



VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Wednesday, December 4, 2024 – 6:00 PM

Village Hall – 1st Floor Community Room, 400 Park Ave., River Forest, IL

AGENDA

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88265040864>

Meeting ID: 882 6504 0864

Public comments and any responses will be shared with the Commission. You may submit your public comments via email in advance of the meeting to: Jessica Spencer at jspencer@vrf.us.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of Minutes – November 6, 2024
4. Approval of Executive Session Minutes – November 6, 2024
5. Discussion Regarding TIF Small Business Incentive Programs
6. Continued Discussion Regarding Business Community Retention/Support Strategies and Communication
7. General Development Updates
8. 2025 Schedule of Meetings
9. Other Business
10. Adjournment

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

November 6, 2024

A meeting of the Village of River Forest Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, November 6, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the 1st Floor Community Room of Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. Meeting started by calling roll. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Cuyler Brown, Commissioners Carr Preston, Walter Wahlfeldt, Katie Lowes, and Tim Brangle

Commissioner Bob Graham attended via Zoom until 7:04pm

Absent: Commissioner Raj Chiplunkar

Also Present: Village Administrator Matt Walsh and Deputy Clerk Luke Masella

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 2, 2024

A **MOTION** was made by Chairman Brown and seconded by Commissioner Brangle to approve the minutes of the October 2nd meeting.

MOTION PASSED by unanimous voice vote.

4. DISCUSSION REGARDING TIF SMALL BUSINESS INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Administration Walsh presented the comments that were prepared by Assistant Administrator Spencer from the October meeting and asked for feedback on the current draft. He laid out the next steps once this commission had a final draft. Commissioner Wahlfeldt asked about the expectation for budget for this program, Administrator Walsh answered that there are a few ways to determine how much of the TIF funds to use for this program, but further thought was needed. Discussion ensued regarding methodology, and commissioners settled upon having a \$50,000 annual budget, \$5,000 per project set at the beginning of the program with the intention to review the funding structure after 12 months. Another question was raised regarding how many grants can be applied

for by the same business/property owner. One suggestion was one application per business, per year, per property. This would allow for the property owner and the business (tenant) apply in the same year. The main point was that all approvals are subject to the availability of the budget.

Administrator Walsh explained how TIF funds come into the Village and how it is spent.

Chairman Brown asked how often applicants can apply for the grant – one a year? Once every three years? Discussion ensued regarding the merits of the application process; Commissioner Wahlfeldt suggested allowing the application process to sort out who is awarded.

Commissioner Lowes suggested striking “painting things that had not been painted previously”. Commissioner Brangle said that he felt the statement was subjective, but he understood why it might have been included. Commissioner Wahlfeldt suggested this might not be allowed so that the applicant would have to improve the façade in another way. The statement will be kept.

Commissioner Lowes also suggested “applications must include photographs of the existing façade and detailed renderings of the proposed improvements”. She felt that the last portion, after “and detailed renderings...” should be struck entirely because sometimes applicants will not have that available at the time of applications. Commissioner Brangle agreed suggested drawings instead so as not to have a financial burden on the applicant. He also promised to provide additional comments on the draft document later. He suggested having some definitions to help clarify the portions of the exterior to be included in the grant. Chairman Brown suggested streamlining the list of successful projects rather than provide too many options, the other commissioners agreed.

Commissioner Brangle suggested not including the “restoration of historic interior architectural features, including ceilings, light fixtures, floors, and architectural detailing” as that would be interior work, Commissioner Wahlfeldt agreed.

Commissioner Brangle raised the topic of reimbursement in the event of the business ceasing. Discussion ensued regarding the situation that would cause this penalty to be imposed.

Chairman Brown asked for the next steps on this draft. Administrator Walsh said that he will see that the draft is distributed to the Commission to review again. Chairman Brown is happy with the program and the work put in thus far.

5. CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING BUSINESS COMMUNITY RETENTION/ SUPPORT STRATEGIES AND COMMUNICATION

Chairman Brown said that the Memorial Day Parade planning is coming along with the Chamber of Commerce, in addition to the Façade Improvement Program. He’s quite pleased with the progress on both programs from this Commission.

