourage both new and existing businesses. This can be accomplished by cultivating partnerships and continuing to improve the safety of our residents and business owners. Everyone has an important role to play, when we work together, we can support our local businesses and make West Town a great place to live, work, and shop.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND ATTRACTION

(PARTNERSHIPS: LOCAL BUSINESSES, BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTERS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CENTERS, OTHER CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE)

Our first recommendation for encouraging small business development is to focus on business retention and attraction. Our independent businesses are the economic backbone of the community and play an important role in West Town's unique character.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Participate in shop local incentives and other community programming in West Town.
- Recommend new strategies or program ideas to the Chamber for community programming and ways to address vacancies.



- Communicate your pride for West Town and its local establishments.

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Maintain a business directory that effectively provides information on businesses, the business corridors, and other community resources.
- Implement a business retention and expansion program to:
 - *Strengthen existing relationships and forge new relationships within the West Town business community.*
 - *Advocate for business interests at the city and state level.*
 - *Strengthen and expand technical assistance for business needs.*
 - *Establish a task force of business owners and community stakeholders that focuses on identifying business needs and collecting data.*
- Elevate area-wide marketing efforts that promote successful independent businesses to help celebrate a greater sense of place.
- Expand the Chamber boundaries to encompass Hubbard Street to the south, in order to provide services to a currently underserved corridor.

WHAT THEY CAN DO

- Continually engage small business owners, community leaders, and local stakeholders in decision making processes.
- Consider advocacy recommendations given by community and economic development organizations.
- Reassess city and state regulations that affect small businesses.
 - *Work to reduce cost prohibitive fees.*
 - *Reduce tax breaks that incentivize leaving storefronts vacant.*



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- Establish a Mayoral Council for business attraction and retention that listens to the concerns of nonprofit organizations and businesses. The Council should help provide:
 - *Transparency with business development efforts.*
 - *A quarterly meeting similar to other Mayoral Councils.*
 - *Allocate tax money towards supportive programming.*

CRIME AND SAFETY

(PARTNERSHIPS: LOCAL BUSINESSES, CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT, CAPS, COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEES, ALDERMANIC OFFICES, AND RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS)

Our second recommendation for encouraging small business development is to promote a culture of safety and cleanliness in our community, and to focus on crime prevention. If West Town is a place that is safe, clean, and bustling; there will be less opportunities for crime due to more people on the street.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Participate in local Police beat meetings and establish relationships with your local police officers.
- Maintain beautification efforts, including planters and parkway landscaping, on your property to keep them clean and clear of litter.
- Engage with your local community groups to organize neighborhood cleanup days.

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Promote our existing Security Grant Program.
- Recruit businesses near high crime areas to install forward and alley-facing security cameras.
- Promote several of our graffiti removal programs.



- Promote our existing snow removal services.

Visit the West Town SSA website for more information on these programs and their applications.

WHAT THEY CAN DO

- Implement the Vision Zero initiative in our neighborhood.
- Improve dangerous intersections in our community that have already been identified by previous traffic studies and plans.

WHAT IS VISION ZERO?

Vision Zero originally launched in Scandinavia and is an approach to mitigating traffic fatalities as a public health concern. The ultimate aim of Vision Zero is to reduce all traffic-related fatalities to zero.

Please visit the City of Chicago's website for more information on City of Chicago's goal for implementing Vision Zero.



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Image Source: Westtownssa.org

BEFORE AND AFTER FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



Image Source: Westtownssa.org



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The More You Know

The West Town Chamber of Commerce and West Town SSA offers a variety of programs that directly support our small businesses, including facade improvement rebates, graffiti abatement rebates, and security grants. The Facade Rebate Program allows a building owner (or tenant with building owner approval) who plans on making at least \$500 worth of exterior improvements to receive up to 50% financial reimbursement for their improvement up to a maximum of \$15,000. Similarly, the Graffiti Abatement Rebate Program provides 50% of the cost, up to \$500, for labor and materials to remove, repair, and prevent graffiti or acid etching on building facades, walls, doors, doorways, and windows. Finally, the Security Grant Program provides up to a \$1,500 grant for first-time installation of an eligible security system and up to \$500 for any eligible systems subject to an update. More information on these services can be found on the West Town SSA website.



