

# UPTOWN

2024 Year in Review



Uptown  
United

Uptown Chamber  
of Commerce





Winthrop Family Historical Garden Mural Dedication

# Introduction

A model of urban unity nestled along Lake Michigan about six miles north of downtown Chicago, Uptown is ever welcoming and ever-evolving. It's a vibrant, living tapestry—as rich in history as it is in culture—and an epicenter of action and progress.

Established in 1900, Uptown has a colorful history as a hotspot for arts and entertainment. The neighborhood's iconic Prohibition-era venues and ornate architecture are as beloved today as they were in the early decades of the 20th century. Home to the iconic Green Mill Lounge, Aragon Ballroom, and numerous designated landmark buildings, it is also the site of Chicago's first "shared street" project in the West Argyle Historic District, opened in 2016.

Uptown has long been home to social activists and advocates, immigrants and refugees, artists and entrepreneurs of every stripe, all of whom have helped shape the area as it is today—a microcosm of Chicago itself, a neighborhood of big shoulders and rich contrast. Drawn to its ample green space, diverse housing options, culinary offerings, and nightlife, a new generation of residents and visitors are discovering what long-time fixtures have always known—that Uptown is a community where **all** belong.

As the neighborhood continues to grow, Uptown leaders and residents are united in a shared vision for the future: re-investing in the community, embracing new opportunities for thoughtful development, harnessing the passion and creativity of its people to address challenges as they arise, and celebrating the stories of all who live, work, and play in Uptown.

To celebrate this past year's successes, Uptown United and the Uptown Chamber of Commerce have published this **2024 Year in Review** to highlight the many activities, events, and stories that have continued to make Uptown a diverse, vibrant, thriving, and strong Chicago neighborhood.

# LIVE IT UP



# Uptown United & Uptown Chamber of Commerce

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Our organizations share a mission to build a strong, unified business environment; facilitate economic development; and strengthen community—all to nurture a diverse, vibrant, and thriving Uptown.

Uptown's business association since 1923, the Uptown Chamber of Commerce is one of Chicago's oldest Chambers. While our focus is business development and promotion, we also recognize the cultural richness of our community to help make all of Uptown thrive.

Uptown United assists local businesses, investors, and community organizations, helping stimulate economic development to strengthen the community's economic base, and address broad issues pertaining to quality of life for Uptown's diverse population.

Uptown United also administers Uptown's Special Service Area (SSA #34), a special taxing district that funds additional services, such as neighborhood beautification, within its boundaries. To learn more about our organizations and services visit [exploreuptown.org](https://exploreuptown.org)

