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## **Thirty-Seven City of Albany Small Businesses and Nonprofits Receive more than \$600,000 in Building Improvement Grants**

*Through City of Albany's American Rescue Plan Act Efforts, Capitalize Albany Awards Flexible, Reimbursement Grants for Investments that Support Ongoing Post-Covid Recovery Efforts*

ALBANY – Following a highly competitive and thorough application and review process, \$635,000 in Small Business Building Improvement Grant Program (BIG) awards were announced today, 11 a.m. at Albany City Hall, to support 34 businesses and three nonprofit organizations, all located throughout 15 different City of Albany neighborhoods. The BIG Program was designed to support, attract and grow small businesses citywide. Administered by the City's economic development organization Capitalize Albany Corporation, the program is made possible through the City of Albany's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding process.

Lincoln Pharmacy, located at 300 Morton Ave. in Albany's South End neighborhood was one of the more than 30 awarded businesses. As the first award to be recognized, its Pharmacy Manager Zarina Jalal gave remarks at the announcement event on the impact of the BIG Program at Lincoln Pharmacy.

The pharmacy was awarded \$4,999 under the Microgrant track – a streamlined and targeted portion of the Program focused on smaller, tactical investments with outsized impact to enhance program accessibility with less application and reporting requirements. Lincoln Pharmacy will use the funding to replace an aging robotic pill dispensing system which has been costly to maintain, with a new photographic pill counting device. Ms. Jalal indicates that in addition to the direct benefit of upgrading the equipment, the staff hours previously allocated to machine operations and maintenance can now be reallocated to patient care.

Like Lincoln Pharmacy, themes of tangible upgrades, operational efficiency, and expansion of services run throughout the awarded projects, all of which are detailed below.

BIG awards prioritized filling needs outlined in the City's 2021 COVID-19 Recovery Task Force Final Report, with 85 percent of the 34 small businesses awarded identified as disadvantaged



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business enterprises (DBEs) including minority, women and veteran-owned operations. Three nonprofit, community-serving organizations also received an award.

This citywide program will support businesses in 15 Albany neighborhoods including in each of the Neighborhood Strategy Areas (NSAs) designated by the Albany Community Development Agency (ACDA) such as Arbor Hill, West Hill, North Albany and Albany's South End neighborhood. More than 90 percent of awardees are located within an NSA or a distressed "Qualified" Census Tract as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The BIG Program prioritizes these geographies and businesses that serve low-to-moderate-income areas, bringing critical funding to these strategically identified neighborhoods. The Program provides access to critical funding necessary for aspiring entrepreneurs and new businesses to get off the ground in the City of Albany and for existing Albany businesses to grow.

The application process opened January 11, Program Intake and Eligibility Screening Questionnaires were accepted through February 10, and applicants deemed eligible were provided a full program application. Final BIG program applications, including any required documentation, were accepted through February 17 – the final deadline for the program.

Through the City of Albany's ARPA funding process under the objectives identified by the City's COVID-19 Recovery Task Force, \$750,000 was invested into the program for the award of flexible, reimbursable grants for capital investments and support the cost of the Program's administration.

From the opening of the program's application process in January Corporation staff provided technical assistance, hosted webinars and participated in local small business open-house workshops and a number of other public events. Capitalize Albany received an overwhelming response to the program, with more than 200 Intake and Eligibility Screening Questionnaires submitted for determination of eligibility. The Program was highly competitive, and more than 90 final applications totaling more than \$1.9 million in funding requests were reviewed, scored and processed.

Grant administration staff will be available to assist awarded applicants as they complete their projects. For projects that did not receive an award, Corporation staff is available to consult with applicants to find other programs that may provide financial and technical assistance that fits their needs. Immediate opportunities may include Albany County's exciting new ARPA funding opportunity in partnership with the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region or BIG's complementary grant program, the Small Business Vitality Assistance Program is providing financial and technical assistance for small businesses' non-capital needs through a partnership



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of the Downtown Albany Business Improvement District, Central Avenue Business Improvement District and the Albany Small Business Development Center.

