



Department of City Development
City Plan Commission
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee
Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation

Lafayette L. Crump
Commissioner

Vanessa L. Koster
Deputy Commissioner

October 18, 2023

Honorable Chair Marina Dimitrijevic
Members of the Finance and Personnel Committee
Milwaukee Common Council
City Hall, Room 205

Dear Chair Dimitrijevic and Committee Members:

This letter responds to requests and questions that were raised at the Finance and Personnel Committee's hearing regarding the Department of City Development's (DCD) proposed 2024 budget.

1. *Make it easier for small businesses to navigate the (permitting, licensing and grants) system by being as seamless and interconnected as possible. Share information with business owners about the benefits of a BID. Work with the Health Dept., Licensing, DNS, etc. to communicate all elements that need to be put in place. Provide information about grant programs that are available. Improve communication with applicants and provide transparent processes. Provide a list of grants for small businesses to consider to improve commercial corridors.*

The DCD will continue to identify ways to provide information and transparency with the commercial corridor grants and connecting applicants with the permitting and licensing process. We collaborate with DNS Development Center staff during the pre-development and permitting processes, and where applicable, the licensing process, through the Land Management System (LMS), the database tool that tracks permitting.

The DCD Commercial Corridors Team (CCT) also works closely with commercial grant applicants—especially those that are new to the City's permitting and licensing process--to help them navigate the permitting system. The CCT refers applicants to the City's Start Smart app, found [here](#), that identifies the required permits and licenses that are needed for a particular type of business.

The CCT recently merged all of its commercial grant applications into a universal application that provides an easier application process for the applicants. Based on feedback and survey responses the CCT continues to refine the online application so that materials are presented clearly.

2. *Provide insight as to where to take \$500k from in order to provide additional funding to the Commercial Corridor grant program.*



The current Capital Plan allocates \$500,000 in the 'Commercial Investment Program' account. The Budget office will be preparing a response.

3. *Provide the annual Brew City Match report from LISC and list of commercial grants.*
LISC Milwaukee administers the Brew City Match [program](#) that provides grants to business owners in identified neighborhoods. The current five neighborhoods include: Clarke Square, Historic King Drive, Historic Mitchell Street, Lindsay Heights, Near West Side and Riverworks. The City of Milwaukee Department of City Development committed \$1M to Brew City Match at its inception and met obligations, even during the COVID pandemic period. The program was extended one year because of COVID to support Brew City Match. Since then, the Brew City Match program has been revised and grants are included as one of the benefits of becoming eligible for the program. The list of grants is attached, see "BCM Report 10.17.2023".
4. *How many times was the commercial corridor budget cut/ provided less than requested.*
The Budget office is providing this information.
5. *Provide ARPA funding history on the Down Payment Program.*
The Budget office is providing this information.
6. *Verify where proceeds of sale of in-rem properties go*
The *in-rem* sale proceeds are deposited directly to the City Tax Deed account.
7. *Provide writing in timeline, etc. of the process of foreclosure – in-rem property sale – demolition*
Please see the attached presentation, "Foreclosure Process", Slides 6-13, prepared by the Real Estate Development Services Manager.
8. *Vacant lot / healing spaces/ other ideas for vacant lots. How is this program staffed?*
There is currently 1 FTE staff assigned to administer the Healing Space Initiative and the Community Improvements Project. In its pilot year, a Fellow was assigned to the Healing Space Initiative. Now that the program has expanded citywide, DCD will explore adding another Fellow to assist with program administration.
9. *Forward additional shipping container information to Ald. Coggs.*
Please see attached presentation titled, "Shipping Container", that provides a precedent study and images of a variety of shipping container projects.
10. *Provide a list of TIF's that have supported infrastructure (capital improvements) funding.*
Economic Development staff will follow up with this request under separate communication.

11. *Look at CDBG or other federal grant assistance for the Real Estate division staff. Develop a strategic plan with the County. Locate any additional financial resources for assistance.*
The Department is in the process of filing two vacancies in the Real Estate division that assist with management of *in-rem* properties. Having full staff capacity will assist with City foreclosures. DCD will also work with the Budget office to identify potential other funding sources for Real Estate division staff.

12. *Follow up with Northwestern Mutual for public-private partnerships.*
Commissioner Lafayette Crump will follow up with Northwestern Mutual and report back to Alderman Murphy and the committee.

13. *Highlight the work that DCD does in neighborhoods. Focus on things they can see and feel. Make them feel like they're being invested in. Work on messaging / marketing your good work.*
The department utilizes a variety of methods to share its programs and successes including social media platforms, an Annual Report, eNotify and through our community partners. The Department has increased its social media use by an average of 17% across platforms and our goal is to continue increasing usership. DCD has also added YouTube videos to discuss programs and showcase work.

14. *Provide a copy of the current HACM pilot. Provide a copy of the calculation/ formula.*
This information was provided in a separate letter.

Please contact me should you have any further questions. I can be reached via email at vkoste@milwaukee.gov , or at ext. 5810.

Sincerely,



Vanessa L. Koster
Deputy Commissioner

Attachments