HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

REPORT TO THE COMMISSIONERS **DATE: MARCH 11, 2026**

REGARDING: RESOLUTION APPROVING COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR PROGRAM GUIDELINES, CITYWIDE

Requested Board Action

The specific actions being requested of the HRA Board are as follows:

- Approve the Commercial Corridor Program Guidelines

Background

In April 2025, the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) approved the Commercial Corridor Organization Assistance Program (C-COAP) which established a new program to assist geographically focused organizations in furthering economic development outcomes on identified commercial corridors in the city. This is a direct contracting program, which provides selected business and community support organizations funding to design and implement programming and activities that drive positive economic development outcomes along the defined corridors.

This program was launched as pilot with the intention to evaluate the program design and make refinements as needed to ensure the program achieves its purpose to the greatest extent possible. Staff requested feedback from funded organizations to understand what modifications would allow this program to enhance and further economic development outcomes.

Staff reviewed and evaluated the requested modifications and considered other changes and refinements. The following modifications have been made to the Program Guidelines:

- Extending corridor boundaries to include continuous commercial areas for the following corridors:
    - Ford Parkway: Cretin boundary extended two blocks west to Mississippi River Blvd
    - East 7th Street and Arcade: 7th Street boundary of Arcade extended to 7th Street and Forest Street.

    - Como and Dale corridor extended to include several blocks past the existing boundaries on Como and Dale, and to include a few blocks of intersecting Front Avenue.
    - West Side Corridor: Cesar Chavez Street extended three blocks southwest to include a portion of Wabasha Street.
- Remove the Smith Corridor. This corridor is an outlier with 74% being residential land use, therefore, staff is recommending that Smith is considered a micro-corridor and it is no longer included as an identified corridor in this program.
- Update the calculation and evaluation method to determine award size. Previously, award size categories were determine solely based on whether or not a corridor was in an Area of Concentrated Poverty. Staff is recommending the award size categories are based on the Commercial Corridor Index, which considers multiple factors to determine award size including business density, employee density, commercial land use, and vacant building and HRA owned property ready to sell. In addition, award size now reflects HUD Qualified Census Tracts instead of Areas of Concentrated Poverty which is in alignment with how the City and other partner agencies such as the Met Council measure socioeconomic status and level of historic disinvestment in an area.
- Update the guidelines to allow for minor corridor specific changes when there is just cause and an economic development purpose and public purpose is demonstrated.
- Refine the guideline allowing business sub-grants for operational expenses to only allow operational grants when an organization can document that the corridor experienced a substantial business disruption.
- Allow corridor wide technical assistance as a sub-grant eligible use.
- Rename the program to the Commercial Corridors Program.

Budget Action

N/A

Future Action

N/A

PED Credit Committee Review

N/A

Compliance

The Commercial Corridor Program will follow required compliance requirements. Selected organizations must comply with the Vendor Outreach Program and Affirmative Action Equal Employment Opportunity.

Green/Sustainable Development

N/A

Environmental Impact Disclosure

N/A

Historic Preservation

N/A

Public Purpose/Comprehensive Plan Conformance

The Project will accomplish several public purposes and be in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan, including:

- Policy LU-6. Foster equitable and sustainable economic growth by the following:
    - Facilitating business creation, attraction, retention and expansion;
    - Growing Saint Paul's tax base in order to maintain and expand City services, amenities and infrastructure;
    - Supporting business, real estate and financial models that keep more money locally, such as locally owned businesses, local-prioritized employment, employee-owned businesses and commercial land trusts;
    - Building and expanding neighborhood economic and cultural assets through the development of the local micro-economies of our Neighborhood Nodes;
    - Enhancing vibrant downtown neighborhoods and connecting them to the

Mississippi River;

- Developing programs and funding sources for site acquisition and parcel assembly; and integrating Saint Paul's historic resources into neighborhood-based economic development strategies.

Recommendation:

The Executive Director recommends approval of the resolution approving the Commercial Corridor Program Guidelines.

Sponsored by: Commissioner Noecker and Chair Johnson

Staff: Annie Byrne, 266-8567

Daniela Lorenz, 266-6595

Attachments

- Map
- Guidelines