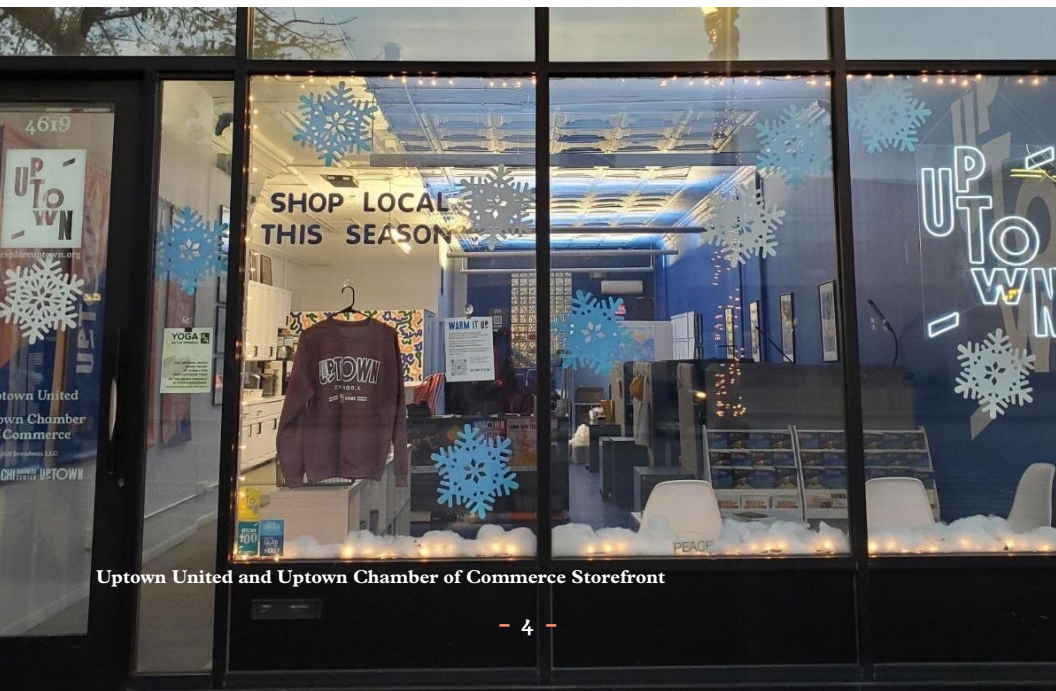
# Small Business Storefront Activation

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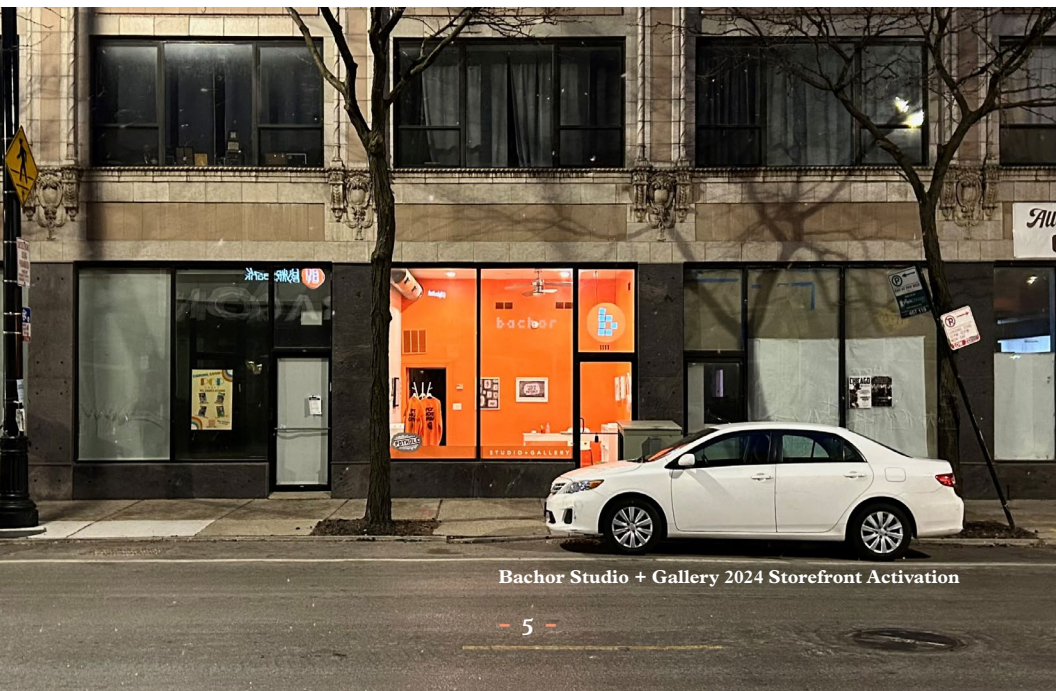
The COVID-19 pandemic left significant increases in commercial corridor vacancy rates across the City of Chicago. Brick and mortar businesses that rely on foot traffic to drive sales were particularly harmed as commercial corridors across the city saw major reductions in economic activity. In 2024, Uptown United was one of fourteen (14) community and economic development organizations to be awarded a grant as part of the Small Business Storefront Activation Program.

Our organizations worked with small business owners and landlords to provide rapid relief to small businesses by activating three (3) vacant storefronts into burgeoning business spaces with the goal to boost local spending and draw additional foot traffic to commercial corridors across Uptown.

