



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON LEADS SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC MISSION, SECURES KEY INVESTMENTS & STRENGTHENS TIES WITH LONDON

Discussions focused on collaboration across sectors where Chicago excels, including food innovation, clean energy, business services, and the economic impact of international sports and tourism.

CHICAGO – Mayor Brandon Johnson, along with World Business Chicago and Choose Chicago, led a successful business and tourism mission to London, strengthening the city's global partnerships. A core tenet of the mission was to attract international investment, travel, and leisure opportunities. The trip strengthened Chicago's relationship with London, a key economic ally. Discussions focused on collaboration across sectors where Chicago excels, including food innovation, clean energy, business services, and the economic impact of international sports and tourism.

The mission highlighted the city's evolution beyond its industrial past. No longer defined by the "rust belt," Chicago is now at the forefront of the "green and blue belt," driven by its leadership in climate innovation and a commitment to building an inclusive, circular blue economy.

The trip also provided a timely opportunity to highlight Chicago's growing leadership in quantum computing, positioning the city as a global hub for this next frontier of technology. Mayor Johnson led a Business Climate Roundtable, meeting with 20 climate and clean tech companies interested in expanding to Chicago. Deputy Mayor Merritt and World Business Chicago held similar talks with a leading quantum company on the brink of expanding to the city, where it was shared by a UK partner that "Chicago is to quantum what Silicon



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Valley was to tech.” Additionally, the team hosted a roundtable with five quantum companies—see below for key highlights from these discussions.

London, Chicago’s fourth-largest foreign direct investment partner, is home to many UK-based companies operating in the city, employing over 90,000 Illinoisans. During the mission, Pirkx, a wellbeing startup from London, announced it will establish its U.S. headquarters in Chicago, further strengthening this partnership.

“Our trip to London exceeded my expectations,” said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “It was inspiring to see Chicago recognized globally as an economic powerhouse by the leaders we engaged with. I thank Mayor Sadiq Khan and the City of London for its continued commitment to collaboration. This trip rekindled longstanding respect and opened new opportunities for growth, innovation, and investment that will benefit both cities for years to come.”

Key highlights of the trip include:

- **Lagfin & Campari’s Commitment to Chicago Exceeding \$200M by 2025**
Mayor Johnson met with Luca Garavoglia, Chairman of Campari, to discuss the company’s ongoing growth in Chicago. Lagfin, the Garavoglia family’s holding company, announced its commitment to increasing its capital investment in the city to over \$200 million by 2025, with five major projects already underway.
- **Pirkx Announces U.S. Headquarters in Chicago**
During the business mission to London, Pirkx, a well-being benefits platform based in the UK, announced that it will open its U.S. headquarters in Chicago. The company is set to launch operations in early 2025, with plans to employ up to 50 people as it grows. This decision highlights Chicago’s strength as a destination for innovative companies seeking to expand in the U.S.
- **Sustainability Roundtable with UK Companies**
Jenner & Block hosted a roundtable engaging 20 UK-based companies and investors focused on Chicago’s green economy. United Airlines was highlighted as a case study in successful business-government collaboration on climate change.



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- **Exploring Chicago’s Potential as a Global Food Hub**
The delegation discussed the creation of a large-scale food hub on Chicago’s South Side, modeled after Europe’s largest wholesale food markets. As a result of the meetings, a feasibility study will soon get underway.
- **Pursuing Opportunities to Increase International Sporting Events in Chicago**
The Chicago Sports Commission and WBC partnered on a brunch, bringing together UK sporting clients with the Chicago business community to promote Chicago as a center for international sports. Also, building on the success of the recent Premier League Fan Fest in Chicago, which saw record-breaking attendance, the delegation held a productive meeting with the English Premier League to discuss future opportunities in Chicago.
- **Chicago as a Premier Quantum Innovation Hub**
Deputy Mayor Kenya Merritt led an insightful meeting with executives from ORCA Computing, a leader in the full-stack photonic quantum computing space, where both parties shared recent developments. She also hosted a roundtable with four UK-based quantum-related companies, focusing on future expansion into the U.S. market through Chicago. The discussions highlighted the development of a quantum campus on the Southeast Side and the potential to leverage federal and state investments.
- **Choose Chicago Strengthens Travel and Leisure Partnerships**
Mayor Johnson also attended multiple events held by Choose Chicago to drive tourism from this key international market, targeting travel trade and convention clients as well as London-based media.
- **Strengthening Partnerships with London**
Overall meetings with London Mayor Sadiq Khan, Deputy Mayor Howard Dawber, and elected officials reinforced the collaborative spirit between Chicago and London. Both cities committed to exchanging best practices in economic development, life sciences, crime prevention, workforce development, and housing.

“I want to thank Mayor Johnson, Deputy Mayor Merritt, Vice Chair Charles Smith, and our board members and companies who joined us in London, representing Chicago on the



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global stage,” said **Phil Clement, President & CEO, World Business Chicago**. “Our meetings in London were incredibly productive, opening doors to new opportunities and strengthening our ties with a key economic partner. The team and I are excited about the strong and robust pipeline of opportunities we’ve developed as a result of this trip. The announcement by Pirxx, opening its U.S. headquarters in Chicago, was particularly rewarding as they are a prospect we’ve worked on for years to bring new benefits to small and medium sized businesses across Chicagoland.”

The Chicago cohort has returned home with a renewed sense of optimism and confidence in the growing partnership between Chicago and London. Our pipeline of opportunities is stronger than ever, and we expect continued momentum and positive outcomes from the meetings held. Looking ahead to early 2025, Chicago will welcome a delegation from London, further deepening the ties between our cities. And as a perfect capstone to the trip, a big shout-out to hometown favorite, the Chicago Bears, for their victory in London, showing our friends and partners what Chicago’s strength looks like—on and off the field.

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