Chairman Brown mentioned the recent additions to the Town Center, including J. Crew Factory and CAVA. Commissioner Graham asked about the status of the Whole Foods construction permit, Administrator Walsh said that they are working under a demolition permit at this time, but no other plans have been submitted. Chairman Brown said that is great news, given how hard things have been for retail lately.

6. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Administrator Walsh updated the Commission about Black Fodder, moving into 349 Ashland Ave. It's expected that they will open in the Spring.

Administrator Walsh stated that there was no substantive update on Lake and Lathrop at this time. He explained that the Village has taken some steps to motivate the parties to resolution, with more details to come. Commissioner Lowes pointed out some corrections to be made to the Lake and Lathrop webpage. Administrator Walsh reminded the commission that Lake Lathrop Partners had recently applied for a building permit, but the Village denied the permit based on the legal arguments over the site at this time. Lake Lathrop Partners filed suit against the Village, which the Village is handling.

Administrator Walsh reported that the Neighborhood Dialogues are going well and there has been good information gleaned from these conversations as they occur around the Village in residents' homes. Administrator Walsh said that a final report will be compiled after the final Dialogue is held later this month. There has been a lot of good discussions and feedback thus far, including how residents are hearing information from the Village and the public perception of communications regarding important topics. Chairman Brown pointed out that there are some people who have problems with this strategy, Administration Walsh confirmed that there are some people who have expressed an interest in hosting but haven't been scheduled yet.

Commissioner Preston asked about the format of the Dialogues. Administrator Walsh responded that they are meant to be informal and open-ended, with the tone set that the discussion is intended to learn about what residents want to see developed at the Madison Street site, even though other questions typically arise.

Chairman Brown asked if commissioners are welcome to attend these meetings. Administrator Walsh stated that yes, anyone is open to hosting if they are interested, even commissioners. Discussion ensued regarding the various topics that have risen from the Dialogues and comments from residents about several ideas for the Village. Administrator Walsh stated that some residents have asked about the plan for the Village, he responded that the Comprehensive Plan is still the guiding document.

Commissioner Wahlfeldt asked how many Dialogues were intended, Administrator Walsh said the goal was 8 to be completed before the holidays.

Commissioner Graham pointed out that its important to document how many meetings are held, not necessarily who attended them, in order to demonstrate that there has already been substantial conversation about economic development.

Commissioner Graham left the meeting at 7:04pm.

Chairman Brown expressed his confidence in the level of documentation of the Dialogues that was occurring during this process. He said that he's knows there are residents who have great suggestions for development, but it is important to bring to light the financial realities of development.

Commissioner Brangle reminded the group of the original recommendation regarding the commercial text amendment to the ZBA Commission several months ago and suggested having a joint meeting of the ZBA and the EDC Commissions later to discuss the implications from each commission’s perspective. Administrator Walsh confirmed this was possible, with a little planning.

Commissioner Wahlfeldt cautioned that we learned from the previous zoning conversations, and when the topic is this sensitive, there needs to be additional steps to communicate with residents.

Chairman Brown pointed out that the commercial text amendment was focused on one particular property when that was not the intention.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Brown asked about the status of the process to hire a broker. Administrator Walsh said that this has been impacted by the Neighborhood Dialogues, as the information to move forward hasn’t been determined yet. Chairman Brown urged staff to select a broker soon. Commissioner Brangle noted that there were still some negotiations to be completed due to the differences in the proposals.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. Executive Session pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(6) to discuss: property for sale

A MOTION by Chairman Brown and seconded by Commissioner Brangle to enter Executive Session pursuant to 5 ILCS 2 (c)(6) to discuss property for sale and the Economic Development Commission will adjourn after Executive Session and will not return to open session.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Chairman Brown and seconded by Commissioner Preston to adjourn the meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 7:45 p.m.

MOTION PASSED by unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jessica Spencer, Assistant Village Administrator

Date: _____

Cuyler Brown, Chairman Economic Development Commission



1. Program Purpose

The Village of River Forest is proud to introduce the Facade Improvement Grant Program, designed to support local businesses and property owners in enhancing the exterior appearance of their buildings. This program aims to revitalize commercial areas, boost property values, and attract more visitors to our business districts, ensuring that River Forest remains a vibrant, welcoming, and attractive community.

