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Second St. Parking Lot Reconstruction Mid-March - May

During the City Council meeting on February 12th, a contract was approved to reconstruct the Second Street surface parking lot between Michael's and Terry's Toffee. The project includes complete pavement reconstruction, permeable brick pavers for parking stalls, a new curb, gutter, and drainage structures, lighting enhancements, and installation of new conduit for future electrical vehicle charging stations. The construction work is expected to begin in mid-March and continue through May, and during this time, the parking lot will not be accessible to customers or employees. The City has already discussed the project timing with the affected businesses and property owners along Second St. and First St. It will provide further details about the project timeline and parking for customers and employees before the start of the construction.

In addition to this, the City Council discussed the broader lighting and streetscape enhancement of Second Street during the Committee of the Whole meeting. The council supported re-situating a planned bump-out slightly north along Second St. (between Gearhead Outfitters and BYG) to facilitate outdoor dining and enhanced lighting. As planning continues for this project, City staff will explore additional lighting elements to enhance the ambiance of

the Second Street corridor between Central Ave. and Elm Pl. Information will also be available on the city's [interactive CIP map](#) nearer to the start of construction. If you're interested in receiving updates about the project, you can sign up for the dedicated project email list by emailing cityhp@cityhpil.com.

The Lot: 2024 Season Lineup



An exciting third season of special events and festivals returns to The Lot in Downtown Highland Park! 2024's season features time-tested favorites and exciting new themes. The band lineup is coming soon! For more information about the season schedule, visit the [Enjoy Highland Park website](#).



Spring has arrived in Highland Park, and there's so much to celebrate! We've created an ever-growing, [downloadable guide](#) of things to do in Highland Park this season with sections dedicated to St. Patrick's Day, Purim, Passover, Easter, and more.

Want your local business to be featured in the guide? If you're hosting a spring event, workshop, special dining opportunity, or other promotion, please reach out to Marketing Coordinator, Diane Larson at: dlarson@cityhpil.com for more information.

Are You Offering Your Retail Customers The Experiences They Expect?

With the rise of e-commerce, more and more brick-and-mortar businesses are focusing on providing immersive in-store retail experiences. In the below summarized article by Jaime Bettencourt, SVP of North American Sales & Brand Strategy, Mood Media, she emphasizes the need to create destination stores and physical experience to help form lasting connections.

EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL REVOLUTION

According to Jaime, two in five retail companies ranked immersive experiences as a top investment priority...Creativity and human-centric technology—like interactive displays, experiential audio, and scent marketing—are the differentiators driving loyalty and brick-and-mortar success.

KEY TRENDS FUELING THE REVOLUTION

Cutting-edge technologies offer exciting possibilities for engaging multiple senses and enhancing interactivity, opening up new frontiers in personalization. For instance, interactive displays help customers learn more about products and provide video demonstrations. The right technology can take brand experiences to the next level, but human-centric experiences remain vital. Our In-Store Customer Trends Data Report reports:

- Over half of the customers appreciate tangibly connecting with products.
- Music drives mood and can elicit happiness from 55% of shoppers.
- The right ambient scent enhances the experience of 85% of customers.
- Nearly 75% of shoppers love interactive screens, and 69% are impressed by in-store video walls

OVERCOMING EXPERIENTIAL CHALLENGES

Adapting to evolving consumer expectations is the top challenge for 42% of retailers. The modern customer seeks a shopping journey that blends engagement and convenience, requiring stores to offer a fresh, dynamic experience while maintaining brand authenticity.

- Embracing technology integration keeps stores relevant in the digital age.
- Staff training cultivates a customer-centric workforce and improves staff retention.
- Technological costs are investments in lasting customer impressions and loyalty.
- Addressing privacy builds trust through transparent, responsible data use.
- Leveraging managed services ensures streamlined operations and optimal performance. By navigating these challenges, retailers enhance their competitive edge while reshaping retail.

TIPS FOR TRADITIONAL RETAILERS

The experiential retail revolution may seem daunting for traditional retailers accustomed to conventional stores. However, brands can revamp their physical spaces to create immersive destinations by:

1. Implementing advanced augmented reality technology like virtual mirrors or product customization tools.
2. Incorporating gamification elements like rewards programs.
3. Hosting in-store events like new product previews, classes, or pop-up shops to drive excitement and FOMO.
4. Using spatial design like art installations, 3D mapping projections, and interactive environments.
5. Leveraging location-based notifications and mobile integrations like special offers based on in-store movement.
6. Strategically curating customized playlists for an enhanced atmosphere and brand image. With creativity and customer-centric thinking, traditional retailers can keep pace with experiential disruptors. The brands that evolve their physical spaces into immersive havens will win over customers' hearts, minds, and wallets.

Jaime Bettencourt, senior vice president of North American sales and brand strategy at Mood Media, is an accomplished senior-level sales and marketing leader with a robust track record for leading teams and leveraging custom, complex in-store marketing, media, and technology solutions for Fortune 500 retail clients.



The **Exterior Improvement Grant Program** offered by the City is designed to provide both assistance and encouragement to commercial property owners and sales-tax-generating local businesses citywide to improve their storefronts' appearance and functionality. The program has the following key features:

- The cost of eligible improvements is shared equally between the applicant and the City.
- The maximum Grant amount is \$20,000 per year for up to five consecutive years or a total of \$100,000; however, a grant for the same improvement would not be considered within the same five-year period.
- The eligible improvements must be visible from the right-of-way.

The annual program budget is \$100,000 and is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The program is an excellent opportunity for local businesses and property owners to revamp their storefronts, enhance their appeal, and lessen the financial burden. Please visit [Exterior Improvement Grant Program](#) to learn more 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.

Business Registration

There are still businesses that have not renewed their 2024 business registration and license(s). If you already renewed and received an email confirmation of your payment, you can disregard.

To renew your business registration and license(s), you must sign up for a new account online. The instructions are as follows:

1) Click here: (https://selfservice.cityhpil.com/EnerGov_Prod/SelfService#/home) to visit the Self Service payment portal.

2) Click on the “Login or Register” box to access a “Sign in” box.

3) Scroll down to the bottom of the “Sign in” box and follow the instructions for “Don’t have an account? Sign up.”

4) Click the “Sign up” link and complete the instructions.

NOTE: Enter the email address with which you used to register your business in previous years. If you do not remember that email address or aren’t sure, contact the City via email at cmolicense@cityhpil.com or by phone at 847.926.1000 for assistance.

5) You should now be able to access your business Dashboard where you can see your permits and licenses for renewal. If you do not see that information, contact the City via email at cmolicense@cityhpil.com or by phone at 847.926.1000 for assistance.

6) Click the “renew” button(s) to follow the steps for license renewal.

What happens after I create my online account? Once you have created your online account, City staff will be notified to review the information for accuracy. After that, an invoice for payment will be generated, and you will receive an email indicating that you have an invoice ready for payment. Once payment has been received, you will receive a notification that your business registration is complete, and you will be able to view your business information and print applicable license(s) online.

Any questions can be directed to 847.926.1000 or via email to: cmolicense@cityhpil.com.

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



**HELLO
ALICE**

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.](#)

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.

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 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.

Upcoming Free Webinar: April 2, 12pm CDT Email Marketing: How to be Relevant Now.

[Click to learn more.](#)

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 danajweiss@gmail.com by February 14.

"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. 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 or 847.926.1027.

Additional Resources

[Available Commercial Space](#)

[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](#)

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

[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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