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## City Begins 2024 With Major Reinvestment in Economic Development

Economic Development is one of the City's core priorities, and the City's recently enhanced portfolio of [business incentives](#) is a key component.

In the first [partnership](#) of the City of Highland Park's new boutique incentive program designed to attract well-established, successful restaurant groups to Highland Park, the City and Ballyhoo Hospitality have entered into an agreement that will see [Ballyhoo's DeNucci's concept](#) open a new restaurant in Downtown Highland Park. Ballyhoo plans to bring their second DeNucci's restaurant to Renaissance Place at 1850 Second St., Unit 110, in fall 2024. The restaurant concept promises an inviting ambiance with old-school Italian charm and a fresh appeal. Guests who dine at DeNucci's will be able to experience an authentic, approachable, warm, and welcoming environment while enjoying classics like Artichoke Vesuvio, Mozzarella al Forno and Veal Marsala. The menu also features NY-influenced pies using the beloved recipe by Salvatore "Sal" Lo Cascio (Ballyhoo's Pizzaiolo overseeing Coda di Volpe, Pizza by Sal and DeNucci's).

The agreement bridges the gap between the contributions of the business owner/operator and the property owner relative to eligible renovation expenses, including remodeling of the existing interior restaurant space, enclosed patio, and kitchen on the property. Ballyhoo will take on responsibility

for the remaining renovation costs. The Tabani Group, which owns the Renaissance Place property, is also a partner in this project through their lease obligations and terms with Ballyhoo.

The collaboration was facilitated by the August 2023 expansion of the City's economic incentive offerings to include boutique incentive packages of grants and/or low-interest loans for sought-after restaurant groups. To protect the City's financial investment, the agreement provides for a percentage of funds to be returned to the City on a sliding scale if the restaurant doesn't open or ceases operations in Highland Park within the first five years.

This business attraction strategy has been successfully implemented by federal, state, county and local governments, including neighboring suburbs of Chicago. In forming this program, the City joined other North Shore communities in recognizing the value of investing in businesses that bring employment, high-volume foot traffic, sales to their main commercial districts, and vibrancy.

Through the City's [Exterior Improvement Grant Program](#), Highland Park businesses may now submit eligible improvement expenses for reimbursement of up to 50% of the project costs to a maximum of \$20,000. Launched in January 2024, the Program expands the scope and increases the budget of the former Small Business Façade Improvement Program to support existing Highland Park businesses in funding exterior improvements to their building and outdoor dining infrastructure.

Other incentive programs to support Highland Park's economic vitality include the [Sales Tax Rebate Program](#), which incentivizes high sales tax-producing businesses in the form of a rebate, and reduced pricing for [employee parking permits](#) purchased in bulk.

Additionally, in 2024, the City will undertake a number of [infrastructure projects](#) in Downtown Highland Park, including the street resurfacing in the heart of the Central Business District and enhanced streetscape design and amenities along the Second Street corridor. This investment in downtown infrastructure will enhance access to and enjoyment of restaurants, shops, and other businesses in Downtown Highland Park.

[Learn more about these economic development strategies.](#)

**Welcome New Business La Taquiza Express**



Please welcome [La Taquiza Express](#) to Highland Park! The latest restaurant concept from the La Taquiza family, we are excited to welcome Marlene and Kris Benitez to the community. Since 2011, [La Taquiza](#) has been serving up fresh, healthy, traditional Mexican and family recipes from scratch.

1960 First St. / 847.780.3300 / [La Taquiza Express](#)

**Business Anniversary: My Best Friend's Closet**



Congratulations to Downtown Highland Park business My Best Friend's Closet, which celebrates 14 years of stylish designer clothing and accessories this month! Stop in to congratulate owner Gilat Zamost and her outstanding team on this achievement!

1780 Green Bay Rd. / 847.681.0002 / [mybestfriendsclosethp.com](http://mybestfriendsclosethp.com)

## New Exterior Improvement Grant Program

The City is pleased to announce the **Exterior Improvement Grant Program**, an expansion of the Small Business Façade Program. The Small Business Façade Grant Program was established in 2002 to provide both assistance and incentive to commercial property owners and sales-tax-generating local businesses citywide to improve the look and functionality of their properties

and businesses. As of January 1, 2024, the Program title changed from the Small Business Façade Grant Program to the ***Exterior Improvement Grant Program***. The following are key changes:

- The grant maximum increased from \$5,000 to \$20,000 for eligible improvements, although it still requires a 50% cost-share from the applicant.
- Applicants may apply for a maximum Grant of \$20,000 toward eligible improvements annually for up to five consecutive years up to a maximum of \$100,000; grant funding for the same type of eligible expense will not be considered within the same 5-year period.
- The applicant's eligibility expanded from small businesses to allow businesses of all sizes.
- The eligible improvements expanded from only frontage along the right-of-way to eligible improvements visible from the right-of-way, including purchasing outdoor dining furniture and décor, landscaping, and installing parklets for outdoor dining.
- The annual Program Budget increased from \$15,000 to \$100,000 to accommodate the Program expansion.