The Facade Improvement Grant Program offers financial assistance to businesses and property owners looking to make improvements to the visible portions of their properties. Whether it's restoring historic charm, modernizing storefronts, or improving accessibility, the program helps foster a strong, appealing streetscape while preserving the unique character of River Forest. By investing in our local business community, we can enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Eligible applicants can receive funds for a variety of facade improvements, including but not limited to new signage, lighting, windows, painting, and masonry work. This initiative is part of the Village's broader commitment to economic development, sustainable growth, and the enhancement of River Forest's commercial corridors.

2. Program Guidelines

All businesses must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ The property must be located within the North Avenue TIF (C-1) District or the Madison Street TIF (C-2) District.
- ✓ All commercial property owners and business owners located within C-1 and C-2 Districts are eligible to apply for this program.
- ✓ All proposed projects must conform to the Village's Codes for Building, Zoning, and Signs.
- ✓ Grant funding shall be administered in the form of reimbursement following the completion of an approved project, and presentation of a receipt or similar material.
- ✓ The grant shall not exceed 50% of all eligible activities or \$5,000, whichever is less.
- ✓ Funding of this program is subject to Village Board approval of the fiscal year budget.
- ✓ Upon approval, applicants must secure a building permit within 60 days and adhere to all building, zoning, and inspection requirements.

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3. Program Eligibility

To be ~~considered for awarded award of the maximum amount of funds~~ing available, ~~successful proposed~~ projects ~~may include the following improvements~~:

- Energy Conservation improvements
- Exterior Accessibility improvements for handicapped persons



FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT – DRAFT 2

- Façade cleaning
- Fences (other than chain-link)
- Restoration of historic exterior ~~interior~~ architectural features, ~~including ceilings, light fixtures, floors, and architectural detailing~~ including but not limited to storefront glass/windows, doorways, cornices, etc.
- Pitched roofs along primary storefront facades
- Landscaping, sidewalk replacement, streetscape, retaining-planting beds, walls and related improvements along primary facades
- New siding and siding repair along primary facades
- Front façade improvements including but not limited to cleaning, ~~Painting~~painting, tuckpointing, brick restoration, removal of non contextual or inappropriate exterior finishes, window / door restoration or replacement
- Front and wrap-around porches (does this apply to us?)
- Front and rooftop patios or walkways
- ~~Windows and doors~~
- New primary signage, sign fees, and related costs
- Decorative masonry walls?
- ~~Tuckpointing~~
- ~~Exterior cornices~~
- Awnings/canopies
- ~~Restoration of brick using a non-abrasive pain removal material~~
- ~~Removal of inappropriate exterior finishes, materials, or features~~
- ~~Replacement of sidewalks in the public right-of-way~~
- Parking lot improvements/repairs/resurfacing (limitations on size?)
- Similar and compatible improvement projects that improve the overall aesthetic of the commercial district as approved by the Village Administrator

**these are not exhaustive lists. Please contact the Building Department if your project is not listed here to determine eligibility.

4. Ineligible Projects

Examples of projects that are ineligible:

- Building permit fees and related costs
- ~~Preference for not Painting-painting~~ masonry that was not previously painted
- Professional service fees including but not limited to design, engineering, architectural, and structural fees
- Sandblasting of brick?
- Flat roofs?
- Interior signage
- Interior Lighting fixtures?
- Product inventory

Commented [TSB1]: Subjective. There may be cases where this is better



FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT – DRAFT 2

- Utility service upgrades, including water and sewer
- Acquisition of land and/or buildings
- New construction or development not directly related to improving the primary façade(s)
- Ongoing Landscaping maintenance
- Projects not visible from the public right-of-way
- Projects completed prior to receiving approval for this grant program.

**these are not exhaustive lists. Please contact the Building Department if your project is not listed here to determine eligibility.