One storefront is now home to the Chicago Fair Trade Store and Museum, whose mission is to inspire visitors to use their voice and spending power to demand ethically and sustainability-made products. In this interactive and immersive space, visitors learn about the historical roots of injustice in international trade and business, how fair trade provides a people- and planet- friendly alternative, and Chicago's important role in the global labor rights movement.



Uptown United and Uptown Chamber of Commerce Storefront



Bacher Studio + Gallery 2024 Storefront Activation



# Special Events

Neighborhood special events provide a measurable benefit to the community and foster community growth and development. With a goal to increase public awareness of Uptown's unique history and culture, Uptown United and the Uptown Chamber of Commerce manage and sponsor public initiatives that enhance the community within Uptown.

Each year Uptown United, through the Uptown SSA, also sponsors several community events throughout the neighborhood. Any business, organization, or individual planning a free outdoor public event within the Uptown SSA boundary is eligible to apply to the Community Events Grant Program. Preference is given to businesses, organizations, and individuals that reside within the district.

In 2024 the **Argyle Night Market** returned with its largest attendance to date. Argyle businesses opened their doors late every Thursday evening in July and August so the Uptown community could show its support. The markets featured weekly live entertainment including a diverse offering of musical acts and cultural performances.

In 2024 we also hosted the fifth annual **Uptown Art Walk** which brought more color and vibrancy to Uptown's streets with over fifty mural painted live on one weekend!

Many of these programs were partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

For more information about Uptown United's events, visit [exploreuptown.org/events](https://exploreuptown.org/events) or call 773.878.1064.



Yoga on the Triangle funded by RTA's Station Activation Grant



# Our Events

## Uptown United

EVENT	LOCATION	ATTENDANCE
Lunar New Year Parade	Argyle Street	5,000+
Uptown Art Walk	Uptown	5,000+
State of Uptown	Furama	100+
Argyle Night Markets	Argyle Street	35,000+
Casino Uptown	Aragon Ballroom	400+

**TOTAL ATTENDANCE** 45,500+

## Uptown Chamber of Commerce

EVENT	LOCATION	ATTENDANCE
Networking & Business Seminars	Multiple	1,000+
Toast of Uptown Wine Walk	Buena Park	400+
Taste of Uptown Dinner Crawl	Wilson/Broadway	600+
Winter Walk on Wilson	Wilson Avenue	2,000+

**TOTAL ATTENDANCE** 4,000+

# SHAKE IT UP



# 35,000 +

More than 35,000 people attended the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Argyle Night Market



# Marketing

Telling Uptown’s story, building neighborhood pride, and highlighting our amazing local businesses are key to achieving our mission. In 2024, Uptown United and the Uptown Chamber of Commerce made strides in sharing our community with Chicago and the world. With features in the Chicago Sun Times, Chicago Magazine, NBC5, WGN, and many more, we have amplified our reach.

## Digital Marketing

CHANNELS	VISITS / FOLLOWERS / SUBSCRIBERS
Website	100,000+ unique visits to homepage
Facebook	5,000+ followers
Instagram	11,000+ followers
E-newsletter	5,000+ subscribers
TOTAL	121,000+

## Print Marketing

MATERIALS	REACH
Neighborhood Guides	20,000+ distributed
Uptown Food Guides	10,000+ distributed
Uptown Stickers + Posters	5,000+ distributed
TOTAL REACH	35,000+

## Media

In 2024, Uptown United and the Uptown Chamber of Commerce reached an estimated 10+ **million** people through mentions of our programs in the media. Our programs were mentioned regularly in neighborhood media and also were featured in the Chicago Sun Times, Chicago Magazine, NBC5, WGN, WBEZ, Crain’s Chicago Business, WTTW, and other major media outlets.

10,000,000 +

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Uptown Stickers available at the Argyle Night Market





Landscape Winter Displays

# Public Way Improvements

The largest portion of the Uptown SSA's budget addresses cleanliness. This includes supplementary snow removal, litter abatement, and graffiti removal. Other beautification efforts include the maintenance of sidewalk planters, installation of seasonal plantings in landscape containers, and tree trimming. The Uptown SSA also funds the installation of decorative light pole banners and custom bike racks.

