

**MAYOR ERIC GARCETTI
CITY OF LOS ANGELES**

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**MAYOR GARCETTI LAUNCHES “LA OPTIMIZED” TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL SMALL
BUSINESSES**

Initiative will help enterprises expand their digital footprint, led by newly appointed Entrepreneur-in-Residence, Roberto Martinez

LOS ANGELES — Mayor Eric Garcetti today launched [LA Optimized](#), an initiative to help local small businesses recover from the pandemic by expanding their e-commerce capabilities and growing their online presence. The project will be overseen by the Mayor’s newly appointed 2021 Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR), Roberto Martinez.

“COVID-19 has changed everything — the way we communicate, work, socialize, and shop — and our brick-and-mortar stores need to rapidly rethink how they reach their customers, market their goods, sell their products, and thrive when so much business is happening online,” said Mayor Garcetti. “Our small businesses are the backbone of our economic strength, and LA Optimized taps into the power of partnerships to equip local enterprises with a larger digital footprint and the tools necessary to gain a competitive edge and lead our pandemic recovery.” LA Optimized is designed to help small businesses adapt to the rapid shifts in consumer behavior and technological advances by empowering them to boost their digital marketing, maximize their online business listings, create or optimize their websites, and increase their knowledge and presence in the e-commerce space - all at no cost to businesses. Through the help of dedicated partners, the Mayor’s Office plans to allocate over \$1.5 million to help provide these services.

This program will also partner with the ArtCenter College of Design and [verynice](#) to deliver up to \$500,000 in total to vetted creative professionals to provide \$500 worth of business and digital content services including branding, video, photography, and graphic design to struggling small businesses. In its first year, up to 1,000 small businesses will be able to access these services to increase their online visibility and engagement, and help them adapt to digital marketing platforms in the wake of pandemic-related challenges.

While the pandemic has accelerated the surge of online sales this year, small and medium businesses have long faced digital challenges to compete with larger corporations. This year, California's small business revenue dropped by 29.3%, and a September 2020 [report](#) found that Los Angeles has seen 15,000 closures, half of which are permanent.

LA Optimized will be open to active small businesses in the City of Los Angeles, with priority given to brick-and-mortar establishments located in or serving residents of low income communities. Businesses can enroll at Coronavirus.LACity.org/LAOptimized.

This initiative will be led by the City's Entrepreneur-in-Residence, Roberto Martinez, who brings more than 15 years of experience and expertise to this effort. As Founder of [Braven Agency](#), he uses digital marketing tools and strategies to scale diverse small businesses and organizations — bridging the digital divide and providing businesses owned or run by people of color with the ability to compete against the titans of industry. As Google's Digital Coach for the Los Angeles metropolitan area, Martinez enlists some of the city's most accomplished business minds to build stronger industries across the City.

"I am honored and privileged to be the next Entrepreneur-in-Residence for the City of L.A.," said Martinez. "Now more than ever there is a need to bridge the digital divide to help small businesses. I'm excited to work with Mayor Garcetti's administration to spearhead programs that leverage partnerships with various tech, NGO, and community actors to assist our local businesses in growing and prospering regardless of the economic climate."

First launched in 2014, the EIR program is made possible with support from Ernst & Young LLP and the Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles. It enlists business executives and expert entrepreneurs to work with the City to create exciting and powerful solutions that will lead to thoughtful policy, a growing workforce, and a stronger economy.

"We're proud to support the Entrepreneur-in-Residence program and this year's initiative to help provide small business owners with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the digital age," said Patrick Niemann, EY Greater Los Angeles Managing Partner. "This is a pivotal time for our fellow Angelenos, and we believe that digital transformation can unlock human potential and accelerate new and better ways of working to drive equitable economic growth."

Martinez will begin his EIR appointment on Friday, December 4th.

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