



REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Title: Amendments to the Commercial Exterior Improvement Program

Preferred Agenda: January 12, 2021

Submitted By: Blair Larsen, Community & Economic Development Director

Reviewed By: Ray Towry, City Manager

Type of Action: Resolution ___ Motion Roll Call ___ Other ___

Relevant Code/Policy: Commercial Exterior Improvement Program

Towards Council Goal: Aspiration I: Desirable Community; Goal 1: Infrastructure; Goal 2: Economic Strength

Attachments: Amended CEIP Documents

Purpose of this RCA:

The purpose of this RCA is to amend the City's Commercial Exterior Improvement Program.

Background/Context:

During several recent meetings, the City Council and Staff have discussed the need to amend the City's Commercial Exterior Improvement Program (CEIP) in order to better achieve the purposes of that program, and make Sweet Home's commercial areas more beautiful and appealing to visitors and residents. The Council expressed a desire to increase the maximum grant award to \$15,000, and give up to \$5,000 with no match required. In addition, the Council asked that if any applicant desires a grant of more than \$15,000, those applications would go to the Council for final approval, if recommended by the CEIP committee and City Manager. In addition, Staff is recommending that successful applicants be required to post a City-provided sign stating that the improvements were funded in part by a grant from the City, and that applicants be required to participate in the City's voluntary business registration program.

The Challenge/Problem:

How does the City make the Commercial Exterior Improvement Program more effective?

Stakeholders:

- Sweet Home Residents – Residents deserve beautiful and appealing commercial areas.
- Businesses and Commercial Property Owners – Beautification of commercial properties is extremely expensive. Businesses and commercial property owners benefit from a grant program that makes it easier for them to make significant improvements to the appearance of their sites.
- Sweet Home City Council – The City Council has an interest in beautifying commercial areas in order to better serve residents and attract visitors.

Issues and Financial Impacts:

Since 2018, the City has approved \$90,544 in CEIP grants to 26 projects, and paid out a total of \$73,986.54 to 23 projects. These amendments would triple the size of the maximum grant award, and would provide \$5,000 to any eligible project without any match from the applicant. While it is difficult to predict how many more eligible applications the City would receive as a result of these changes, it is safe to say that the number of applications and level of spending will significantly increase. The Economic Development Fund, which is the source of these grants, currently has \$464,696 available for projects such as this.

Elements of a Stable Solution:

A stable solution includes the approval of amended CEIP documents to better achieve the program's purposes.

Options:

1. Do Nothing – The Council could choose to do nothing at this time, and leave the Commercial Exterior Improvement Program as it currently exists.
2. Approve the proposed Amended Commercial Exterior Improvement Program Documents as Presented – By approving the CEIP Documents as presented, the Council would increase the level of funding and number of grants issued for exterior improvements at eligible sites.
3. Approve the proposed Amended Commercial Exterior Improvement Program Documents with Changes – The Council may choose to direct Staff to make other changes to the Commercial Exterior Improvement Program approve the amended documents.
4. Direct Staff to Research Other Options – The Council may direct staff to research other ways to accomplish its goals.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends option 2: Motion to Approve the proposed Amended Commercial Exterior Improvement Program Documents as Presented.