



MidTown Cleveland, Inc.
Small Business Development Manager
Full-Time

About MidTown Cleveland

MidTown Cleveland, Inc. is a dynamic and high-performing 501(c)(3) economic and community development corporation working across Cleveland's MidTown, AsiaTown, and Hough neighborhoods. MidTown is a place for connection, belonging, and the joyful celebration of culture, where stakeholders reinvest prosperity in the community, equity and inclusion are fundamental expectations, and innovation helps families realize long-promised dreams.

MidTown Cleveland works alongside residents, businesses, institutions, developers, and public-sector partners to support equitable neighborhood growth and strengthen the people, places, and businesses that make our neighborhoods unique.

Position Overview

MidTown Cleveland is seeking a Small Business Development Manager to lead the organization's efforts to support, retain, and strengthen small businesses and retail-facing businesses throughout MidTown and AsiaTown.

This is a highly relationship-oriented and community-facing position. The Small Business Development Manager will serve as a trusted resource and connector for neighborhood business owners, building relationships, understanding their needs, helping them navigate challenges, connecting them to resources and opportunities, and advocating for a strong and vibrant commercial environment.

While this position will support businesses across MidTown and AsiaTown, the majority of the small businesses and retail-facing businesses that MidTown Cleveland serves are located in AsiaTown. The Small Business Development Manager will therefore spend significant time working directly with AsiaTown's diverse business community, including immigrant- and family-owned businesses. The ideal candidate will demonstrate strong cultural competency and an authentic interest in working across cultures and communities. Fluency in Mandarin or Cantonese is strongly preferred.

The Small Business Development Manager will support efforts to strengthen neighborhood retail corridors, including helping prospective business owners identify opportunities to locate and open in the neighborhood and supporting the activation of vacant storefronts. Beyond providing direct business support, the Manager will help MidTown Cleveland develop a deeper understanding of the neighborhood's small business ecosystem and translate that knowledge into long-term strategies for business retention, growth, recruitment, and commercial vitality. In particular, the Manager will play a leading role in shaping a long-term commercial strategy for AsiaTown that includes anti-displacement initiatives in partnership with business owners and other neighborhood stakeholders.

As MidTown Cleveland's neighborhood development work evolves, this position may also contribute to small business and retail strategies associated with the advancement of the Hough Cultural District and other neighborhood initiatives.

Key Responsibilities

Small Business Outreach & Relationship Management

- Build and maintain trusted, long-term relationships with small business owners throughout MidTown and AsiaTown.
- Maintain a visible presence in the business community through regular business check-ins, community meetings, and neighborhood events.
- Develop a strong understanding of individual business needs, challenges, opportunities, and aspirations and track referrals, assistance provided, and outcomes to help MidTown Cleveland understand trends and advocate for additional resources.
- Serve as a consistent point of contact between neighborhood businesses and MidTown Cleveland.
- Proactively identify challenges facing businesses and help connect owners to appropriate solutions and resources.
- Create opportunities for business owners to connect with one another, share information, and build relationships.
- Maintain an up-to-date understanding of neighborhood businesses, commercial corridors, and emerging business needs.
- Provide one-on-one technical assistance and problem-solving support to small business owners, including connecting businesses to available grants, loans, technical assistance, professional services, and other resources; and assisting business owners in navigating permitting, Design Review, and other governmental processes.
- Facilitate the City of Cleveland's Storefront Renovation Program and AsiaTown's façade improvement matching grant program.

