

Administration

To: Common Council, CC: Mayor Stocks

From: Mason Becker, Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives

Date: August 19, 2025

Subject: RDA Citywide Sign Grant Program

Background

The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Watertown has been discussing for some time the possibility of a citywide signage improvement program. Recognizing that signage for a business can be a major expense, the idea of creating this program generated support among the RDA board.

As proposed, this program would cover the entire city, except for the historic downtown district, which is already served by the Façade and Sign Grant Programs offered by the Watertown Main Street Program.

Previous discussion at the Finance Committee regarding potential uses of the remaining portion of City funds from Tax Increment District (TID) #4 included this program as an option for funding.

The RDA Executive Director worked to draft wording for the program application, which was reviewed by then City Attorney Steven Chesebro. RDA Chair Ryan Wagner also provided input.

At the July 16, 2025 RDA meeting, the RDA board approved moving forward with the program, with some minor wording changes that have been incorporated into the application document.

On the August 11, 2025, the Finance Committee forwarded the program application to the Common Council with a positive recommendation for approval.

The Common Council will still need to pass a formal resolution authorizing all spending of TID #4 closeout funds at a later date.

Budget Goal

Fosters community growth by assessing opportunities, stakeholder input, environmental needs, and modern code and policy priorities

Financial Impact

Funding has been proposed to come from closeout funds remaining from TID #4. Signage improvements to private commercial properties may serve an economic benefit to the community and help increase property values.

Recommendation

Approve the resolution for the RDA Citywide Sign Grant Program as presented.