



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

AGENDA SECTION	BUSINESS ITEMS
MEETING DATE	12/01/2025

ITEM:	EDA 2025 End of Year Review.		
DEPARTMENT:	Community Development	BY/DATE:	CD Staff, 11/25/2025
CORE CITY STRATEGIES:			
_Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity		_Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking	
_High Quality Public Spaces		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resilient and Prosperous Economy	
_Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone		_Inclusive and Connected Community	

BACKGROUND:

Staff have prepared 2025 year-in-review summaries of EDA programs and activities, as well as a recap of the focus areas identified in the EDA’s February discussion of priorities and goals.

Facade Improvement Grant Program:

- **Applications:** 5 applications were received in 2025, and 4 were approved, for a total of \$14,672 approved out of a total program budget of \$80,000.
- **Disbursements:** 2 grants were disbursed, for a total of \$7,524.
- **Pending:** 1 grantee has completed project improvements and is preparing financial documents for disbursement.
- In addition, 4 grantees from program year 2024 finished their project improvements and received their approved disbursements, totaling \$17,036.

Fire Suppression Grant Program:

- **Applications:** 2 applications were received in 2025, and 2 were approved, for a total of \$80,000 approved out of a total program budget of \$100,000.
- **Disbursements:** 1 grant was disbursed, for a total of \$30,000.

Home Energy Squad (in partnership with ICF and Xcel Energy): In 2025, through mid-November, the Home Energy Squad conducted 24 energy audits with an additional 7 audits scheduled through the end of December. This makes for a total of 31 visits in 2025. This year, Excel and ICF authorized 50%-off reduced price rates for all Columbia Heights audits without the need for a City rate buy-down. Since the EDA no longer needed to buy down the HES visits to achieve the reduced price, no City funds were expended toward the program in 2025.

Property Transactions:

- **Transfer:** 960 40th Ave NE transferred from the EDA to the City
- **Loan:** the EDA provided a \$35,000 loan to cover the Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity construction financing gap for the new home at 4243 5th St NE

- **Purchase:** 4510 Taylor St NE (*through Commercial Revitalization program*)

Miscellaneous:

- Applied for and received \$75,000 in grant funds for affordable housing from the Minnesota Housing (MHFA) Local Housing Trust Fund Grants Program.
- Approved Alatus' refinancing of the Ratio apartment project.
- Awarded local salon Hairatage the 2025 Outstanding Business of the Year Award, after 15 years – and counting – of business in Columbia Heights.
- Established ongoing funding for increased EDA and HRA levy funds.
- Created the Columbia Heights Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) Loan Program, scheduled to launch in January 2026.
- EDA Commissioners and City staff volunteered at a Habitat for Humanity work day at 4243 5th St NE.
- Applied for and received a St Paul Area Association of REALTORS (SPAAR) grant for \$5,500, and used a portion of these funds to host an English-Spanish local homeownership resource night.
- Conducted 10 English-Spanish business outreach visits.
- Planted bee lawns on four EDA-owned parcels and installed signage explaining the bee lawn initiative.

Recap from 2025 EDA Goal Setting, with achievement updates in italics:

1. Central Ave

- a. In alignment with City Council citywide goals for public art, develop and launch a Central Business District public art program.
- b. Facilitate placemaking along and near Central Avenue, taking into consideration existing program-based opportunities and upcoming MnDOT-led street redevelopment.
 - i. *In 2025, the EDA amended the Façade Improvement Grant Program to allow businesses in the Central Business District to access up to \$10,000 in façade grants, including for public alley-facing improvements.*
 - ii. *In 2025, the City audited and replaced signage at the City's surface parking lot.*
 - iii. *In 2025, the EDA planted bee lawns on three EDA-owned sites on Central Avenue.*

2. Business

- a. Create initiatives to increase the City's interactions with and promotion of the local business community.
 - i. *In 2025, Community Development staff collaborated with the City's Multicultural Liaison to conduct 10 business outreach visits to local Spanish-speaking businesses.*
- b. Update City grant programs to ensure they provide beneficial and valuable support to businesses.
 - i. *In 2025, the EDA amended its existing grant programs to increase the amounts available for businesses and to relax restrictions, thereby promoting more usage of the programs.*

2. Neighborhood/Housing

- a. Review, revise, and continue to administer the EDA's Commercial Revitalization Program to address substandard and non-conforming housing stock.
 - i. *In 2025, the EDA revised the Commercial Revitalization Program to enable the Commission to target blighted and substandard single-family homes in residential districts as well as in commercial districts. Subsequently, the EDA purchased the blighted home at 4510 Taylor St and is preparing the site for residential redevelopment.*
- b. Establish and implement an allocation plan for the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

- i. *In 2025, the EDA established a Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing Loan Program and allocated Local Housing Trust Fund resources to these loans, while also setting aside funds for larger scale affordable housing redevelopment programs.*
- ii. *In 2025, the City was awarded a \$75,000 grant from Minnesota Housing for local affordable housing initiatives, to be administered through the Trust Fund.*

4. "Big Sites"

- a. Advance redevelopment of EDA-owned properties.
- b. Promote and champion opportunities for major local redevelopment sites.
 - i. Marketing
 - ii. Outreach to developers
 - iii. Track progress in 2025
 - 1. *In 2025, the Medtronic / Lincoln Avenue Communities / 800 53rd Ave NE redevelopment project completed its comprehensive plan amendment and received base approval for its preliminary entitlements.*
 - 2. *In 2025, the City and the EDA conducted two loan modifications and pledged for the reissuance of bonds for the Rainbow / Alatus / 4300 Central Ave NE site.*
 - 3. *In 2025, the City provided a letter of support to Minnesota Housing for one of the developers pre-selected by Anoka County for redevelopment of the Royce Place / 1515 44th Ave NE site.*