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Chicago's Little Village Neighborhood Named Designated Cultural District By State of Illinois

*Ten Year Designation Opens New Opportunities for Little Village to Increase Economic
Development; Celebrate Cultural Heritage*

Chicago, IL – Feb. 26, 2024 – Chicago’s Little Village neighborhood has been recognized as a State-Designated Cultural District, Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced Monday. This significant designation showcases the neighborhood's rich cultural heritage and its contribution to the city's economic, arts and cultural landscape. This designation will be in place through 2034.

“We are extremely honored to have Little Village named as a Designated Cultural District,” said Kim Close, executive director of the Foundation of Little Village. “This prestigious designation will help strengthen our efforts to elevate Little Village as a hub for cultural and economic influence in Chicago.”

The goal of the State-Designated Cultural Districts program is to encourage economic development; support the preservation and development of history and culturally significant structures, traditions, and languages; foster local cultural development and education; provide a focal point for celebrating communities' unique cultural identities; and promote equitable growth and opportunity without generating displacement, the governor’s office said.

“This distinguished honor makes the Foundation of Little Village so proud and encouraged,” said Little Village Foundation’s Board Chair Dan Arce. “As we look at the next decade, this prestigious designation will open new doors of opportunity for the Little Village neighborhood. We thank Governor Pritzker and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity for their support.”

As outlined in statute, DCEO selected ten recipients (five for 2023 and five for 2024) and will be selecting an additional five recipients in 2025, with a focus on downstate and rural communities.

Recipients will be eligible to apply for \$3 million in funding that will be tailored to fit the needs of individual Cultural Districts and support the goals of the program to foster economic development and help communities preserve their unique cultural identities. The state will launch the funding opportunity following the selection of the final five cultural districts.

The State-Designated Cultural Districts opportunity was made available to localities, municipalities and community based non-profit organizations, through a competitive Notice of Designation Opportunity (NODO). Eligible applicants had to be historically impacted and at risk of losing their cultural identity due to gentrification displacement, or the COVID-19 pandemic and also have a history of economic disinvestment.

As a State-Designated Cultural District, Little Village will have access to various resources and opportunities aimed at fostering the growth and development of its arts and cultural sectors. It will also continue to encourage entrepreneurship and support community economic development with a prioritization on the preservation of existing businesses and retention of current residents.

In future years, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity may provide funding and support for local initiatives, programs, and events that showcase the diverse cultural offerings of the neighborhood and support economic development opportunities.

The Foundation of Little Village supports and encourages business growth through an established business ecosystem that offers culturally relevant and bilingual entrepreneurial programming, access to capital, a business incubator, and other critical resources that impact the economic wellness of Little Village. The nonprofit's core pillars focus on building community wealth, cultural preservation, and corridor revitalization. Learn more about the Foundation of Little Village or enroll in its entrepreneurial Juntos programming at flvchicago.org.

About the Foundation of Little Village

The Foundation of Little Village was founded in August 2018 with a mission to create a socioeconomic impact system for Little Village entrepreneurs. In this time, the Foundation of Little Village has supported more than 250 local small businesses with culturally relevant educational programming, professional services, workforce training, access to capital, and technical assistance to bridge the digital divide between youth and local businesses. In pursuit of these goals, the Foundation of Little Village equips local entrepreneurs with access to bilingual, professional programming designed to support and encourage economic growth, educational opportunities, and vibrant wealth creation to more effectively propel the Little Village community forward.