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## **Helping Pawtucket's small businesses invest in HVAC upgrades - by Donald Grebien**

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Donald Grebien

Pawtucket's small businesses are the lifeblood of our city, but sometimes it can be difficult for them to make expensive capital expenditures. That's why I'm excited about a new program we've recently launched.

The Pawtucket Business Development Corp.'s (PBDC) new small business support grant program is focused on heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) improvements and COVID-19 resiliency for public-facing Pawtucket small businesses. Grants will help support small businesses make building/infrastructure alterations that improve or maintain good indoor air quality through ventilation with filtration, while providing thermal comfort. Eligible small businesses will be able to apply for up to \$50,000 to improve their HVAC systems to reduce the ongoing risks of COVID-19 transmission and other illnesses.

Public facing Pawtucket small businesses eligible for PBDC HVAC grants include but are not limited to most retail stores, restaurants, bakeries, cafés, delis, bars, barber shops, salons, fitness centers, and florists.

The PBDC and the city of Pawtucket will be coordinating with RISE Engineering to work with and provide improvements for the Pawtucket small business community. RISE Engineering is providing free energy efficiency assessments to businesses in Rhode Island. RISE has been selected by Rhode Island Energy to help Rhode Island customers access some of the most aggressive small-business incentives available anywhere in the U.S. These incentives can cover much of the cost of a project and eligible public facing small businesses will now be able to apply to the PBDC for gap financing.

Dozens of applications for the program have already been received, with decisions on the allocation of funding to be made in the first quarter of 2023. The new HVAC grant program is funded through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 funds allocated to the City of Pawtucket by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and is administered by the PBDC.

We're pleased to make this great new grant funding opportunity to Pawtucket's small businesses so they can upgrade their HVAC systems.

Donald Grebien is the mayor of the city of Pawtucket, R.I.

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