

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sustainability Audit Grant To Fund McKinley Park Neighborhood News

CHICAGO – The *McKinley Park News*, a micro-local news publication covering Chicago's McKinley Park neighborhood, is the recipient of a \$20,000 grant through the Sustainability Audit program of LION Publishers, a non-profit organization supporting independent local news publishers.

"LION's Sustainability Audit is transformative for the *McKinley Park News*," said Publisher Justin Kerr. "Not only for the significant funding that is going straight into growing our local news business, but also for the professional expertise that helped all the pieces click together in our business plan."

LION's sustainability audit program has helped scores of its members through a process that queries the state of a news organization and connects it with an expert analyst who digs deeper and compiles an audit report that includes key recommendations for improvement.

The end goal is creating sustainable local news enterprises, said Andrew Rockway, LION's Sustainability Audit program manager.

"We know independent news publishers have great ideas for making their businesses more sustainable, but often lack the capital to turn those ideas into action," Rockway said.

"That's why LION Publishers is thrilled to be able to offer this funding to *McKinley Park News* in support of its business development," he said.

Kerr noted the utility of the funding to realize long-desired business development opportunities and support operations during business start-up and growth.

"One hundred percent of this money is earmarked for business development and operations support that dovetails directly from the recommendations of the audit," Kerr said.

"This includes supporting the work of neighborhood news correspondents, direct marketing outreach to tell local businesses about our sponsorships and advertising, and outsourced technical development to spiff up our advertising technology," Kerr said.

Kerr noted how the audit funding is especially useful since it will bring to fruition many of the resources and opportunities identified in previous journalism support programs in which the *McKinley Park News* participated.

“The Metro Media Lab at Northwestern’s Medill School laid great groundwork with its analysis of our subscription and local business markets,” Kerr said. “The Sustainability Audit funding lets us pursue these opportunities to provide revenue for our local news business.”

The comprehensive process of the audit’s analysis highlighted deficits in business planning for the *McKinley Park News*, Kerr said, and pushed the publication to fill in many of the blanks.

“It especially inspired us to finalize key elements of our revenue strategy,” Kerr said, “as well as focus on the metrics we need to measure business success.”

The LION Publishers Sustainability Audit program is funded through the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Google News Initiative.

“We’re deeply grateful to LION and program funders for supporting our local news enterprise,” Kerr said. “The audit and its financial support is going to have a profound impact for our start-up business.”

ABOUT THE MCKINLEY PARK NEWS

The *McKinley Park News* is a local news publication covering the McKinley Park neighborhood of Chicago from its website at <https://mckinleypark.news>. Its features include original news reporting, a calendar of neighborhood events, interactive memberships and subscriptions, and sponsorships and advertising. Online as a neighborhood news source since 2016, the *McKinley Park News* launched its commercial operations in 2019 as a publication of Local News LLC. It is a member of LION Publishers and the Chicago Independent Media Alliance (CIMA).

ABOUT LION PUBLISHERS

LION Publishers is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to provide teaching, resources and community to independent news entrepreneurs as they build and develop sustainable businesses. LION Publishers represents more than 450 members across the U.S. and Canada, focusing on the business side of news entrepreneurship to create local news enterprises that are here to stay.

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Resources:

- *McKinley Park News* – <https://mckinleypark.news>
- LION Publishers – <https://www.lionpublishers.com>

- LION Sustainability Audits and Funding
<https://www.lionpublishers.com/learn/sustainability-audits/>
- 2023 June-August Cycle LION Publishers Sustainability Audit Program Participants
<https://www.lionpublishers.com/37-lion-members-selected-for-sustainability-audits-2023-june-august-cycle/>
- John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
<https://knightfoundation.org/>
- Google News Initiative
<https://newsinitiative.withgoogle.com/>