



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office 312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**CITY OF CHICAGO & WORLD BUSINESS CHICAGO EXPAND CULTURAL
SHOWCASE POP-UP STRATEGY**

The cultural pop-ups temporarily occupy vacant downtown commercial spaces to showcase art and offer international goods made available by local independent retailers

CHICAGO — The City of Chicago and World Business Chicago (WBC) announced the expansion of the Cultural Showcase Pop-Up Strategy today with two new retail experiences opening in June: C Ukraine and an International Showcase. This innovative retail strategy is successfully engaging residents, guests, and tourists around the city's deep and genuine global connections and commitment to support for local small businesses and entrepreneurs.

"I'm pleased to see the continued success of these pop-ups which honor the myriad of cultures that have each left their own unique impressions on Chicago and make it the truly global city that it is today," said Chicago Mayor **Lori E. Lightfoot**. "The team at WBC has been a tremendous asset to our entire city, and our residents are better for the work they do to uplift and celebrate local businesses and entrepreneurs. The pop up on Ukraine is a particularly important cultural exhibition at this time, and I look forward to seeing its success as well as the continuation of the cultural pop-ups program."

Funded by COVID-19 relief funds granted to WBC through the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, each showcase transforms a vacant downtown storefront, promotes small businesses, and offers visitors an enriching, immersive cultural experience, along with a great opportunity to purchase unique products from local makers and creatives. The Cultural Showcase Pop-Up Strategy prides itself on highlighting Chicago's culturally diverse communities, promoting small businesses, and increasing foot traffic and commercial spending in downtown Chicago.

Opening in mid-June in ground floor retail spaces in the Wrigley Building (400-410 N. Michigan Ave.), the "C Ukraine" pop-up experience, designed by local Ukrainian architect Vladimir Radutny, will feature delicious homemade pastries by Shokolad Cafe and handmade Ukrainian goods sold by Casapolis and It's Oksana. The store's small businesses and Ukrainian consulate invite guests to "C" (see) Ukraine through shopping, artwork, and events that will celebrate Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian community in Chicago.



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The International Showcase will feature Chicago-based retail and food businesses that will showcase Colombian, Kyrgyz, Pakistani, and Polish cultures. King Sweets and Polombia will sell food, and Shyrdak World and Studio Elite will sell handmade clothing and goods. Both pop-up shops will be full of authentic, handmade art, décor, apparel, and other cultural treasures, founded in love and honor for Ukrainian, Colombian, Kyrgyz, Pakistani, and Polish cultures.

“These showcases are getting attention around the world,” said **Samir Mayekar**, Deputy Mayor for Economic and Neighborhood Development. “At a recent global mayor’s conference, I shared Chicago’s cultural showcase concept with U.S. Secretary of State Blinken and several Ukrainian Mayors, some of whom had been kidnapped during the war. They all expressed their gratitude for our commitment to citizen diplomacy and Chicago’s desire to help locals better understand and connect with cultures from around the world.”

Michael Fassnacht, President & CEO of World Business Chicago and the first-ever Chief Marketing Officer for the City of Chicago, emphasized the city's commitment to diversity and inclusivity: "Chicago is a city that embraces everyone and celebrates our differences. These innovative retail pop-ups provide an incredible platform for local businesses to showcase their unique talents, creativity, and products to a wider audience on one of the world's most iconic streets. They also offer a unique experience for visitors and residents to immerse themselves in the richness of different cultures from around the world.”

In 2021, Colores Mexicanos, at 605 N. Michigan Ave., piloted the pop-up strategy. Today it enjoys a commercial lease and operates independently without any subsidies. The pilot’s success led to the opening in 2022 of the Argentine Connection and Nordic House in previously vacant spaces at the Wrigley Building. Here they sold unique goods and hosted a variety of special events, welcoming residents, influencers, tourists, and the city’s diplomatic community. These pop-ups also served as the official VIP hosts for the Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival, one of the shop’s busiest days. Foot traffic counters at the store entrances showed that between October 2022 and April 2023, Argentine Connection and Nordic House welcomed over 20,000 guests.

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