Business Development Strategy and Commercial Vitality

- Develop a deep understanding of the small business ecosystem across MidTown and AsiaTown, including business mix, ownership, vacancies, growth and closure trends, succession and ownership transition needs, and common challenges and opportunities.
- Help businesses identify opportunities to strengthen operations, marketing, customer engagement, and long-term sustainability.
- Support MidTown Cleveland staff on neighborhood and business marketing and content creation.
- Help identify vacant or underutilized storefronts and opportunities for new retail and neighborhood-serving businesses and work with property owners, brokers, developers, and other partners to support the activation of vacant storefronts.
- Build relationships with prospective entrepreneurs interested in locating in MidTown and AsiaTown.
- Monitor changes in neighborhood retail corridors and identify opportunities for MidTown Cleveland to respond.
- Help ensure that small business and retail development strategies reflect the history, culture, and aspirations of the communities MidTown Cleveland serves.
- Collaborate with MidTown Cleveland staff and partners on initiatives related to storefronts, signage, public art, streetscape improvements, safety, events, and other efforts that contribute to vibrant commercial corridors.

AsiaTown Business Engagement

- Develop culturally responsive and language-appropriate outreach strategies for AsiaTown businesses, with particular attention to immigrant-owned and family-owned businesses.
- Build authentic relationships with Asian and AAPI business owners and community members while recognizing the diversity of cultures, languages, experiences, and business practices represented in AsiaTown.
- Provide or coordinate interpretation and translation when appropriate to ensure business owners can fully access programs and resources.
- Collaborate with MidTown Cleveland staff to ensure small business strategies complement the neighborhood's broader vision as a welcoming cultural hub and place of belonging.
- Build relationships among neighborhood businesses and develop an AsiaTown Business Network that creates opportunities for business owners to share information, identify common priorities, and work together to strengthen the commercial district.
- Work with business owners, property owners, brokers, community members, and other partners to develop a long-term commercial strategy for AsiaTown that supports business retention and growth, addresses anti-displacement, and reflects the needs, aspirations, and unique character of the neighborhood.

Partnerships & Advocacy

- Develop strong working relationships with City of Cleveland departments, financial institutions, nonprofit organizations, small business assistance providers, neighborhood organizations, commercial brokers, and other partners.
- Represent MidTown Cleveland at meetings and events.
- Advocate for programs, investments, and policies that support small businesses and neighborhood commercial districts.
- Identify gaps in existing resources and work with partners to develop solutions.

Program Management

- Manage small business programs, projects, and initiatives from planning through implementation.
- Assist with grant applications, reporting, and documentation related to small business initiatives.
- Maintain accurate and organized records of business contacts, needs, referrals, assistance, and outcomes.
- Prepare reports, presentations, and other materials to communicate program progress and business needs.
- Collaborate with MidTown Cleveland staff to advance organizational priorities.
- Support MidTown Cleveland events and other organizational initiatives as needed.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

Qualifications

Education & Experience

- Bachelor's degree in business, economic development, urban planning, community development, nonprofit management, or a related field or an equivalent combination of education and relevant professional experience.
- 3–5 years of relevant professional experience in small business development, business assistance, entrepreneurship, community development, commercial district management, or a related field.
- Demonstrated experience working directly with small business owners, entrepreneurs, or community-based businesses.
- Experience providing technical assistance, referrals, or other direct services to businesses strongly preferred.
- Experience working with immigrant-owned businesses, entrepreneurs of color, or businesses in diverse cultural communities strongly preferred.
- Knowledge of small business financing, grants, technical assistance resources, permitting/licensing, or retail/commercial corridors preferred.

Cultural & Language Competency

- Demonstrated cultural competency and ability to build authentic relationships across racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic differences.
- Fluency in Mandarin or Cantonese is strongly preferred.
- Ability to communicate effectively with individuals for whom English is not their first language.
- Experience working in or with immigrant communities is strongly preferred.

Compensation & Benefits

MidTown Cleveland offers competitive compensation and benefits. This is a full-time, salaried position with a starting annual salary of \$55,000. Employees are eligible for medical benefits, retirement options, paid time off, professional development opportunities, and remote work options.

MidTown Cleveland, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer. We strongly encourage applications from individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences, particularly those who reflect the communities and businesses we serve.

Applicants should submit a resume and cover letter describing their interest in the position and relevant experience to careers@midtowncleveland.org. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled.