



OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Make Chicago the Best City for Small Business

Empowering Chicago's small business community through common-sense reforms

Chicago's economy is fueled by small and local businesses. They are the engines of economic growth and job creation, and are integral parts of our local communities. Therefore, eliminating barriers that make it difficult to start and operate a business is crucial. Creating an environment where small businesses and entrepreneurs can thrive will support communities throughout the City.

The following recommendations are proposed by the Small Business Advocacy Council and a city-wide coalition of chambers, civic, and trade associations.

Acting on these recommendations will help improve the business climate for Chicago small businesses and spark the City's economy.

We encourage the Mayor and Chicago City Council members to support and enact these recommendations.



Expand Public Way Use Opportunities for Small Businesses

The responsible use of the public way for private enterprise supports small businesses and provides a revenue opportunity for the City of Chicago. Where sidewalk widths are sufficient, we recommend expanding the amount of space a restaurant can use for a sidewalk café.

Allowing a sidewalk café to extend past the borders of the restaurant will allow local restaurants to service more customers and increase the vibrancy of local communities. Of course, more revenue for local businesses equates to more revenue for the City.



Proposal #1:

1. As part of the existing sidewalk café permit application, allow restaurants to extend their sidewalk cafés beyond the edge of their storefront, if they have the support of the neighboring business owner and landlord.

Allow A-Frame or Sandwich Signs

A-Frame or sandwich signs are significant and inexpensive marketing tools for small and local businesses. Small businesses with limited retail frontage need extra exposure and rely on A-frame signs in front of their storefronts to draw consumers inside.

However, there is presently no system to permit these signs and business owners using them run the risk of receiving fines.

The City of Chicago could generate additional revenue by implementing a permitting system, allowing for responsible placement of A-frame signs, and charging a reasonable annual fee. Increased commercial activity also increases sales tax revenue for the City.



Proposal #2:

1. To ensure that A-Frame signs are placed in a way that does not block walkways or create a safety hazard, the City can create simple criteria governing size, height, number, timing, and location.
2. Require that an application be completed, that the business owner provide general liability insurance and a COI listing the address and location of the sign with the City of Chicago listed as additional insured.

This is the way in which kiosks, awnings, and other permanent structures in the public way are permitted and insured to protect the City from liability.



In Chicago, putting up window signage, such as a Yelp sticker or hours of operation, requires a sign construction building permit. Obtaining such a permit can be a costly and time-consuming proposition.

Make it easier to put up simple window signage

Also, stickers and temporary signs are unable to be attached to a window for more than 60 days without such a permit.

One reason all signs require a building permit is to allow zoning to review the total sign area of signs. Zoning rules include a cap on the number of square footage of signage that is legible from the

public way. This process creates long delays and added costs for small businesses looking to put up simple window signage.

Proposal #3:

1. Allow business owners to apply for sign construction building permits for simple window signage that is non-

structural and non-electrical. Currently, only a licensed sign erector can apply for the building permit, so a business owner must pay the erector to pursue the permit.



Running a home-based business offers individuals an inexpensive entry point into the world of business ownership.

Home-based businesses have become a hub of business activity, entrepreneurship, and business creation. Companies like Amazon, Google, and Yankee Candle Company were all started in someone's garage.

So, whether folks are starting a business in a garage or a kitchen office, our laws ought to support entrepreneurs at every stage of their business development. Let's allow industrious people to work from home as long as they are doing no harm to their neighbors.

Proposal #4:

1. Allow more than one non-resident employee in conjunction with a home occupation. Chicago's Zoning Code prohibits more than one non-resident employee, even if the employee does not come to the home.
2. Allow making products in the home when the home is not the point of sale. Under current law, you cannot make jewelry or greeting cards in your home if the jewelry or greeting cards are to be sold elsewhere. You are also not allowed to display the goods on shelves or racks at home, either.
3. Allow business activities in garages or sheds. Some of the greatest success stories in America started out in a garage. Let's not outlaw the iconic entrepreneur from building a business in Chicago.

Simplify Payment for Violations

Now that incorporated businesses need lawyers in administrative hearings, it is even more expensive to appear for a hearing. If businesses' minor violations were treated more like traffic tickets, the City and the businesses could save a lot of money and time.

Proposal #5:

1. Reduce the number of violations that require an appearance in person. Give business owners options to pay a fine without appearing. Inform business owners if the ticket will be nonsuited.
2. Where possible, allow the officers of a business or designated representatives to appear, instead of a lawyer.

Small Business

FAST FACTS

Chicago has 77 community areas containing more than 100 neighborhoods

Small businesses support nearly half of Chicago's workforce

Chicago has more than 7,300 restaurants



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT BLANCA CAMPOS, SBAC COO OF ADVOCACY, AT BLANCA@SBACIL.ORG.