

# NegociosNow

La voz de los negocios latinos de Chicago y suburbios

Felix's Famous  
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crece **Página 6.**



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A PETER LISAGOR AWARD-WINNING PUBLICATION

## EN ESTA EDICIÓN Anna Valencia



El alcalde Rahm Emanuel nombra a Anna Valencia para dirigir la Secretaría Municipal (City Clerk), la plaza dejada vacante por Susana Mendoza, quien es ahora la Contralora de Illinois, luego de su contundente triunfo ante la republicana Leslie Geissler Munger. El nombramiento debe de ser aprobado por el Concilio Municipal. **Página 8.**



NegociosNow

### Vienen los "Under 40"

Negocios Now recibió más de 70 nominaciones para la 2da edición de "Latinos 40 Under 40". Los seleccionados se darán a conocer en la segunda semana de enero, mientras que el evento de presentación tendrá lugar el 3 de Marzo, en el Mago Grill & Cantina. **Página 20.**



What do Santos Torres, Martha Morelos and Carlos V. Huddleston have in common? The answer is simple: all three Latinos have certified their companies as minority-owned, opening a huge door to opportunities. Santos is the owner of MEPIS, a design company founded in 2012 with 150 employees, and he expects to make over \$50 million in 2017; Martha, founder of Art Dose, Inc., gives thanks to the certified minority status of

her company for her McCormick Place, Midway and O'Hare contracts while Carlos couldn't be happier after the Tollway and the Illinois Department of Transportation awarded contracts to his company, Gonzalez Engineering & Construction Management. Negocios Now presents another Special Edition, "Supplier Diversity," to draw attention to this important "move" on the hard road to growth. **Pages 3,10-18**

## José Aybar con Negocios Now



A veces las oportunidades son del tamaño de elefante y muchos en la comunidad no las ven. Daley College podría ser uno de esos ejemplos. Su presidente, José Aybar, habla en entrevista con Negocios Now acerca de lo que representa esta institución del sur de la ciudad para quienes aspiran ingresar a la universidad "por vía rápida" y bien preparados u obtener una calificación profesional que lo haga competitivo el mercado laboral. **Página 7.**

## ¡MÁS PROGRESO LATINO!

Con el respaldo de un donativo de 1.2 millones de la fundación Walmart, el Instituto del Progreso Latino abre una nueva avenida educativa para la comunidad latina con el lanzamiento de un programa que preparará a jóvenes para trabajar en la red del mercado minorista. De un total de 450 estudiantes que espera recibir para su capacitación, 350 serán empleados de tiendas y 150 serán captados de la comunidad. El programa se



impartirá en las mismas instalaciones de Western Ave. y Calle 26, en la que se ha venido preparando personal para estudios de enfermería. Con este nuevo empuje, el Instituto sumaría más de 1000 estudiantes bajo su tutela. **Página 4. (In English version)**

## Supplier Diversity Opportunities



Becoming certified as an MBE takes a lot of work, but MEPIS shows what they can do when opportunities arise. The building above is one example of MEPIS' work.

# MBE PROGRAM LEADS TO 'EXPONENTIAL GROWTH' FOR CHICAGO DESIGN FIRM

By Tara García Mathewson

The story of Santos Torres' success as the CEO and founder of MEPIS, Inc. (M.E.P. Infrastructure Solutions) is wrapped up in Chicago's Minority- and Women-owned Business Certification Program. He estimates it took 600 to 800 hours to complete the rigorous application process. But in mid-December of 2012, he had the certification in hand, and has seen his business grow exponentially since.

In 2012, MEPIS had six employees. Now it has 32. By the end of 2017, Torres expects to have 150 employees operating in several states, all contributing to a \$50 million engineering, architecture and general contracting firm focused on mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection systems design.

"Right now the sky is the limit for my determination, my vision and the way I want to grow the business," Torres said. For about 20 years, Torres climbed the ranks as an electrical designer and project manager in Chicago companies, developing a reputation for quality work. Then in 2010, he struck out on his own. Within the past six years, he has seen the

fruition of his efforts come to life.

About 70 percent of MEPIS contracts are due to the Minority Business Enterprise program. Torres is also registered as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise.

Amongst his many projects, MEPIS will lead a \$2.6 million project for replacing and updating Northwestern University's entire outdoor lighting system on its Evanston campus.

Perhaps his proudest accomplishment so far is a new, soon-to-open ambulatory care clinic located in Orland Park, IL. for University of Chicago Medicine. The project has been MEPIS' first opportunity to prove it can handle designs for new facilities in addition to renovations of those existing.

Torres has stressed that, while his company's MBE designation helped award the contract, the University of Chicago no longer looks at his company as one that can simply fulfill internal requirements to hire MBE firms but rather a firm that can regularly deliver quality products for complex systems expected from experienced firms.

Tyson Foods has brought MEPIS on board as a construc-

tion management company for a project in California and they are considering another one in Texas. While Torres already has his MBE certification for Chicago and the state of Illinois, his recent work with Tyson led him to apply for the designation at the national level, which he expects to receive by January.

Becoming certified as an MBE takes a lot of work. But the returns can more than make up for that effort. In his first two years in business, Torres completed projects for as little as \$1,000 up to a high of about \$20,000. By 2014, MEPIS expanded his clientele with a \$1 million retainer from the University of Illinois at Chicago for design engineering services in fire protection, and eventually an additional retainer for general MEP services.

"I knew that the MBE was going to be an instrument to help my company grow to the level of success that it has today," Torres said. He believes the program can help Latinos break the glass ceiling if they are committed and determined to do so. In his case, it already has.



Foto Cortesía.  
Santos Torres, CEO and founder of MEPIS.