

## Call to Creative Entrepreneurs

### ***Project Storefronts: Stimulating New Haven's Creative Economy***

**Location:** New Haven, Connecticut  
**Call type:** Artists, Artist teams, Non Profit Organizations, Small Start-Up Creative Industry entrepreneurs and businesses  
**Deadline:** Ongoing  
Proposals accepted in person or through mail (no email, faxes or online submissions):  
New Haven Festivals, Inc. c/o  
The Department of Arts, Culture & Tourism  
ATTN: Project Storefronts  
City of New Haven  
165 Church Street, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
New Haven, CT 06510

#### **PROJECT SUMMARY & SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

- I. Opportunity Summary
- II. Background Information  
City of New Haven: Connecticut's Creative & Cultural Capital  
Trends Utilizing Empty Commercial Spaces for the Arts
- III. Goals of the Project
- IV. Eligibility
- V. Parameters
- VI. Information Sessions
- VII. Application Review Process
- VIII. Timeline
- IX. Submission Process
- X. Submission Documents

#### **I. OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY**

The City of New Haven's Department of Arts, Culture and Tourism seeks proposals from individual artists/artist teams, not-for-profit arts organizations and for-profit creative entrepreneurs/start-up enterprises with missions and interests related to the arts and the

creative industries, to occupy and utilize empty retail space in imaginative and innovative ways with the ultimate goal of creating new for-profit businesses.

The program fosters collaboration among prospective entrepreneurs, property owners, the New Haven Economic Development Corporation and The City of New Haven.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### ***New Haven: Connecticut's Creative + Cultural Capital***

New Haven is the second-largest city in Connecticut, with more than 125,000 residents, 11,000 university students, and several major commercial districts both downtown and across the city. The greater New Haven region is home to more than 850,000 residents within only 600 square miles. New Haven's downtown has a diverse and dense residential population for a city its size, with more than 7,500 residents in the immediate downtown area.

New Haven, known as the ***Creative Capital of Connecticut***, takes pride in its artistic heritage. It has an impressive collection of arts and cultural institutions that rivals cities many times its size. In addition to the city's well-established professional theaters, museums, arts education entities, orchestras and chorales, New Haven is blessed with an abundance of small performing organizations, writers, musicians, poets, dancers, sculptors, painters, and designers of all types.

The creative spirit long known as "Yankee ingenuity" is alive and well in New Haven and bursting out in the usual and not-so-usual places. There is a bohemian underside to this small city that attracts large numbers of new residents in the form of students, young professionals, families, and empty-nesters who seek an active lifestyle in a lively urban environment.

New Haven is a "smart city" in many ways, and not just because five colleges and universities call it home. It is also an increasingly "green" city, with fabulous parks, a waterfront windmill, Zip Cars, and one of New England's largest cycling communities. Cafes, bookstores and neighborhood establishments are an important part of city life, and while New Haven boasts some the Northeast's finest architecture, there is also much affordable housing located in a broad cross section of interesting neighborhoods.

New Haven's public art includes more than 400 installations, including murals, sculpture, stained glass, and more pieces by local as well as world-renowned artists. From the trendy Artspace Center for Contemporary Art, which produces the largest Open Studios on the East Coast, to the two-week-long International Festival of Arts & Ideas, the city is rich with cultural opportunities.

### ***National Trends & the Benefits of Using Empty Commercial Spaces for Art***

The current economic recession has resulted in more empty storefronts in every city. Innovative communities across the nation are turning this trend into a creative opportunity, and New Haven has taken note. From Los Angeles' Phantom Gallery to New York's well-established *Swing Space* Program, artists, arts organizations and entrepreneurs are temporarily

transforming empty spaces into experimental laboratories and incubators for innovative retail, performances, exhibitions, and countless educational and entrepreneurial outlets. Many of these projects are spurring economic growth through new start-up businesses while fostering new creative communities.