5. Program Review and Approval Process

1. Initial Application Submission
 - a. Applicants must submit a completed Façade Improvement Grant Program application along with all necessary project plans, cost estimates, and descriptions of proposed improvements to the Village's Building Department.
 - b. Applications must include photographs of the existing façade and ~~detailed a~~ narrative renderings description of the proposed scope of work improvements along with any supporting graphic materials (drawings, elevation mock ups, sketches, precedents pictures, etc.) illustrating the proposed intent.
2. Staff Review
 - a. Village staff will review the submitted application for completeness and to ensure compliance with the Village's Building, Zoning, and Sign Codes.
 - b. If additional information or revisions are required, the applicant will be notified and must provide the necessary updates.
3. Evaluation
 - a. Applications will be evaluated based on project impact, alignment with the Village's goals for improving commercial districts, ~~and~~ adherence to the program's guidelines and availability of funding. Priority will be given to projects that:
 - i. Improve the overall aesthetic of the commercial district to enhance attraction to the area, vitality of the business and corridor, and "leasability" of River Forest's commercial properties within TIF Districts
 - ii. Enhance the accessibility of the property.
 - iii. Incorporate energy-efficient or sustainable design elements.
 - iv. ~~Enhance the accessibility of the property.~~
4. Approval



FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT – DRAFT 2

- a. The Village Administrator or his designee will review the recommended applications. Some projects may also require Village Board approval if they exceed specific funding thresholds or require zoning variations.
- b. Applicants will be notified in writing once their project has been approved or denied.

6. Reimbursement Process

1. Completion of Project
 - a. Approved applicants must complete their façade improvement project within the timeframe specified in the Grant Agreement, typically within 12 months of approval.
 - b. All improvements must be made according to the approved plans. Any significant changes to the scope of the project must be pre-approved by the Village.
2. Final Inspection
 - a. Once the project is completed, applicants must request a final inspection from the Village's Building Department. Staff will inspect the project to ensure that it complies with the approved plans and local codes.
3. Submission of Documentation for Reimbursement
 - a. After the final inspection is approved, applicants must submit the following documents to the Village for reimbursement:
 - i. Letter requesting reimbursement
 - ii. Proof of payment for all project-related expenses, including final invoices and receipts
 - iii. Lien waivers from contractors and supplies
 - iv. Photographs of the completed improvements
4. Reimbursement Payment

Upon successful submission of all applicable reimbursement materials, reimbursement will be placed on the Village Board's list of invoices to be approved at a regularly scheduled Village Board meeting. Please note, this process can take up to 4 weeks.

~~5. Program Penalties~~

~~All applicants granted financial support are required to comply with all Village codes and ordinances. Failure to do so, as documented by citations issued by the Village of River Forest, will subject that awardee to all applicable fines and penalties allowable under Village Code including a reduction in this program's grant funding in part or in full.~~

~~Any intentional removal or modification to the façade improvement which is not in accordance with the approved project, or any business operation that ceases within three (3) years will require reimbursement of awarded funds. The reimbursement of the award will adhere to the grant agreement and the following table:~~



FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT – [DRAFT 2](#)

TIMING OF DEFAULT EVENT	PERCENTAGE OF AWARD THAT MUST BE REFUNDED
Within 1 year of Award payment	100%
Within 2 years of Award payment	67%
Within 3 years of Award payment	33%

~~The property owner and tenant shall be responsible for maintaining the improvements without alterations for five (5) years. A restrictive covenant limiting alterations may be required by the Village Board at the time of approval of this Façade Improvement Grant. A waiver from this requirement may be awarded by the Village Board following a recommendation by the Assistant Village Administrator, upon submittal of evidence of hardship or unusual circumstances.~~



Village of River Forest

Village Administrator's Office

400 Park Avenue

River Forest, IL 60305

Tel: 708-366-8500

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 4, 2024

To: Economic Development Commission

From: Jessica Spencer, Assistant Village Administrator

Subj: 2025 Schedule of Meetings

The Economic Development Commission is scheduled to meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm in the Village Hall Community Room.

January 1
February 5
March 5
April 2
May 7
June 4
July 2
August 6
September 3
October 1
November 5
December 3