## Clean It Up

### ACTIVITY

Litter Abatement

Graffiti Removal

Snow Removal

### IMPACT

15,000+ bags of trash removed

4,000+ bags of recyclables recovered

4,000+ graffiti tags removed

500+ crosswalks and bus stops cleared

## Green It Up

### ACTIVITY

Landscape Containers

Sidewalk Planters

Decorative Banners

### IMPACT

1,500+ square feet of seasonal plantings installed

6,600+ square feet of landscaping maintained

170+ neighborhood banners installed

125+ sub-neighborhood banners installed

325+ holiday banners installed

Interested in sponsoring a street-pole banner?

Visit [exploreuptown.org/banners](https://exploreuptown.org/banners)

or call 773.878.1064.

# GREEN IT UP



# Business Services

Uptown's premier business association since 1923, the Uptown Chamber of Commerce works to nurture a diverse, vibrant, and thriving Uptown. All businesses and organizations that join the Chamber have exclusive access to a suite of services. In addition to the services below, the Uptown Chamber of Commerce is a hub for information about doing business in Uptown.

If you are not already a member, visit [exploreuptown.org/join](https://exploreuptown.org/join) to learn more!

## Marketing and Promotion

- Business listings on [exploreuptown.org](https://exploreuptown.org) and printed neighborhood guide
- Ribbon-cutting ceremonies with local elected officials
- Regular business and consumer newsletters
- Social media and newsletter mentions
- Neighborhood promotions

## Connection and Community

- Monthly networking events
- Personal introductions and referrals

## Business Services / Technical Assistance

- Educational seminars and workshops
- Business advocacy and government relations
- Permitting, licensing, zoning, and business location assistance
- Free notary service
- Neighborhood retail market and demographic data
- Access to commercial real estate database

## Special Events

- Sponsorship, booth space, and promotional involvement for events such as Toast of Uptown, Winter Walk on Wilson, Taste of Uptown, Uptown Art Week, and more!
- Special event and social service volunteer opportunities



Qideas' Renovated Storefront



# Grant & Rebate Programs

Uptown United offers a number of grant and rebate programs to local business and property owners within the Uptown SSA boundary. Rebates can be awarded to owners who make exterior improvements or security enhancements to their property. These programs are intended for business or property owners who may be limited in their funding with the goal to help leverage funds in order to upgrade, preserve, or restore storefronts and display windows or install creative signage to enhance the overall aesthetic of the district.

Uptown United and the Uptown Chamber of Commerce also provide assistance to business and property owners who are interested in the City of Chicago’s Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF) grant program, COVID-19 small business relief programs, and other financial tools to support our businesses. Additionally, to capture and convey Uptown’s unique identity and sense of place, Uptown United administers a Public Art Grant Program.

## Grant and Rebate Program Assistance

PROGRAM	NUMBER ASSISTED	FUNDING COMMITTED	TOTAL INVESTMENT
Curb Appeal Rebate	6 businesses	\$20,000 +	\$40,000 +
Security Rebate	8 businesses	\$10,000 +	\$20,000 +
Public Art Grant	60 artists	\$50,000 +	\$50,000 +
TOTAL	74	\$80,000 +	\$110,000 +

For more information about Uptown United’s Grant and Rebate Programs, visit [exploreuptown.org](https://exploreuptown.org) or call 773.878.1064.

PAINT IT UP



\$80,000 +

In 2024, Uptown United helped to secure over \$80,000 in funding for local businesses and artists.

Rodney Duran Mural at Racine and Leland





100+

In 2024, Uptown United hosted or participated in over 100 meetings related to construction, planning, and safety.

# Community Planning

As Uptown's community economic development organization, Uptown United leads efforts to facilitate economic development through smart urban planning. This includes facilitating strategic and master planning projects and participating in numerous tasks forces, steering committees, and construction meetings.

