



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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Strategic Partnerships Will Help Implement INVEST South/West Initiative

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot's INVEST South/West initiative will receive technical assistance and project management support through partnerships with strategic planning organizations, under a \$7.3 million plan approved by City Council today.

Through its Main Street America program, the National Main Street Center will provide training, coaching, and consulting services to South and West side neighborhood groups and City staff for five years under a proposed contract valued at \$500,000 per year. Funding will be allocated from the City's corporate budget to support community workshops and training, focusing on comprehensive, multi-phased approaches involving proven commercial corridor revitalization techniques.

The Chicago office of Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC) will provide marketing and implementation assistance with commercial corridor improvement efforts for four years through a proposed contract valued at \$1.2 million per year. Funding will be provided through the City's Tax Increment Financing program for staff salaries, subcontract work, and related costs for identifying, attracting, and maintaining local businesses.

"These supportive partnerships are critical to enabling the INVEST South/West program to build on-the-ground capacity with local organizations and residents who work to strengthen and invigorate their neighborhoods every day," said Maurice Cox, commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), which administers the INVEST South/West initiative. "They'll provide important resources as the City works to implement local improvement goals while also addressing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis."

Launched last fall, INVEST South/West is intended to re-activate a dozen commercial corridors on the South and West sides that have historically served as focal points for pedestrian activity, shopping, transportation, public spaces, and



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other quality-of-life amenities for local residents. With \$750 million in City support for infrastructure and economic incentives, the targeted corridors were prioritized through a DPD analysis of business activity and a series of community meetings this winter. The corridors include:

- 47th and Ashland streets
- 63rd/ and Halsted streets
- 79th Street (Ashland to Lowe)
- Chicago Avenue (Austin to Cicero)
- Chicago Avenue (Kedzie to Pulaski)
- Cottage Grove (42nd to 47th)
- North Avenue (Lowell to Kedzie/Central Park to Cicero)
- Ogden Avenue (Kedzie to Pulaski)
- 79th Street (Stony Island to Exchange)
- Commercial Avenue (87th to 92nd)
- 111th Street (Ellis to King)
- Michigan Avenue (111th to 119th)

Main Street America is a program of the nonprofit National Main Street Center Inc., a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

LISC is the nation's leading community development support organization.

For more information on the new INVEST South/West initiative, visit www.chicago.gov/investSW.

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TIF, Land Sale Will Support Redevelopment of Ramova Theater in Bridgeport

Bridgeport's long-vacant Ramova Theater will be rehabilitated as part of a \$22.9 million entertainment and dining complex through a financial plan approved by City Council today.

Closed to the public since 1985, the 90-year-old, City-owned structure will be restored by Our Revival Chicago LLC as the centerpiece of a three-building theater, restaurant, and brewpub complex on the 3500 block of South Halsted Street, hosting concerts and other live events for up to 1,600 patrons.

"This is an exciting step forward for the Bridgeport community and the entire cultural life of our city," Mayor Lori Lightfoot said. "The Ramova Theatre will once again become the beating heart of Bridgeport as it helps fuel its local economy and



write a new chapter in the history of the South Side.”

City assistance for the project will include a \$6.64 million Tax Increment Financing (TIF) loan that will be provided at project completion. The developer will repay \$100,000 in interest over the first three years, with the principal and remaining interest to be forgiven at the conclusion of the 10-year-term, provided all annual compliance requirements are met. The City-owned theater building and adjacent lot, valued at \$765,000, will also be provided for \$1 to support the project.

Built in 1928, the single-screen theater building was designed by architect Mayer O. Nathan in the Spanish Revival style with atmospheric details that resembled a courtyard under the stars. In 1940, it hosted the Chicago premier of Charlie Chaplin’s “The Great Dictator.” The final movie screening took place in 1985, “Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment.”

The City took ownership of the vacant property in 2001 with long-term goals to support its redevelopment as an economic anchor for the community.

“Bridgeport residents have been eager to see the Ramova restored for decades,” Ald. Patrick Daley Thompson (11th) said. “This is a true public-private partnership that will bring entertainment, jobs and investment to a critical stretch of the Halsted commercial corridor.”

The redevelopment project will also include a new 5,000-square-foot brewery and 4,000-square-foot restaurant in adjacent buildings. The project will create 80 permanent and approximately 110 temporary construction jobs.

The TIF assistance will be provided following project completion and be subject to ongoing occupancy, employment, and other requirements for at least 10 years.

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Historic Bronzeville Church Associated with the Civil Rights Movement Approved for Landmark Status

The 109-year-old Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church complex in Grand Boulevard was designated an official Chicago landmark by City Council today.

Prominent Chicago architect Alfred Alschuler designed the Neoclassical style campus at 4600 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive as the third home for the Sinai Congregation, Chicago’s first Jewish reform congregation. Completed in 1912, the complex consists of the former synagogue and social settlement house that is joined by a connecting wing. Clad in limestone, the main building features a soaring front



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entrance portico framed by six Ionic columns, a four-story sanctuary with a barrel vault ceiling, a central skylight, and stained-glass windows depicting geometric and floral forms.

Sinai Temple was well-known as a social and educational center, with programming that included lectures by Jane Addams, Harold L. Ickes, Louis Brandeis, Clarence Darrow, and Eleanor Roosevelt. It was later the headquarters for civil rights groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Operation Breadbasket, and Operation PUSH. The church was the site where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his sermon “Why Jesus Called A Man A Fool” in 1967, during the height of the Civil Rights Movement.

The temple was sold to the Catholic Archbishop of Chicago in 1944 and became Corpus Christi High School. Mt Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church acquired the building in 1962.

The designation was recommended by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in February.

The designation will protect the building’s exteriors, entrance lobby, sanctuary, and balcony from significant alteration or demolition.

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