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## **The South East Chicago Commission Announces the 2024 Shirley J. Newsome Beautification Program Grant**

CHICAGO (**April 1, 2024**) - The South East Chicago Commission (SECC) with thanks to our partners at the Elizabeth Louise Smith Fund of the Chicago Community Trust and gifts from private donations are excited to announce the **2024 Shirley J. Newsome Beautification Program Grant**.

Formerly known as the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant, the program focuses on enhancing the physical attractiveness and walkability of Hyde Park, Kenwood, Oakland, Woodlawn, and Washington Park. Since 1999, nearly \$1,000,000 has been granted to over 200 projects representing community and faith-based organizations, block clubs, neighborhood schools, and park advisory councils to support neighborhood enhancement projects.

The program pays homage to former SECC Board President and community leader Shirley J. Newsome, who joined the SECC Board of Directors in 2006. For nearly 15 years, Ms. Newsome provided valuable insight, expertise, and guidance on how microgrants were dispersed. She directly impacted over 120 projects during her involvement with the program. Ms. Newsome served on the SECC Executive Board and on the Advisory Board through her passing in December 2022.

Executive Director Diane Burnham stated, "SECC is thrilled to offer these microgrants for a new season of community investment. We will continue to amplify Ms. Newsome's vision in changing the landscape of vacant lots and other public spaces and to work on changing the narrative of Chicago's South Side through placemaking efforts."

The **Grant Application** is open through Monday April 29, 2024. Grant values are based upon the proposed project, with a maximum amount of \$5,000 per organization. Proposed projects are required to be:

- Highly visible from the street
- Completed between June 3 – October 28, 2024
- Designed to physically enhance and build on the uniqueness and character of the neighborhood
- Executed as a way to strengthen civic pride and foster a strong sense of community
- Sustainable

Each proposal will be reviewed by a committee comprised of representatives from the community areas and the SECC. **Application deadline is Monday, April 29, 2024.**

Examples of previously funded projects:

- **Houston Park Chess** – The Jessie "Ma" Houston Park Advisory Council installed four chess tables at Jessie "Ma" Houston Park to nurture an interest that is flowering at the park. (Kenwood)
- **Woodlawn Botanical Nature Center** – The William G Hill Center for the Arts beautified the Woodlawn Botanical Nature Center connected to Hyde Park Academy High School at 63rd and Stony with unique pathways to view the collection of plant and fruit species, focusing on making them wheelchair accessible by master gardener, Bill Hill. (Woodlawn)
- **Paradise Garden Project by Salaam Community Wellness Center** – Paradise Garden Project enhanced its current organic garden by designing and creating a walkable urban educational garden center. The project aimed to educate visitors on the nutritional value of the produce in the garden. (Woodlawn)

For more information, please visit <https://www.secc-chicago.org/neighborhood-enhancement-grant/> or contact the us via email at [outreach@secc-chicago.org](mailto:outreach@secc-chicago.org) to learn more about this exciting opportunity.

#### **About South East Chicago Commission (SECC)**

SECC facilitates and supports economic development within Chicago's Southeast lakefront communities including Kenwood, Hyde Park, Oakland, Washington Park and Woodlawn. SECC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization fostering collaboration among businesses, organizations and anchor institutions to promote job creation, community investment and economic vitality.