The ***Exterior Improvement Grant Program*** is an excellent opportunity to reinvest in your business and property and enhance its appearance and the City's business districts. If your business or property needs a refresh, please visit [Exterior Improvement Grant](#) to learn more about the ***Program*** and download the ***Application***.

If you have questions about the Program, please contact Business Development Manager Carolyn Hersch at 847.926.1027 or via e-mail at [chersch@cityhpil.com](mailto:chersch@cityhpil.com).

## Super Bowl and Valentine's Day Marketing Opportunities



Is your business offering any Super Bowl or Valentine's Day specials? Our

marketing team will be highlighting these promotions on our [Enjoy Highland Park](#) website. If you'd like to be included, please send the details of your promotion to Marketing Coordinator, Diane Larson via email: [dlarson@cityhpil.com](mailto:dlarson@cityhpil.com).

## Small Business Development Center: Low and No-Cost Business Services



[Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDC) are located throughout the state and provide information, confidential business guidance, training, and other free resources for start-ups and existing small businesses. If you need help with a business plan, marketing, financial bookkeeping, finding grants, starting and growing a business, click [HERE](#). To find a Center near you, click [HERE](#). Please note that many SBDCs do provide Spanish assistance. If you need help finding an SBDC that provides Spanish assistance, please contact Diana Alfaro at [diana.alfaro@illinois.gov](mailto:diana.alfaro@illinois.gov).

## Community Navigator Business Support Program

[Community Navigators](#) is a support program to assist small businesses, particularly minority, women, rural, and veteran-owned businesses. They provide outreach to raise awareness on federal and state programs, and provide 1:1 technical assistance, etc. For more information, please click [HERE](#).

## Hello Alice Small Business Grant Program



Discover small business grants for every stage of your small business adventure. Grant opportunities are recommended based on your unique profile and delivered to your inbox weekly. The search for free money doesn't get any easier! In partnership with the Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) and with funding from Etsy and Progressive, [Hello Alice](#) is a free online platform that helps businesses launch and grow through every step of their

entrepreneurial journey. The Small Business Growth Fund provides small business owners with knowledge, funding, networking opportunities, and peer-to-peer connections with more than one million small business owners.

[Learn about Hello Alice funding opportunities.](#)

## SCORE Mentoring at the Highland Park Public Library & Free Webinars

**SCORE offers in-person or virtual sessions using phone, email, or video**



All sessions are free and confidential. SCORE mentors are successful business professionals, some retired, some working, from all industries and experiences.

SCORE recently added a new [YouTube channel](#) where all previously recorded webinars can be accessed.

To schedule an in-person or virtual session, visit [score.org/northchicago](https://score.org/northchicago) and register to “Find a Mentor”. You will be asked to provide the nature of your business interest. Please include whether you prefer in-person or virtual mentoring (phone, email, video) and note the **Highland Park Public Library** even if you prefer a virtual session.

## Art In Bloom: A Student Art Walk Experience



On behalf of the 112 Education Foundation, the District 112 Art Teachers and the PTO President’s Council, your business is invited to participate in the first “Art in Bloom” Student Art Walk Experience. Spring forward with the talented emerging artists in District 112! By displaying students’ artwork in your windows, you can help harness senses of creativity and pride for our town’s youth. If you would like to participate in this community initiative, please email

## "Take Care Packages" To Support Newly-arrived Migrants

# "TAKE CARE"

# PACKAGES

Highland Park student volunteers with SaLT (Service and Learning Together) are working to collect donations for ["Take Care" packages](#) for newly-arrived migrants while they await transfer to the Chicago Processing Center. SaLT volunteers are partnering with the City of Highland Park and the Rotary Club of Highland Park/Highwood to collect donations that will be used to create these thoughtful "Take Care" packages.

Donations may be dropped off at City Hall (1707 St. Johns Ave.) and [other convenient locations](#) throughout Highland Park, including First Bank of Highland Park and Highland Park Bank & Trust.

## Contacting the Office of Business Development

This newsletter is produced by the City of Highland Park's Office of Business Development. The City encourages business owners and managers to share information regarding upcoming events, promotions or news for possible inclusion in the City's marketing modalities, including [The Weekender](#), [Enjoy Highland Park](#), and [social media](#). Please send these items to the City via email to: [businessdevelopment@cityhpil.com](mailto:businessdevelopment@cityhpil.com). The City reserves the right to edit and/or filter submissions.

For general business inquiries and assistance, contact Business Development Manager Carolyn Hersch at [chersch@cityhpil.com](mailto:chersch@cityhpil.com) or 847.926.1027.

## Additional Resources

[Available Commercial Space](#)

[U.S. Small Business Administration](#)



[Business Directory](#)

[City of Highland Park Business Development Strategic Plan](#)

[Chamber Of Commerce](#)

[College of Lake County Small Business Development Center](#)

[Hello Alice](#)

[SCORE](#)

[SCORE YouTube Channel](#)

[Job Center of Lake County - Business Services](#)

[Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity:](#)

- [Small Business Development Centers of Illinois](#)
- [Community Navigator Business Support Program](#)
- [Grant Opportunities](#)

[Visit Lake County](#)

[Women-in-Business Resources](#)

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