BIG Program grants were awarded to eligible applicants with qualified projects to assist with costs associated with capital investments. Eligible projects under the program’s guidelines include but are not limited to interior and exterior renovations for commercial use, and/or machinery, furniture, fixtures and equipment purchases. Grantees will receive funding for projects including the acquisition of electronic point-of-sale systems, kitchen appliances, production and manufacturing equipment, interior and exterior lighting, and structural and cosmetic interior and exterior improvements.

Awardees that applied for Major Project Grants of \$5,000 up to \$25,000 for capital investments in their businesses benefited from a streamlined application process and assistance from grant administration staff in completion of their applications. In an effort to provide small businesses with the most efficient process possible, applicants for Microgrants of \$1,500 to \$4,999 had even more limited application and monitoring requirements.

Grant funds will be issued as a reimbursement upon a project’s completion.

BIG is the latest program to continue Capitalize Albany’s successful track record of small business assistance. Throughout 2020 and 2021 the Corporation administered more than \$500,000 in direct COVID-recovery grants to small businesses through its Small Business Adaptation Program. Its currently available programs include the Neighborhood Retail, Downtown Albany Retail, Amplify Albany, and its City of Albany Small Business Façade Improvement grant program which is planned to reopen to new applicants later this fall. These grant programs are made possible with support from the City of Albany Capital Resource Corporation and ACDA.

Beyond the BIG Program, since 2016 Capitalize Albany has made grants totaling more than \$1.6 million to assist small businesses and organizations throughout the City of Albany. More than 90 percent of which has been awarded within NSAs and Qualified Census Tracts. These programs have leveraged more than \$3.3 million in new, private investment throughout the Capital City.

More information is available at [www.CapitalizeAlbany.com/grants](http://www.CapitalizeAlbany.com/grants).

| <b>Business Name</b>      | <b>Description of Awarded Activities</b>                    | <b>Award Amount</b> |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
| All Plus Table Tennis LLC | Acquisition of equipment to support expanding customer base | \$4,999.00          |



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| ARE Event Productions, Inc.    | Rehabilitation of a vacant building into home of Albany Running Exchange                                   | \$25,000.00 |
| Banh Mi 47                     | Acquisition of kitchen equipment to expand capacity, and offerings   | \$10,144.89 |
| Bombshell Midtown Inc          | Exterior signage and furniture to support new location   | \$17,110.00 |
| Capital District NY Handyman   | Renovations to increase capacity for manufacturing custom-built products                                   | \$25,000.00 |
| Capital Region GPR             | Equipment acquisition to detect underground utilities/objects  | \$4,968.00  |
| Caroline Corrigan Studio       | Equipment acquisition to enhance operations/bring processes in-house                                       | \$3,897.92  |
| Delaware Supply                | Equipment acquisition to expand services, capacity, and offerings  | \$4,792.23  |
| Edens Rose Foundation          | Renovation/activation of vacant space for community arts use   | \$24,849.20 |
| Emack and Bolio's              | Interior renovations and redesign  | \$24,330.22 |
| Faith Creative Names           | Equipment acquisition to bring processes in-house  | \$22,498.20 |
| Fidens Brewing Company LLC     | Renovations and redesign including furniture to support new location                                       | \$25,000.00 |
| Foodscraps360, LLC             | Equipment acquisition to expand service area for compost pick-up   | \$25,000.00 |
| Hair we r                      | Renovations to expand capacity   | \$25,000.00 |
| Halo Wholesale Food Co. LLC    | Equipment acquisition to increase capacity and production  | \$25,000.00 |
| Hive of Hope, Inc.             | Exterior signage and improvements to create outdoor recreational space                                     | \$25,000.00 |
| Image Quilt Productions, Inc.  | Interior renovations and redesign to expand creative arts opportunities                                    | \$24,750.00 |
| Irie Vybez LLC                 | Acquisition of kitchen equipment to increase capacity and efficiency                                       | \$6,300.00  |
| Irish American Heritage Museum | Interior renovations and acquisition of kitchen appliances to increase opportunities for public engagement | \$25,000.00 |
| Kema's Kreations LLC           | Equipment acquisition to bring manufacturing processes in-house  | \$4,999.00  |
| Lark Hall                      | Interior improvements to create/expand dining and entertaining spaces                                      | \$25,000.00 |
| Lark Street Photo              | Equipment acquisition to enhance services  | \$2,771.03  |