## Lead Role in Community Planning

### ACTIVITY

Development  
Partners  
Committee

Entertainment  
District Task Force

Argyle Street  
Task Force

Tax Increment  
Financing 101 Webinar

### ROLE

Monthly meetings with developers, Chicago  
Transit Authority, Chicago Department of  
Transportation, and others

Conducted monthly visioning sessions, giving  
participants an opportunity to share their thoughts

Conducted monthly visioning sessions, giving  
participants an opportunity to share their thoughts

Hosted a webinar to break down this funding  
mechanism and explain its fundamentals

## Participation in Community Planning

### ACTIVITY

Tapestry 360 Health  
Community Advisory Board

Cook County State's  
Attorney CJC

CTA Red-Purple  
Modernization and  
LBMM Projects

North Lake Shore  
Drive Reconstruction

### ROLE

Quarterly meetings between Tapestry 360 Health  
Center clinics staff and other service providers

Bi-monthly Community Justice Center meetings  
with 19th and 20th Chicago Police Districts

Business assistance and informational meetings  
related to the Lawrence to Bryn Mawr  
Modernization (LBMM) Project

Task Force meetings related to IDOT's North  
Lake Drive reconstruction planning project



# Economic Development

Uptown United and our Development Partners committee regularly meet with elected officials, government agencies, private developers, nonprofit organizations, and business owners to facilitate economic development in Uptown. We have a shared vision for the future: reinvesting in the community, embracing new opportunities for thoughtful development, harnessing the passion and creativity of Uptown's people to address challenges as they arise, and celebrating the stories of all who live, work, and play in Uptown.

Public investment is rebuilding Uptown's transit and streets, enhancing its vibrancy. More than \$1.3 billion in public infrastructure investments have recently been completed, are under construction, or will be breaking ground soon in Uptown. Private investment continues to make Uptown a great place to do business as well. More than 2,300 new residential units are proposed or under construction in the neighborhood, along with more than 100,000 square feet of new commercial space. Private development includes market-rate housing, commercial, and office development, as well as affordable housing, arts, and social service organizations. This private development ensures continued vibrancy and growth in the neighborhood for years to come.

## 1.3 billion +

More than \$1.3 billion in public infrastructure investments have recently been completed, are under construction, or will be breaking ground soon in Uptown.



**UNDER CONSTRUCTION:** The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) has begun the rebuild of four stations including Lawrence and Argyle as part of its \$2.1 billion Red and Purple Modernization (RPM) Project.



**RECENTLY COMPLETED:** The Portrait is a five-story, mixed-use development at Sheridan and Sunnyside which includes 59 residential units, 7,000 square feet of commercial space, and 35 parking spaces.



**BREAKING GROUND SOON:** In restoring the Wilson Theater, the Double Door will build out a music venue with two mezzanine levels while a bank vault in the basement will be turned into a lounge with a bar.



## New Businesses

More than 50 businesses and organizations opened, joined the Chamber, or expanded in Uptown in 2024. Highlights include:

- Doggy Glam Boutique
- Help at Home
- Studio Within Salon Spa
- Lakeview Church of Christ
- 1895 Media
- SigmaZone Analytics
- Peniel Group International
- Century 21 Realty Associates
- Chicago Flavas
- Inspired Youth
- Old National Bank
- Rayito De Sol
- Rhonda Wong-Calace Group
- Muscle & Joint Physical Therapy
- Izora Contemporary
- Carlos Herrera Accounting and Bookkeeping Services
- Hello Thai
- Engel & Völkers Chicago
- Chicago Fair Trade
- Dark Tropics Studios
- Fauna Veterinary Care
- Noren, Nordling, and Associates
- The Bark Of The Town
- Merrill Lynch
- V.I.P Therapy Bodywork
- African Wonderland Imports
- Drishti Law
- Cresta Solutions: Consulting & Facilitation
- Pho 777
- Arogya Aesthetics and Wellness
- Fertile Ground Legal
- Sidewalk Dog
- Nabala Cafe
- Judith Mayer Creative
- Illinois Autism Center
- Dodomi Rotary Sushi and Ramen
- Sol Salon & Spa Chicago
- Cuppypcakes Early Learning Academy
- Joel Hall Dancers & Center
- Michuu Ethiopian Restaurant Corp
- LTK Insurance Services
- Mutual Ground Mediation
- Your Coach Through Life
- Fat Miilk
- Breakfast House
- Adobe
- Uplifting Melodies Tutoring
- The Monogram Collective
- Small Business Advocacy Council
- Keeshin Inspection Services
- Poor Boy Rich Taste
- Community Counseling Centers of Chicago
- We Blend It Nutrition Cafe
- Radically Blended Services
- Cloud & Bunny

