



PROJECT POP-UP GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Project Pop-Up brings vibrancy and innovation to Downtown Pittsburgh by activating vacant storefronts with temporary retail pop-ups, interior window displays, and artistic window graphics. In collaboration with Downtown property owners—and with generous support from the Hillman Foundation—the program invites entrepreneurs, artists, makers, retailers, and creative teams to transform empty storefronts into engaging destinations.

This initiative supports Downtown's economic revitalization by providing low-barrier opportunities for creative retail, art, and cultural activations that contribute to a more dynamic and welcoming street-level experience.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

We're currently accepting a limited number of applications and match-making concepts with interested property owners.

We are now recruiting for new Pop-Up concepts to launch in early 2026. Applications should be submitted as soon as possible to allow for review and approval by **January or February 2026**, ensuring enough time for permitting and installation ahead of the **April 2026 launch deadline**.

Typical activation periods range from **6–12 months** for pop-ups, interactive window displays, and artistic graphics, with the potential for extensions when appropriate.

Eligible Activations

- Pop-Up Shops: Temporary retail, food, service, or art concepts
- Interior Window Displays: Installations or interactive experiences inside a storefront
- Artistic Window Graphics: Vinyl or surface treatments tailored to space conditions

Program Benefits

- Streamlined process – Simple application and property matchmaking based on fit and availability.
- Affordable launch opportunity – Selected participants may receive rent-free or significantly reduced rent for 6–12 months (for pop-ups) or short-term display access.
- Financial incentives – Grants of up to \$15,000 per storefront may be available to offset eligible costs such as materials, fabrication, installation, utilities, maintenance, insurance, events, and activation needs.
- Marketing support – Participants are promoted through Downtown Pittsburgh channels to drive visibility and traffic.
- Built-in audience – Downtown’s residents, workers, and visitors create a steady flow of potential customers and viewers.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Complete the online application form: [Apply Now](#)

Step 1: Submit Your Concept

Complete the online application form:

🔗 Apply Now: <https://forms.gle/kQ4aryxSvtXcVoLM7>

Include:

- A brief description of your idea (pop-up, display, or window graphics) and how it would contribute to Downtown’s vibrancy
- Visual representation of your concept (sketches, mock-ups, or images)
- Estimated budget and installation/operation timeline
- Links to your work or social media profiles that showcase your products, artwork, or past projects

Step 2: Review and Matchmaking

Applications are reviewed by the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP) team. Selected applicants will be matched with suitable available storefronts based on concept, size, and location fit.

Once matched, participants will work with PDP staff to finalize a project plan, budget, and agreement with the property owner.

Step 3: Implementation

Approved participants will coordinate with PDP and the property owner on:

- Permitting and installation logistics
- Proof of general liability insurance (naming the property owner as an additional insured)
- Maintenance and security plans for the activation

All projects must be temporary and removable, leaving no permanent impact on the space.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated by Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership staff as they are received. PDP will review each application for viability, and if the concept is a strong fit, staff will work to match the applicant with a suitable storefront.

- Creativity, quality, and originality of the proposed concept
- Feasibility of budget and timeline
- Compatibility with Downtown's retail mix and character
- Demonstrated experience and professionalism
- Potential to enhance foot traffic, visibility, and street-level activation

Preference will be given to applications from local businesses, women- and minority-owned enterprises, and living-wage employers.

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.***

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/>

PROGRAM CONTACT

For questions or to discuss your concept before applying, contact:

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