



INTRODUCTION

Downtown Pittsburgh is steadily recovering from the impacts of the pandemic. We are seeing exciting new developments and a steady stream of new businesses opening in the Golden Triangle, along with a consistent increase in visitor foot traffic to near pre-pandemic levels. However, many storefronts and buildings remain vacant, offering enormous potential for innovative use. These spaces provide a unique opportunity for creative artistic intervention or short-term retail until longer-term occupancy is secured.

Project Pop-Up is an initiative of the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP), in collaboration with private property owners to activate vacant Downtown Pittsburgh storefronts. This program will provide entrepreneurs with an opportunity to activate a pop-up retail shop or to start a small business in Downtown Pittsburgh. Selected applicants can occupy and transform vacant storefront spaces for up to 12 months, creating a more vibrant street-level environment Downtown.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Project Pop-Up: Activating Storefronts in Downtown Pittsburgh

The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP) is currently seeking applications from prospective pop-up retail businesses to transform vacant storefronts into vibrant, activated spaces, creating new and exciting destinations in Downtown Pittsburgh. The goal of Project Pop-Up is to support storefront concepts that contribute to Downtown's growing small business community. Activation can range from a 6-months to one year, with the potential for extended occupancy.

The PDP invites prospective candidates to apply for a ground-floor retail space in Downtown Pittsburgh. Establishments selling retail merchandise and/or providing an experiential service that is not currently available in the Downtown area would have greater chance of approval. The PDP encourages applicants who will enhance the streetscape and social environment of the surrounding area to apply. Applicants should propose concepts that appeal broadly to a diverse customer base, complement businesses in the area, and provide memorable experiences for customers and window shoppers.

Program Goals

The program seeks to activate at least four (4) vacant storefronts with art and pop-up retail, during the day and into the night.

PDP will lead the Project Pop-Up marketing campaigns, which will include highlighting art installations and pop-up retailers on the PDP website, newsletters, and social media channels, maps of the new locations, and events (such as a boutique crawl) to showcase the projects.

Program goals include:

- Providing opportunities for start-up retailers to occupy and activate vacant storefronts in functional and engaging ways, within a Downtown location.
- Encourage local entrepreneurship and broaden business opportunities by reducing barriers of entry to aspiring business owners through subsidized rents and startup costs.
- Increase daytime and nighttime street vibrancy, safety, and economic health through active storefronts that enhance the public experience.
- Create an atmosphere in storefronts that will lead to business development and potential permanent residency in these locations.

By filling vacant storefronts with high quality pop-up retail ventures, this program seeks to support existing local merchants with increased foot traffic, improve streetscape conditions and safety, as well as create additional reasons for locals and visitors to patronize Downtown.

Awards and Project Budget

Project Pop Up will provide grants of **up to \$15,000** per storefront, contingent upon the scale and scope of each project proposal and its corresponding available storefront.

This grant is to be provided toward reimbursable expenses directly associated with the project, including but not limited to monthly utility costs, labor, and materials for setting up the space, maintenance of the space during occupancy, general liability insurance, public events within the space, and the overall implementation of a pop-up environment.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Please submit your application via the form linked on our website at:

<https://downtownpittsburgh.com/project-pop-up>. Applicants must complete all required sections for consideration.

- **Completed online application:**
 - Complete and submit the online application form [on our website](#). This will include contact information, professional references, proposed storefront project narrative, and why you want to participate in this program.
- **Demonstration of business feasibility:**
 - In the online application, you will be asked to include reference images and/or photos of your products or proposed idea. You must also provide an estimated **budget in the application** that includes all costs associated with the installation and maintenance of the project for a 6-12-month period. Budgets will be judged on feasibility and available funding.
- **Supplemental Documents:**
 - You will be asked to provide supplemental documents via the online application, including:
 - **A Business Plan:** Business Plans are appreciated by the review team if available; all documents are kept internal to the Review Committee.
 - **Marketing and Social Media Plan:**

- Describe any social media and other marketing techniques that will enhance the operation and presentation of the concept to improve sales, traffic, and exposure.
- This should include social media marketing plans and current number of followers on various social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, etc.).

Each applicant is encouraged to meet with a local Small Business Development Center to review their application and help with the development of a business plan. See the last page of this document for a list of Pittsburgh-based centers.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All applications received will be evaluated by PDP staff. The following criteria, in no order of importance, will be used to evaluate applicants:

- Creativity and uniqueness of proposed concept
- Relevant experience to the proposed concept
- Credibility of business plan and budget
- Compatibility and synergy of proposed concept with neighboring businesses
- Experience managing a project of the proposed scale and budget
- Potential for the greatest foot traffic impact
- Current social media following and existing client/audience base.
- Activation of the storefront at night
- Preference will be given to applications from women, people of color, Pittsburgh local businesses and those paying a living wage.

All applications will be evaluated by a review committee. The committee will select a group of finalists and work to match each to a suitable storefront. The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership may choose to develop a waitlist of additional applicants and/or provide a revolving storefront that will support multiple short-term pop-up projects.

Those selected will work with the PDP to solidify budget and plans for each space. Once the project budget and plans have been approved, each project participant will sign an agreement for a 6-12-month commitment with the property owner and subsequently receive funds toward expenses within the approved budget, up to \$15,000. The final lease agreement will be negotiated and signed by the participants and the property owner.

Project participants will work with the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership's Director of Economic Development, who will assist them with the implementation of their projects.

Storefront Space

In consultation with the Review Committee, PDP staff will work to match selected participants with available spaces. Most spaces range from 1,500 to 2,500 square feet.

Installing fixtures, equipment, and materials will be subject to approval by each property owner, as set forth in the lease agreement.

Storefront Content, Maintenance, Insurance & Security

Storefronts can be gallery spaces, experiential services, retail ventures, or any combination thereof. Activation of the storefront facade and interior space that creates a presence both during the day and at night is strongly desired.

Project participants will be responsible for the maintenance of their storefront project and should include such expenses within their budget. All projects must be removable and temporary, leaving no permanent adverse effect to the storefront facade or interior space.

Each selected participant in the program will be required to secure general liability insurance insuring against the program participant's liability for property damage and bodily injury, including death, related to the program participant's use of the space. The property owner will be named as an additional insured. The program participant will hold the property owner and the PDP harmless from damage or loss to artwork or storefront contents. The property owner will look solely to the program participant's insurance for claims related to use of the space by the program participant.

If electronic equipment or other valuable or delicate objects are part of the storefront installation, the project proposal should address how security will be ensured. ***Neither the program nor the property owner will be responsible for theft or damage of storefront contents.***

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Application Deadline: **Monday, September 4, 2023**

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR SMALL BUSINESS PLANNING

- **Duquesne University Small Business Development Center:** <https://www.sbdc.duq.edu/>
- **Chatham Center for Women's Entrepreneurship:** <https://www.chatham.edu/cwe/counseling/>
- **Pitt Small Business Development Center:** <https://entrepreneur.pitt.edu/centers/small-business-development-center-sbdc/>