



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**MAYOR EMANUEL DECLARES CITY HALL OPEN FOR SMALL BUSINESSES**

*Announces Opening of City Hall Small Business Center as a "One-Stop Shop" For Licenses and Permits;  
Creates New Chief Small Business Officer Role To Advocate for Small Businesses*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced an overhaul of the way City Hall works with small businesses in order to cut red tape and more effectively support economic development across Chicago's neighborhoods. By opening a new City Hall Small Business Center and streamlining permit and licensing reviews, small business owners and entrepreneurs across the city will have a "one-stop-shop" and dedicated staff working with them every step of the way to support their success. And under the leadership of a new Chief Small Business Officer, Roxanne Nava, City Hall will be equipped to advocate for small business owners and entrepreneurs and ensure policies and procedures are implemented in a way that works for small business.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and the lifeblood of our neighborhoods, accounting for nearly half of Chicago's jobs. Yet too often City Hall can get in the way instead of supporting their success. That stops today," said Mayor Emanuel. "We have made strides in streamlining licensing and permitting processes, but there is still more we can do. With the new Small Business Center, led by a dedicated Chief Small Business Officer, our small businesses and entrepreneurs will find that City Hall's door is wide open to support them every step of the way."

City Hall is also reporting today that the Restaurant Start-up Program, which launched nine months ago, has cut start-up times in half, helping nearly 200 restaurants open their doors more quickly. On average, these restaurants were able to receive their business license in half the time it took before the program began. The success of this program, which uses a client-based approach to walk restaurant owners through every step of the process required to get a license, led directly to the creation of the new Small Business Center.

"Chicagoland's small businesses are the backbone of our economy, driving innovation and job creation in communities both large and small throughout this great city and the Midwest," said

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

Marianne Markowitz, Regional Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration. “Mayor Emanuel is taking an impressive step to fully integrate services for small business into a true “one-stop-shop” for all licensing, permitting, counseling and financial assistance.”

With today’s announcement, Mayor Emanuel is following through on a commitment made in his budget address last October. The package of reforms being announced today were developed by the Mayor’s Innovation Delivery Team and the Departments of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), Housing and Economic Development (HED), and Transportation (CDOT), based on input from over 120 small business owners and entrepreneurs in over a dozen meetings held in Chinatown, Chatham, Little Village, Uptown, Roseland and others.

“We are committed to making sure City Hall is a partner, not an obstacle, for our small businesses,” said BACP Commissioner Rosemary Krimbel. “With this Small Business Center and Chief Small Business Officer, we are creating a dedicated, “one-stop-shop” for entrepreneurs and small businesses to help them thrive.”

To fully support the new Small Business Center as a one-stop-shop for licenses and permits, several changes have been made:

- City staff are being retrained to offer beginning-to-end case management, ensuring that small business owners and entrepreneurs have someone working with them every step of the way to obtain necessary permits and licenses;
- City zoning personnel that review business licenses have been moved into the Small Business Center, decreasing wait times for zoning approvals and allowing the Center to serve as a convenient zoning help desk;
- Zoning and licensing reviews will now include driveway permit reviews, which decreases overlap, streamlines the review process for small business owners and entrepreneurs, and reduces the time it takes to obtain a license
- City staff will also actively direct their clients to financial assistance programs and business plan counselors to encourage the success of small business owners and entrepreneurs.

“Small businesses and entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of this City and deserve a true partner with City Hall. As Alderman and small business owner, I know firsthand the struggles of opening and maintaining a business in Chicago,” said Alderman Tom Tunney. “This new Business Center will improve and expedite City Services, provide networking opportunities, and foster better communication between City Hall and its business community.”

“As a small business owner myself, I know how entrepreneurs pour their hearts, souls and minds into their businesses and their customers,” added Alderman Mary O’Connor. “That should be their focus, not navigating a maze of government requirements and these reforms are an impressive start to a new day, where City Hall is an active partner with our entrepreneurs and small businesses.”

Last year, Mayor Emanuel took major steps to make the business licensing system simpler and more streamlined by reducing the number of license types by 60 percent. By cutting the number of license categories from 117 to 49 and requiring businesses to obtain less licenses to get up and running, the reform saves over 10,000 small businesses \$2 million in license fees each year, savings that can be invested instead in their businesses and creating jobs. And in 2011, Chicago received a \$6 million grant from the Bloomberg Philanthropies to fund an Innovation Delivery Team. Since launching, Chicago's Innovation Delivery Team has partnered with city departments to spearhead a business license reform ordinance to drive that 60 percent reduction in license categories, established the Small Business Center to provide entrepreneurs with a one-stop-shop, and launched the Retrofit Chicago Residential Partnership to help home and apartment building owners save thousands of dollars on their energy bills.

People can also contact the new Small Business Center online on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

#### **About Roxanne Nava, Chief Small Business Officer**

A native Chicagoan, Nava brings a decade of experience supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs at the state government level, serving as the Director of the Illinois Financial Institutions and formerly as the Assistant Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, where she focused on creating consumer protection legislation and led Opportunity Returns, a regional economic initiative that drives job attraction and retention, respectively. Before joining the State of Illinois, Nava was a Vice President of The Northern Trust Company, where she sourced, underwrote and managed commercial lending relationships in the Chicago market. At The Northern Trust Company, Nava also led Latino outreach, increasing Latino business clients by 50 percent during her tenure. Prior to her time at The Northern Trust Company, Nava served in various senior management roles at Citi Group and Chase. Nava has been recognized for her accomplishments and leadership from the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and serves on the board of Leadership Greater Chicago. She received her Bachelor's degree at DePaul University.

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