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| Lincoln Pharmacy                    | Equipment acquisition to increase efficiency and enhance patient care                          | \$4,999.00  |
| MAC Equipment LLC                   | Interior redesign allowing for additional capacity to create new jobs                          | \$25,000.00 |
| Meatball Martini Madison, LLC       | Exterior façade restoration and interior renovation to support new location of Hattie's        | \$25,000.00 |
| Moliendo Cafe Restaurant            | Equipment acquisition to improve efficiency and upgrade interior                               | \$24,116.08 |
| New Scotland Spirits                | Interior improvements for establishment of new tasting room for local beverage manufacturer    | \$25,000.00 |
| Nor Jewelers LLC                    | Equipment acquisition to bring production/testing processes in-house                           | \$21,971.00 |
| Power Beauty Unlimited LLC          | Acquisition of machinery to increase efficiency and production                                 | \$2,655.87  |
| PWR Performance Wellness Recovery   | Exterior and interior signage  | \$12,622.00 |
| Salvage & Shine                     | Equipment acquisition to increase capacity and production                                      | \$4,424.91  |
| The Hair Gallery                    | Exterior and interior improvements to enhance visibility, increase capacity and salon services | \$8,510.69  |
| The Hollow Bar + Kitchen            | Interior redesign to increase capacity and services  | \$25,000.00 |
| The Kenmore Ballroom                | Equipment acquisition to expand and diversify event opportunities                              | \$20,050.98 |
| The Lost Boys Kitchen               | Equipment acquisition for the establishment of a commercial kitchen                            | \$25,000.00 |
| The Yard-Hatchet House & Bar        | Acquisition of kitchen equipment to expand services and offerings                              | \$17,327.30 |
| Yono's and dp an American Brasserie | Interior painting and communications equipment upgrades  | \$12,000.00 |

**Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan:** "Last year, our 41 COVID Recovery Task Force members engaged in a comprehensive and inclusive process and found that access to capital for both existing small businesses and start-ups was a top priority," **said Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan.** "The BIG Program is just one of a series of initiatives that will fulfill that goal and ensure our small businesses which contribute so significantly to the fabric of our city have the support they need to thrive. Thank you to Capitalize Albany Corporation and the team led by President Sarah Reginelli for quickly and effectively organizing this impactful program and helping small businesses thrive."



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**Capitalize Albany Corp. president Sarah Reginelli:** “Our small businesses employ local residents, provide critical local services and directly create the unique local character and environment that makes our community special. They are essential to our local quality of place. Thank you to the City of Albany, Mayor Sheehan, the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force and ARPA Leadership Team, Albany Common Council, our state and federal partners for continuing to support our team in assisting Albany’s aspiring entrepreneurs, startups, small businesses and nonprofits amidst what has been a challenging economic recovery,” **said Capitalize Albany Corporation president Sarah Reginelli.** “The investments made possible through the ARPA and the BIG Program will significantly strengthen these awarded businesses along with the neighborhoods and commercial districts they serve by fostering jobs, economic vitality, and growth in Albany.”

**Congressman Paul D. Tonko:** “When we support our local businesses, we support our communities as a whole. Many of these engines of our economy were pushed to the brink because of the COVID pandemic, and continue to feel the financial impacts from that crisis,” **said Congressman Paul D. Tonko.** “I took action alongside my colleagues to pass the American Rescue Plan Act and bring needed relief to help get our local businessowners and non-profits back on their feet and ensure they had all the tools necessary to continue their vital services for our communities. I’m grateful to all our Albany leaders and Capitalize Albany for taking action to deliver this federal investment through the BIG Program. I look forward to seeing the ways this vital ARPA investment continues to support and strengthen our Capital Region.”

