



Memorandum

TO: Kevin J. Jackson, Village Manager

FROM: Emily A. Egan, Development Services Director

FOR: Village President and Board of Trustees

DATE: June 24, 2024

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Business Support During “Renew the Avenue” Streetscape Project

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform the Village Board of staff’s recommendation to provide support for businesses during the Renew the Avenue infrastructure and streetscaping construction project, on Oak Park Avenue.

Background

The Renew the Avenue project is planned for construction in early spring of 2025. The project includes utility replacement and road reconstruction between Randolph Street and Ontario Street, with the larger streetscape improvements focused from Pleasant Street to Ontario Street. The utility work includes sewer replacement and lining, water main replacement, and electrical improvements for traffic signals and street lighting. The streetscape will consist of new bluestone sidewalks, brick paver roadways (from Pleasant Street to Lake Street), upgraded benches, enhanced public gathering spaces, four rain gardens, public art, and more. Additional information may be found at: www.renewtheavenue.com.

Staff has held six (6) public meetings regarding the project and many one-on-one meetings with individual business owners and property owners and business district leaders. In discussions with business and property owners, staff has developed the following recommendations for business support in addition to the promotion, marketing, and resources included in the project.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Village provide the following Programs for the Hemingway District Businesses.

1.) Avenue Parking Garage – Increase Free Parking (January-December 2025)

- Current: 1 hour free parking
- Staff Suggestion: Extend free parking to 90 minutes
- Business District Suggestion: Extend free parking to 2 hours

2) Expand the Commercial Façade Improvement Project (C-FIP) Grant Program to Non-Sales Tax Businesses (January-December 2025)

- Current: Available to first-floor, sales tax-generating businesses only.

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- Staff Suggestion: Include all licensed first-floor businesses, regardless of sales tax generation.
- Business District: Fully supports.
- Estimated Budget: 19% participation (\$100,000 max).

3) New Village Commercial Interior Improvement Project (C-IIP) Grant Program (January-December 2025)

- Proposal: Up to \$5,000 per first floor business for interior upgrades (e.g., flooring, painting, lighting, HVAC, etc.).
- Business District: Fully supports.
- Estimated Budget: 19% participation (\$85,000 max)

4) New Village Social Media Grant Program (January-December 2025)

- Proposal: 50/50 matching grant up to \$1,000 for social media marketing. Open to all licensed businesses in the district, on all floors.
- Business District: Fully supports, suggests higher funding.
- Estimated Budget: 80% participation (\$120,000 max).

Eligibility for these grants would be restricted to businesses within the Hemingway Business District (defined by Pleasant Street (South), Euclid Avenue (East), Ontario Street (North - Euclid to N. Grove Avenue); N. Kenilworth (West). Staff purposes they be on a reimbursement basis similar to the current and longstanding C-FIP grant program.

Financial Considerations:

Staff recommends budgeting for \$305,000 for the business incentives described above. The one-time expense over the course of FY25 would be within: Development Services – Economic Vitality – Renew the Avenue Business Support (1001.46262.101.585625). This would be a one-time FY25 expense to coincide with the construction impacts. If the construction project is delayed, associated budgets would be postponed to align with the construction timeline.

Next Steps

If approved as part of the FY25 budget, staff will develop grant program guidelines and application forms and bring them back to the Village Board to authorize by resolution and then begin to market the available grants to the businesses.

For questions, contact Emily A. Egan, Development Services Director, by phone at 708-358-5422 or via email at eeegan@oak-park.us.

Cc: Lisa Shelley, Deputy Village Manager
Ahmad Zayyad, Deputy Village Manager
All Department Directors