



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THIRTEEN SMALL BUSINESSES WIN \$20,000 CITY GRANT FOR GROWTH AND EXPANSION!

CINCINNATI – The City of Cincinnati’s Commercial Tenant Improvement Program (“CTIP”) was created in 2023 to encourage economic development by reducing barriers small businesses face when securing commercial space. Grants were awarded to eleven small businesses in the program’s first year. This year, following an extensive review process, thirteen applications totaling \$260,000 have been approved for funding in the second round of CTIP.



Art The Nail Shop

Award: \$20,000

1010 Race Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

Art The Nail Shop, a nail salon that specializes in natural nail enhancements, is relocating from Tri-County to Downtown. The City’s funds will be used for new lighting, painting, electrical, and drywall repairs.



Black Coffee Lounge

Award: \$20,000

3229 Burnet Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45229

Black Coffee Lounge is opening a second location at the Blood Cancer Healing Center in Coryville. The City’s funds will be used for general buildouts and fixtures.



Chacabanas

Award \$20,000

1301 Main Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

Chacabanas, a restaurant that specializes in Cuban and Dominican cuisine, is moving from Findlay Launch to its own storefront in Over-the-Rhine. The City’s funds will be used for remodeling the space and general buildout.



Flourish Ayurveda Center

Award: \$20,000

3747 Eastern Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45226

Flourish Ayurveda Center, a hub for healing that involves nutrition, mental health, self-care, and personal and professional growth is expanding in Columbia Tusculum.



The City's funds will be used to modernize outdated space, including new flooring, ceilings, and lighting.

Fruleef Juicery

Award: \$20,000

921 E. McMillan Street, Cincinnati, OH 45206

Fruleef Juicery, a black woman-owned juice bar & café that offers a diverse range of nutritious juice options, is relocating from Lockland to Walnut Hills. The City's funds will be used to upgrade HVAC, plumbing, flooring, and electric.



Household Books

Award: \$20,000

5854 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45224

Household Books, a literary venue built for engagement, is opening a new store in College Hill. The City's funds will be used for shelving, lighting, flooring, and general renovations.



Lusheous Collection

Award: \$20,000

5850 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45224

Lusheous Collection, a plus-size clothing boutique, is expanding in College Hill. The City's funds will be used for HVAC updates, flooring, electrical, and framing.



Magnificent Morsels

Award: \$20,000

3253 Jefferson Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220

Magnificent Morsels, a caterer that offers a fresh take on southern and midwestern classics, is opening a new full-service restaurant in Corryville. The City's funds will be used for space renovations, bar installation, and HVAC upgrades.



Nostalgia Wine & Jazz Lounge

Award: \$20,000

1430 Vine Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

Nostalgia Wine & Jazz Lounge is expanding its Over-the-Rhine location to include a second bar, a prep kitchen, and event space. The City's funds will be used for general buildout, HVAC upgrades, plumbing, and lighting.



Selfie Cincy

Award: \$20,000

1338 Main Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

Selfie Cincy, an immersive museum space designed to provide eye-catching installations and photo backdrops, is expanding in Over-the-Rhine. The City's funds will be used for wall additions and updating electrical and lighting.



Sweet Jazz Treats

Award: \$20,000

731 E. McMillan Street, Cincinnati, OH 45206

Sweet Jazz Treats, a bakery that makes custom cakes and desserts, is relocating from Lockland to Walnut Hills. The City's funds will be used on general buildout, shelving, and new electric.



The STEM Lab

Award: \$20,000

2807 Woodburn Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45206

The STEM Lab, a black woman-owned science, technology, engineering, and math learning laboratory with after-school and summer break programming, is relocating from Blue Ash to East Walnut Hills. The City's funds will be used for electrical upgrades, plumbing, and lighting.



The Tabletop Project

Award: \$20,000

124 E. 13th Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

The Tabletop Project, a curated tabletop rental service offering dinnerware, glassware, flatware, and linens, is opening a new storefront in Over-the-Rhine. The City's funding will be used for carpentry, lighting, shelving, and general finishings.

Many of these projects will activate previously vacant spaces across Cincinnati.

