



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Carter
Council President Brendmoen and Members of City Council

FROM: Angela Burns Finney, Vice-Chair, Neighborhood STAR Board *ABF*

DATE: August 24, 2021

SUBJECT: 2021 NEIGHBORHOOD STAR YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM

Background

On August 20, 2021, the Neighborhood STAR Board reviewed four proposals requesting grant-only funding through the Neighborhood STAR Year-Round Program. First was a \$24,933 request from *Urban Roots (Ward 5)* to add three direct water access points to Rivoli Bluff's farm and restoration site. A match of \$0 was pledged to their project. Next, was a \$15,000 request from *Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society (Ward 6)* for Hmong Wall enhancements and to finish paying for installed security cameras. No matching dollars were pledged to this initiative. Third, was a \$15,000 grant proposal from *Sir Boxing (Ward 6)* to assist with higher than anticipated build-out expenditures for their new location at 965 Arcade Street. A match of \$15,000 was pledged to this initiative. Finally, a request for a \$15,000 grant (Ward 7) for leasehold improvements to 781 East 7th Street, the new location for the *G.W. Carver Cultural Center for Innovation*. Matching funds of \$15,000 were pledged to this proposal.

Presentations

Hailey Ball, Executive Director of Urban Roots, presented their request to provide funding for three direct water access points to agricultural production space and community gardens in Rivoli Bluff. Each year, Urban Roots provides 75 paid internships for area youth who produce and market an estimated 15,000 pounds of food at local farmers markets. Ms. Ball explained that the farm and garden property is owned by the HRA, is currently leased to Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services and Urban Roots is in discussions with the city to assume the lease with a long-term goal of purchasing the property.

Linda Mealey Lohmann, Secretary/President Emeritus of the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society, provided a slide presentation of their phase one accomplishments in Phalen Keller Regional Park including the installation of the sister city gift of a pavilion from China and improvements to the surrounding area. The focus of this proposal is to make enhancements around the Hmong Heritage Wall and complete payment of the garden's security cameras installed with a 2019 Year-Round STAR award. To date, \$1.2M has been raised for Phase 1 with \$200,000 needed to finish.



Georgia Fort, Sir Boxing & Fitness, explained the debt-free acquisition of their new location at 965 Arcade Street was accomplished with assistance from crowd sourcing. Currently, they are working with Flannery Construction, Sunrise Bank and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to complete this vacant building’s transformation into a family fitness center. Once architectural drawings from 4RM+ULA are ready, work will begin. Plans are to open before the end of this year.

Pastor Carl Johnson, Faith City Church, presented their proposal to lease and remodel larger space at 781 East Seventh Street to encompass a new home for their affordable neighborhood grocery store and add a coffee shop, meeting space and a cultural center for black and brown voices. There is currently a signed, seven-year lease with an option to purchase the building in the future. Community partner Mary Anne Quiroz, Co-Director of Indigenous Roots, explained the need for culture on East 7th Street and their vision to enhance east side streets with art and pop-up markets for black, brown, and indigenous people to grow together as neighbors.

Review

Although supportive of all projects, STAR Board Members were unable to recommend funding for the China Friendship Garden Society due to Neighborhood STAR Guidelines prohibiting STAR funds be used to cover old debt and the absence of required \$1 for \$1 pledge of non-city matching funds. In addition, a recommendation could not be given for the Urban Roots proposal due to the lack of site control and no matching dollars identified as required by Neighborhood STAR Guidelines.

Rating

The Neighborhood STAR Board rated the Neighborhood STAR Year-Round Program proposals on their own merit on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) with the following results:

Rating	Project	Ward	Grant	Loan
4.0	Water on Rivoli	5	\$24,933	\$0
4.0	Sir Boxing	6	\$15,000	\$0
3.8	Carver Cultural Center	7	\$15,000	\$0
3.3	China Friendship Garden	6	\$15,000	\$0

Thank you for your continued support and assistance. If you have questions, or if staff can provide additional information, please contact Michele Swanson, 266-6574 or Nancy Vang, 266-6474.

- CC: Hailey Ball, Urban Roots
 Linda Mealey Lohman, Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society
 Georgia Fort, Sir Boxing & Fitness, LLC
 Pastor Carl, Faith City Church
 Maryanne Quiroz, Indigenous Roots