### ***New Haven's Success to Date***

New Haven's own Project Storefronts program has already proven its value, providing creative entrepreneurs an opportunity to test market their products and business acumen before making permanent investments and commitments. Our current downtown location in the Ninth Square site on lower Chapel Street has offered a low-budget way for prospective entrepreneurs to demonstrate viability and tweak their business plans. By increasing foot traffic in the area and enlivening the street with vibrant, well-lit (even when closed) storefronts, the Program exposes the rental property to a greater number of potential long-term tenants. For more information and press coverage, visit [www.projectstorefronts.com](http://www.projectstorefronts.com)

Some examples of temporary experiments that have recently taken place in retail spaces, including New Haven's Project Storefronts, include:

- Art installations/galleries
- Special interest bookstores
- Arts & crafts workshops/educational uses
- Retail for creatively recycled, up-cycled wares
- Retail for handmade creations
- Live performances
- New technology/green goods
- Seasonal and holiday sales
- Filmmaking and screenings
- Urban gardening
- Food and other culinary-related uses
- Vintage clothing and housewares
- Numerous types of consignments

### **III. PROJECT GOALS:**

New Haven's goals for the project are:

1. To create visitor destinations in formerly empty spaces to drive new consumers into underutilized areas, increasing foot traffic and business to not only these spaces but neighboring ones as well
2. To raise awareness of New Haven's different commercial districts and help promote underutilized spaces to potential long-term tenants that may eventually create jobs and help expand the tax base
3. To grow interest in and awareness of New Haven's various design businesses, and to expand people's understanding and appreciation of the variety of creative endeavors that exist in our city

4. To encourage the growth and health of creativity in New Haven
5. To enliven New Haven neighborhoods by expanding commercial activity, making the City more attractive to potential residents, businesses, students and other artists
6. To facilitate and inspire new artistic, creative and/or entrepreneurial start-up businesses
7. To enhance New Haven's reputation as Connecticut's Creative Capital.

#### **IV. ELIGIBILITY**

Priority will be given to existing New Haven-based artists and organizations; however, proposals from Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island are also encouraged. Applicants do not need to be based in Connecticut, but during the project duration they should reside in or within commuting distance of New Haven.

#### **V. CONSIDERATIONS & REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICANTS**

The Project Storefronts Pilot Program, undertaken in 2010, has been seen as an important new initiative for New Haven. With only some minor revisions to the original Program, we are continuing to accept applications for current and future space(s). Due to the nature of securing temporary storefronts, locations may change depending on long-term rental interest.

Project Storefronts presents a unique opportunity for participants to realize projects, and refine marketing and business plans with support from the City's Office of Economic Development's small business professionals. This program enables creative start-up businesses to test their products and the viability of developing their business in a specific neighborhood.

Considerations:

- Project ideas that compete with – as opposed to complementing - neighboring businesses may not be considered, or may only be considered for a non-competitive location.
- Applicants must be flexible, recognizing the uncertain nature of operating under temporary leasing arrangements. Applicants must be prepared to move to a new location if or when long-term paying tenants are identified. Project Storefronts seeks to negotiate with commercial landlords for 90-day no-rent leases with 30-day renewal options.
- A stipend of up to \$500 may be given to selected applicants for space build-out including signage, lighting and other needs, based on final application, drawings and other submissions.
- Applicants must develop a formal Business Plan as part of the process. City of New Haven Small Business staff is available to assist with this and other small business questions.

- Successful applicants will be required to track visitors, sales and expenses, and submit a monthly report.
- Successful applicants must provide short-term general liability insurance and may be required to cover or share the cost of utilities depending on the project proposal and location. (City staff has information on low-cost insurance options.)
- Storefront locations change according to availability. Site selection will be based on personal interviews between DACT staff, landlords and applicants according to space needs, project proposal and other considerations.
- Successful applicants will be selected on a 90-day trial basis with an opportunity for successive 90-day renewals. As entrepreneurs become increasingly secure and successful, they will be subject to additional requirements and possible small, incremental payments to help offset project costs.
- Applicant(s) must be prepared to keep their project open at least five days and two evenings per week, including one weekend day/evening. A commitment to hosting one workshop or special event each month (with promotional and marketing assistance from Project Storefronts staff) is also required. Applicant(s) are also responsible for all cleaning, trash removal, etc. In shared storefront locations, applicants may choose to share responsibilities for maintaining store hours, cleaning, etc.

## **VI. INFORMATION SESSIONS**

Information sessions covering program details will be held periodically and applicants are encouraged to attend. Please contact the Project Storefronts Coordinator at (203) 946-2895 or [info@projectstorefrontsnewhaven.com](mailto:info@projectstorefrontsnewhaven.com) for more information.