“This program is a testament to our commitment to fostering a thriving small business community in Cincinnati. By reducing financial barriers, CTIP helps entrepreneurs bring their visions to life, activate vacant spaces, and contribute to the vibrancy of our neighborhoods. We are excited to see these businesses grow and make a lasting impact on our city.” ~ Markiea Carter, Director, *City of Cincinnati Department of Community & Economic Development (“DCED”)*



“[Receiving this grant] is so exciting. We can now start finalizing everything so we can open! I couldn't be more grateful, this has been a labor of love since day one, and [CTIP] will allow us to finish with a little less stress. Thank you for seeing the vision!” ~ Crystal Marie Render, Owner, *Magnificent Morsels*



In total, 54 applications were received for CTIP Round 2, totaling \$1,106,500 in collective funding requests. SBT staff reviewed all the applications, evaluating each CTIP submission on 1) project economic impact, 2) project readiness, 3) project location, and 4) project scope, placing a high emphasis on projects that involved either a business expanding or relocating to previously vacant space or newly developed space. After applying the evaluation criteria, the thirteen projects above measured higher than the others. The review committee met with each of the business owners and visited the spaces they planned to occupy. Once all businesses confirmed their readiness to proceed and all necessary steps had been fulfilled, the awardees were officially confirmed.

SBT staff are currently working with each business to finalize and execute contracts and funding agreements. Construction and project work in the spaces will likely begin in Summer 2025.

BACKGROUND: CTIP + Round 1 Program Recap (2024)

Supporting and empowering local business owners is critical to creating vibrant communities and fostering a healthy regional economy. Recognizing this, the City established CTIP to help alleviate the barrier of renovation costs by offering grants of up to \$20,000 for necessary fixed asset improvements to commercial spaces for small businesses (1) relocating to Cincinnati, (2) opening a new location in Cincinnati, or (3) expanding within Cincinnati. CTIP is set up as a grant program instead of more traditional loan programming to help decrease the financial risk for small businesses. The amount of \$20,000 was selected as it was enough to make a significant difference for small businesses, but not enough to fund an entire project; this required all applicants to demonstrate the ability to secure additional funding outside of City financing.

The Department of Community and Economic Development (“DCED”) executes this program through the City’s Small Business Team (“SBT”). The SBT promoted CTIP through a variety of mediums and conducted a robust review process of the grant applications received. Overseeing the program in-house instead of a third-party contracted organization allowed for a more efficient, easy application process and for the City to have more control of the scoring matrix.

In the first round of CTIP, distributed in 2024, eleven businesses were awarded grants: *6 ‘N the Mornin’, Artist City, Properties, Just Q’In, Aunt Flora’s, Cutman Barbershop, DANCEFIX, Dean’s Mediterranean Imports, Pour Candle Co., Sweets & Meats BBQ, College Hill Pilates & Physical Therapy, Sweet Mae’s Cookie Co.*

Most of the work funded in the first round of CTIP has been completed. The program received high praise from recipients and broad media coverage. In the Summer of 2024, CTIP program managers were invited to present on the program at the Ohio Economic Development Association (“OEDA”) annual conference; there, other municipalities and organizations expressed interest in copying CTIP in their towns and cities.

Following the success of the first round of CTIP, the SBT was empowered to conduct a second round of grants to be distributed in 2025, which is the round recently completed, and the focus of this press release. The SBT hopes to secure funding for a third round in the upcoming City budget.

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About the City's Small Business Team

The SBT is an independent working group within the City Administration responsible for delivering various forms of small business assistance to the community. It was founded in 2016 to coordinate and streamline City efforts to support small businesses across Cincinnati. The team is currently made up of six members from [DCED](#) and the [Department of Economic Inclusion \("DEI"\)](#) who meet on a bi-weekly basis. Together, SBT staff manage a network of over 400 small businesses in a myriad of fields across Cincinnati, administer various certifications and resources, and oversee loan and grant funding, pop-up shop programming, and surveys and engagement. The SBT also partners with business support and entrepreneurial organizations across Cincinnati's ecosystem for training, workshops, and conferences.

[About the City of Cincinnati's Department of Community & Economic Development](#)

The Department of Community & Economic Development ("DCED") improves the lives of residents, increases business investment, and revitalizes City Neighborhoods by providing financial and technical resources, facilitating strategic partnerships, and promoting efficient use of the City's on and off-street parking assets through parking management. DCED serves the City's economic development, housing & community development, and parking needs in a changing development climate through acquisition and repositioning of underutilized property, investment in catalytic public improvements, tax and financial assistance for impactful projects and companies, facilitation of private sector job creation, and more. Learn more at <https://www.choosecincy.com/about-us> and follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).