



Community Development Authority

Meeting Date: September 17, 2026

Agenda Item: Memo re WEDC Community Development Investment Grant application for Bower's House project

Staff Contact (name, email, phone): Mason Becker, mbecker@whitewater-wi.gov, 262.443.4458

BACKGROUND

(Enter the who, what when, where, why)

The Bower's House (formerly also known as the White Elephant) is a vacant commercial building located at 183-187 W Main St in downtown Whitewater. The City previously received a Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant to support redevelopment of the property; however, work on the project stopped in 2024. WEDC closed out that grant award in 2025 and recaptured approximately \$213,000.00 in unused grant funds that had been allocated to the project. WEDC has since informed City staff that they are open to consideration of a new application to utilize the previous remaining funds on the same property.

Brian Whipple of Whipple Contractors LLC now has the property under contract and intends to redevelop the building to include ground floor commercial space and approximately ten (10) market-rate rental apartment units on the upper floors. There would likely be one ADA accessible unit on the first floor. Because WEDC's CDI Grant program does not fund purely residential projects, the developer will be required to identify at least one commercial user for the ground-floor space in order for a new grant award to be approved. As part of the grant, the developer would be required to match the grant funds on a 3-to-1 basis covering new costs. The developer currently projects the project will cost approximately \$2.5 million, representing a significant reinvestment in a currently vacant building located at a focal point in the City's downtown.

Staff requested that the Common Council authorize the City to apply for a new WEDC CDI Grant, in the approximate amount of \$213,000.00, to support this redevelopment effort.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS – COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(Dates, committees, action taken)

- The Common Council approved the resolution authorizing this application at the September 1, 2026 council meeting

FINANCIAL IMPACT

(If none, state N/A)

- There is no direct cost to the City associated with submitting this grant application. If the application is approved, the City would enter into a grant agreement with WEDC to administer approximately \$213,000.00 in CDI Grant funds in support of the Bower's House redevelopment; a formal development agreement between the City and the developer would be brought back to the CDA and Common Council for consideration prior to acceptance.
- It is anticipated that the CDA Façade Loan currently on the property would be paid off when the buyer closes on the property. Current balance was \$16,851.60 as of July 31, 2026, from an original loan amount of \$75,000.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- No action is requested from the CDA board at this time. Staff anticipate bringing a Development Agreement for board review and recommendation in October 2026.

ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED
(If none, state N/A)
- Draft of approved Common Council resolution - Draft of WEDC CDI Grant Application - Previous Bower's House Development Agreement