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SF launches 'Vacant to Vibrant' program to fill downtown vacancies with pop-up shops

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San Francisco launched the "Vacant to Vibrant" program to fill downtown vacancies with pop-up shops in efforts to revive city.

SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- Downtown San Francisco has been struggling to recover after the pandemic. So, the city has a new idea to revive Downtown. The

program called "[Vacant to Vibrant](#)."

It launched this week and organizers are still taking applications. The plan would bring pop-up businesses to empty storefronts. More than 100 vendors have applied.

In Downtown San Francisco, you'll still find a lot of empty storefronts. Nonprofit SF New Deal and the city's Office of Economic Workforce Development hope to change that.

"It would be great to see them more utilized. And just to bring more life downtown," said Ben Quint-Glick who works in Downtown San Francisco.

Organizers say it's part of a bigger road map to breathe new life into San Francisco's Downtown.

"This program is getting a lot of excitement. Because I think it's something we could do immediately," said Simon Bertrang, executive director of nonprofit SF New Deal, which was chosen by the city to launch "Vacant to Vibrant."

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The program could start in late summer and include 15 pop-ups in a two to three block area of Downtown. So far, seven property owners and 130 potential pop-ups have submitted applications.

Bertrang said he has received applications from all sorts of pop-ups including cultural organizations, artists, and restaurants.

"They want to bring all kinds of food downtown, lumpia, Singaporean food, a mocha café, and also a ton of artists - painters, mosaicists, ceramicists, photographers," said Bertrang.

"I think it's great. I think the more diverse vendors, the better. I think that's what makes this city great," said Quint-Glick.

Many people say they're on board with the temporary businesses going up in empty storefronts.

"I think it'll generate income, it'll generate some exposure, like I said. For all folks that are doing the pop up," said Maria Soriano, who works in Downtown San Francisco.

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Some say this could be the future of San Francisco.

"This program, "Vacant to Vibrant," will create a window on that future; people can experience, they can see it, they can go Downtown and actually experience what that vibrant San Francisco Downtown will be in the future," said Bertrang.

[The Downtown SF Partnership](#) will partner to match pop-ups with commercial landlords.

Robbie Silver, the executive director of the Downtown SF Partnership, released this statement about the project:

"The Downtown SF Partnership has previously gone door-to-door in the financial district and Jackson Square to survey how many vacant spaces there are on the ground floor. With 1,336 so far, there's about 33 vacant spaces and 150,000 square feet. We welcome initiatives that'll bring new experiences to our district and give more reason for people to come and stay downtown. Turning spaces into places are key to creating a vibrant, mixed-use downtown."

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