**Assemblymember Patricia Fahy:** “Albany’s Building Improvement Grant (BIG) program, made possible by the City of Albany and with support from its COVID-19 Recovery Task Force members, will revitalize and catapult many of our locally-owned small businesses to success,” **said Assemblymember Patricia Fahy (D—Albany).** “This is yet another example of Albany’s commitment to building back better, collaboratively, in a post-COVID world that hit our small businesses—the cornerstones of our communities—hard. I look forward to seeing the BIG program’s success in our communities and neighborhoods, and commend Mayor Kathy Sheehan, Capitalize Albany, and the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force for their work in supporting our area’s small business owners and entrepreneurs.”



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**Assemblymember John T. McDonald III:** “The Small Business Building Improvement Grant Program (BIG) will support local small businesses while also cutting through some of the red tape and bureaucracy that small businesses face on a regular basis, while focusing on disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs) including minority, women and veteran-owned operations,” **said Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh.** “As a pharmacist and former small business owner, I fully appreciate the microgrant awarded to Lincoln Pharmacy that will create efficiency and allow the pharmacists to focus on patient care rather than attending to outdated equipment. Thank you to the City of Albany, Capitalize Albany, the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force, and all of the partners who worked to fund, create, and implement this important program.”

**Senator Neil Breslin:** “Small businesses are the bedrock of Albany’s commercial sector, and these ARPA-funded grants will play a critical role in promoting the continued prosperity of our city’s neighborhoods in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic,” **said Senator Neil Breslin.** “I thank Capitalize Albany for championing equitable, strategic community investment in this latest round of funding, and I extend my congratulations to all who received an award through the BIG program.”

**Councilmember Sergio Adams:** “I would also like to congratulate the more than 30 businesses and nonprofit organizations, all located throughout 15 different City of Albany neighborhoods, that have been awarded grants under this program,” **said City of Albany Councilmember Sergio Adams.** “This is a significant accomplishment and an indication of the potential for growth and success that exists within our city. The Small Business Building Improvement Grant Program plays an important role in supporting small businesses and nonprofit organizations across Albany, and we are proud to be part of a community that values and invests in the success of its local businesses. We look forward to seeing the positive impact that these grants will have on our city and its residents. Once again, congratulations to the Capitalize Albany team and all of the businesses and organizations awarded under the Small Business Building Improvement Grant Program.”

**Albany COVID Task Force Co-chairs, Mike Whalen, Jahkeen Hoke:** “This program exemplifies the work of the entire 41-member COVID-19 Recovery Task Force and its commitment to helping our city build back better from the unprecedented impact of the Covid pandemic,” **said Task Force co-chairs Mike Whalen and Jahkeen Hoke.** “Through smart, focused, and well-planned investments like this, we will be able to continue reaching and helping our local small businesses, entrepreneurs and city residents.”



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**Lincoln Pharmacy Manager Zarina Jalal:** “We are looking forward to using the BIG program funding to invest in equipment that will help us more efficiently process prescriptions,” **said Lincoln Pharmacy manager Zarina Jalal.** “With the time and energy saved we'll be launching programs, like the national diabetes prevention program, to advance the health of our community. We are very grateful for the support of friends and neighbors that have supported Lincoln Pharmacy for the past 90 years and for the effort of everyone involved in making funding opportunities like this available to businesses like ours.”

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This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by the City of Albany.

About Capitalize Albany Corporation: A catalyst for economic growth, Capitalize Albany Corporation facilitates transformational development projects, serving as the City of Albany’s economic development organization. A registered 501(c) (3) non-profit organization implementing programs and resources to create, retain, and attract business in the City of Albany. [www.capitalizealbany.com](http://www.capitalizealbany.com).