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NEWS RELEASE

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Atlantic City Honors Small Business Owners After Awarding \$900K in Micro Grants

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (March 13, 2026) – The City of Atlantic City celebrated the success of its recent Small Business Micro-Grant Program with a special reception on Thursday, March 12, 2026, honoring the recipients at Island Bar at Showboat Resort. The event brought together city leaders and entrepreneurs whose businesses benefited from the program’s investment in the local economy. Through the initiative, the city awarded \$900,000 in grant funding to 65 small businesses across all six Atlantic City wards, helping stabilize operations, retain jobs, and support growth.

Speakers at the reception included Mayor Marty Small, Sr., Bruce Weekes and Pamela Field with the city’s Division of Economic Development, City Council President Aaron 'Sporty' Randolph, City Council Vice President Kaleem Shabazz, the city’s Business Consultant Joe Molineaux, and Carmen Gates on behalf of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, who all recognized the program’s impact and the entrepreneurs themselves.

Funded in part through federal relief provided by the American Rescue Plan Act, the Atlantic City Small Business Micro-Grant Program was designed to help small, for-profit businesses located within city limits recover from the economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Since becoming mayor, I have made it clear that the Small Administration will do our best to support the Atlantic City business community,” said Mayor Small. “We have backed that commitment by using American Rescue Plan Act funds to invest directly in our local businesses. What began as a \$500,000 investment quickly grew when we saw the positive impact it was having across the city, leading us to nearly double our commitment.”

“This was truly a historic program spearheaded by Mayor Marty Small that allowed the city to put capital directly into the hands of our small business owners,” said Weekes. “This reception was

about supporting the entrepreneurs who received funding and recognizing the significant impact of this initiative. Years from now, we'll be able to look back at this program and see the great things these businesses have accomplished.”

Key metrics from the program demonstrate the meaningful impact on Atlantic City's small business community. An estimated 200 jobs were retained, and an additional 75 jobs were created, with more than one-third of the money going to startups. For the purposes of the program, a startup is defined as a business newly formed or in operation for fewer than three years.

The program also played a key role in strengthening commercial corridors in Atlantic City, with eleven Boardwalk businesses supported and eleven Atlantic Avenue businesses (four of them startups) receiving funding. In addition, the initiative supported a diverse range of local entrepreneurs. Three-quarters of the recipients are minority-owned, women-owned or veteran-owned businesses, and nearly half of the recipients are Black-owned businesses.

Each eligible business was able to receive grants of up to \$15,000 to help address pandemic-related financial hardship and strengthen long-term resilience. Funding helped cover expenses such as payroll, rent, mortgage payments, utilities, equipment, inventory, and other operational costs. Newer businesses and startups were required to submit a business plans in addition to demonstrating how the pandemic affected their operations.

The Atlantic City Division of Economic Development is also preparing to bring back the Small Business Academy this April. This free program is designed to support residents interested in starting a new business or growing an existing one. Participants gain valuable knowledge, resources, and guidance to help turn their ideas into successful ventures. To help prospective participants learn more, the city will host a virtual Information Session on March 25, 2026, at 6:00 PM. Any Atlantic City resident interested in the program is encouraged to attend the Information Session. Registration is available at www.acnj.gov.

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