## Boards and Commission

A special thanks to the Uptown United Board of Directors, Uptown Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Uptown Special Service Area (SSA) #34 Commission, and Annual Sponsors. We'd also like to thank all of the committees, sponsors, businesses, property owners, and volunteers who helped make all of the events and programs highlighted in this 2024 Year in Review possible. Thank you!

### Uptown United – Board of Directors

**Chair:** Jacqueline Loewe, *Sheridan Park Consulting*

**Vice-Chair:** Jackie Taylor, *Black Ensemble Theater*

**Treasurer:** Scott Baskin, *Small Business Advocacy Council*

**Secretary:** Jackie Zanders, *Illinois Action for Children*

Maria Barnes, *Uptown Bikes*

Edward (Ned) Budd, *Thorek Memorial Hospital*

Don Cortelyou, *Wintrust Bank – Uptown*

Amy Crawford, *Cook County State's Attorney's Office*

Nadia Geigler, *The Admiral at the Lake*

Shawn Jackson, *Harry S Truman College*

Lindsay Marciniak, *CCS Fundraising*

Tam Van Nguyen, *Chinese Mutual Aid Association*

Paul Tsang, *Hon Kee Restaurant*

Antonia Mills Wesselink, *Antonia L. Mills, Attorney at Law, PC*

Sam Coady, *CME Group (retired)*

Tressa Feher, *Sellers Dorsey*

Alex Wolking, *Alex Wolking, Inc. | Keller Williams ONEChicago*

Rhea Yapp, *Chinese Mutual Aid Association*



G&S Supermarket Ribbon Cutting



## Uptown Chamber of Commerce – Board of Directors

**Chair:** Jackie Taylor, *Black Ensemble Theater*

**Vice-Chair:** Liz Deboni, *Wintrust Bank*

**Treasurer:** Rajan Shahi, *Chinese Mutual Aid Association*

**Secretary:** Janet Toliver, *Mind Body Defense*

Danielle Wallington-Harris, *Harry S Truman College*

Stephanie Foerster, *Ensemble Media*

Lucio DiPaolo, *Rocchetta Inc.*

Jennifer Pham, *Mini Tx Pharmacy*

Adel Shaw, *Spoil Me Salon*

Jensen Allen, *Graceland Cemetery and Arboretum*

Alexis Zimmer, *Alexis Zimmer State Farm Insurance*

Mohammad Abuhashish, *Uptown Deli*

Kenny Lau, *Rakkan Ramen*

Toni Coke, *Bodi Shak*

## Uptown Special Service Area – Commission

**Chair:** Terry Tuohy, *Weiss Memorial Hospital*

**Vice-Chair:** Patti Eick-Hutzel, *Residential Property Owner*

**Treasurer:** Matthew Ruffi, *Chicago Market*

**Secretary:** Noreen Keeney, *Residential Property Owner*

Kelly Cheng, *Sun Wah BBQ Restaurant*

Dominic Irpino, *Irpino Real Estate*

Todd Allen Israel, *Todd Allen Israel Architect LLC*

Nick Pinto, *Cedar Street / FLATS*

Lesley Showers, *Institute of Cultural Affairs*

Karl Sullivan, *Wilson Abbey*

## Annual Sponsors

**Gold Sponsor:** Graceland Cemetery

**Bronze Sponsors:** Wintrust Bank Uptown, Old National Bank

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Merchandise Collaboration with Eddie Oppong





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