



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

<b>AGENDA SECTION</b>	<b>BUSINESS ITEMS</b>
<b>MEETING DATE</b>	<b>05/05/2025</b>

<b>ITEM:</b>	<b>EDA Grant Program Guidelines Review</b>	
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	Community Development	<b>BY/DATE:</b> Mitchell Forney, 4-23-25

**BACKGROUND:**

During the Economic Development Authority’s (EDA) 2025 goal-setting session, the commission identified the reframing of its current grant programs as a priority for the year. At last month’s EDA meeting, the commission used its additional funding allocation to enhance its existing programs with the goal of reaching more businesses throughout the city. In response, staff have prepared recommended revisions to existing grant program guidelines and are open to discussion and feedback. If the EDA wishes to modify these recommendations during the meeting, commissioners may do so by making a motion, such as: “I move to amend the amended [insert grant name] grant guidelines.” Any edits suggested through discussion can be formally added or removed via motion.

Staff are recommending several updates to the Façade Improvement Grant Program to expand eligibility and better support revitalization efforts in key commercial areas. Most notably, businesses located within the Central Business Zoning District would become eligible for an enhanced grant amount, allowing reimbursement of up to 50% of project costs with a maximum award of \$10,000—an increase from the standard \$5,000 maximum available to other applicants. Additionally, staff recommend revising the guidelines to allow funding for exterior improvements facing a public alleyway, provided the property is located within the Central Business Zoning District. The list of eligible improvements would also be expanded to include permanent landscaping features, such as hardscaping elements, large planters, trees, and benches. These proposed changes are intended to encourage continued investment in the city’s core commercial area and to enhance the appearance and usability of business-facing public spaces. Staff are not recommending expanding the program to include interior improvements, as doing so would significantly alter the program’s intent. Should the EDA wish to support such improvements, staff would suggest establishing a separate program dedicated to interior build-out assistance.

Staff are also proposing updates to the Fire Suppression Grant Program. Specifically, staff recommend increasing the maximum grant award from \$30,000 to \$50,000 to better offset the substantial cost of installing fire suppression systems. In addition, staff recommend expanding geographic eligibility to include industrial properties along 39th Avenue NE. These changes aim to make the program more accessible and impactful for businesses with significant safety and compliance needs.

The Commercial Revitalization Program is not a traditional EDA grant program but functions more as a budgetary expenditure line item. Historically, the EDA has defined the parameters of this program through the budgeting process and specific approvals of individual purchases, rather than through a formalized set of guidelines. Staff recommend continuing this flexible, project-based approach. To that end, staff propose memorializing the current program parameters and EDA intent in the minutes of this meeting. Presently, there are two primary parameters: (1) staff may enter into negotiations for property purchases prior to formal EDA approval as long as any purchase agreement includes a contingency clause requiring EDA approval, and (2) staff have been directed to target nonconforming single-family homes located within commercial zoning

districts. The EDA has also discussed the possibility of expanding the program to include properties that directly abut strategic redevelopment areas or any blighted or substandard residential properties with redevelopment potential. Staff are open to including these additions or other ideas the EDA may wish to pursue, provided consensus is reached during the meeting.

In conclusion, staff are open to discussion on all proposed revisions and look forward to implementing any approved changes to enhance the effectiveness and reach of the EDA's grant and revitalization programs.

<b>RECOMMENDED MOTION(S):</b>
MOTION: Move to approve the Façade Improvement Grant Guidelines as amended. MOTION: Move to approve the Fire Suppression Grant Guidelines as amended.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

- 1. Façade Improvement Grant Guidelines Proposed Amendment**
- 2. Fire Suppression Grant Guidelines Proposed Amendment**