## **VII. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS**

A jury comprised of individuals from the City of New Haven with input from professional artists and arts administrators, will review qualifying applications and judge on the following:

### ***Selection Criteria***

- Overall concept and project feasibility as represented in the application, proposed budgets and other submitted materials
- Quality of project proposal: innovative ideas/concepts, potential for creating excitement, driving traffic, stimulating interest in the project and the neighborhood
- How the applicant proposes to utilize, and contemporize the space, including innovative ideas for signage, lighting, furnishings, etc. to create interest and excitement about the project

- Artistic merit and professional record of achievement; previous successes
- Appropriateness of project for a temporary space
- How the project proposes to engage the neighborhood and increase/generate foot traffic
- Applicant’s flexibility and ability to adapt.

## VIII. TIMELINE

Applications will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, but in order to expedite Storefront activation, quick turnaround is anticipated (2-4 weeks) depending on applicant response numbers.

## IX. SUBMISSION PROCESS

Applicants should complete the following steps to be considered for a Storefront project.

- **STEP ONE:** FAMILIARIZE yourself with Project Storefronts’ goals, eligibility requirements and selection criteria. VISIT and EXPLORE the current Project Storefronts website ([www.projectstorefronts.com](http://www.projectstorefronts.com)) and SPEAK to current participants.
- **STEP TWO:** INVEST the time to explore whether you have what it takes to be an entrepreneur. Google “retail” and “small business” on the internet. There are lots of good sites that have information about small business and retail, starting with the U.S. Small Business Administration, [www.SBA.gov](http://www.SBA.gov). There is also good information on [www.about.com](http://www.about.com) and [www.businessonmain.msn.com](http://www.businessonmain.msn.com), as well as current articles on the Wall Street Journal ([www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)) and New York Times ([www.nyt.com](http://www.nyt.com)) sites.
- **STEP THREE:** DEVELOP your project concept more fully and begin to clarify your ideas. CONSIDER your ideal space requirements and other physical/fit-out needs of your project concept. IDENTIFY your target audience and ways you might best promote and market your idea.
- **STEP FOUR:** ATTEND an information session (or meet with Project Storefronts staff if info sessions are not immediately available) to get additional information, get questions answered, learn more about possible location details, and network with other potential applicants (you never know when you might meet someone with a similar idea with whom you can collaborate).
- **STEP FIVE:** DETERMINE whether your project/business idea would be a good fit for this program and if it is, COMPLETE and SUBMIT the application and required materials. Don’t hesitate to contact us with questions as they arise.

## X. SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS

Each applicant is required to supply the following documentation:

- Signed application form with sketches of proposed signage, storefront layout ideas, preliminary marketing plan and budgets
- Resume/CV outlining experience

- DVDs/CDs of relevant images
- Publicity for previous work
- Samples of products (if applicable)

All required application materials should be submitted in a folder. Folder and all contents should be labeled with applicant's business name (if applicable) and/or last name, first name, e-mail address, telephone and project concept title. Label each DVD/CD clearly with name and email address.

***Mail or Hand-Deliver to:***

New Haven Festivals Inc.  
Attn: Project Storefronts  
c/o The City of New Haven  
Department of Arts, Culture & Tourism  
165 Church Street, 6th Floor  
New Haven, CT 06510

**NOTE:** There is no application fee. Incomplete applications will not be considered. If you wish the return of any materials, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

## **QUESTIONS?**

Please submit questions in writing to the Project Storefronts Project Coordinator at [info@projectstorefrontsnewhaven.com](mailto:info@projectstorefrontsnewhaven.com) or 203.946.2895.

## **CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION**

### ***City's Rights Pertinent to This Solicitation***

The City reserves the right to reject any responses to this solicitation that do not meet the selection criteria. Failure to provide any of the required application materials shall be cause for the submission to be rejected as non-responsive.

The City reserves the right to cancel this solicitation, in whole or in part, at any time without prior notice and makes no representation that any applicant will be selected to perform the work solicited. Additionally, the City reserves the right to postpone the opening of responses to this solicitation for its own convenience, and to waive minor informalities or irregularities in any responses received.

The City accepts no financial responsibility for any costs or expenses incurred by any applicant in responding to this solicitation. All submissions may be kept by the City as public record and may be disclosed to third parties upon request therefore.