



VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Wednesday, November 6th, 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 – October 2, 2024
4. Discussion Regarding TIF Small Business Incentive Programs
5. Continued Discussion Regarding Business Community Retention/Support Strategies and Communication
6. General Development Updates
7. Other Business
8. Adjournment

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

October 2, 2024

A special meeting of the Village of River Forest Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, October 2, 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 6:04 p.m. Meeting started by calling roll. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

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

Absent: None

Executive Director Darien Marion-Burton join the meeting at 6:10pm.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 4, 2024

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wahlfeldt and seconded by Commissioner Graham to approve the minutes of the September 4th meeting.

MOTION PASSED by unanimous voice vote.

4. DISCUSSION REGARDING TIF SMALL BUSINESS INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Assistant Administrator Spencer led the discussion regarding the TIF program. Discussion ensued as they walked through the memo she provided.

Regarding those who would be eligible for the grant program, the Commissioners decided that no home-based businesses should be included, nor those located outside the established commercially zoned areas of the Village. Given the funding for the program, only those businesses located in the C-1 (North Avenue) and C-3 (Madison Street) districts could be considered. There was additional discussion regarding a cap of the available TIF funds to be distributed in this program.

There was also discussion about limiting the size of the business to include, small businesses defined as 50-100 employees, and/or a certain amount of the previous year's revenue.

The Commissioners discussed how to prioritize the applications and decided that tenure within the Village would not be a factor. They discussed allowing property owners to apply for the grant and decided that it must only be in relation to a likely lease agreement. Some suggested a limit on the overall property, some suggested that there might be a limit based on leased out space versus vacant spaces. Executive Director Marion-Burton asked about prioritizing historically marginalized groups. The commission asked Assistant Administrator Spencer to provide some examples of how this might be incorporated into the programs in the next draft.

The commission was comfortable incorporating all the suggested 'eligible improvements' on Assistant Administrator Spencer's memo.

Commissioners discussed a policy to protect the Village's investment and referenced the Village of Gilbert's Eligibility Guidelines, including a stepped-down model of reimbursement over 3 years of continued inhabitation of the space. Assistant Administrator Spencer will include those guidelines in her next draft.

The Commissioners determined that the Zoning, Building, and Sign Code review processes should be left to the Building Official. The applications would be reviewed by staff and this Commission would be notified of the award. At this point in the discussion, a Commissioner asked to define "improvements" and clarify that items that don't require a Village-issued permit should not be included in the program.

Assistant Administrator Spencer stated that she would provide a draft program for the next meeting where this discussion would be continued.

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

Executive Director Marion-Burton updated the Commission regarding the Memorial Day parade. He said they are in the process of developing the budget and there have been funds earmarked in the proposal. He encourages residents to read the newly published Strategic Plan and learn about the new programs that are proposed over the next 10 years. He said that the Executive Assistant might be reaching out to this commission to encourage and schedule community meetings to help foster excitement in the upcoming events. Chairman Brown asked about the tie in of the Community Funds, Director Marion-Burton said that the change of the IRS status will allow the group to apply for grants in the future.

6. NORTH AVE/MADISON ST/LAKE & LATHROP UPDATE

Assistant Administrator Spencer stated that the response to the Neighborhood Dialogues has been quite positive so far. Commissioner Wahlfeldt asked about how to find out about dates and

locations for future events, and Assistant Administrator Spencer clarified that the hosts are responsible for sharing information as to when the events are being held in their homes. Hosts also determine who is invited to those events. Assistant Administrator Spencer invited those interested in hosting to reach out to her or Administrator Walsh to discuss further.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

None

8. ADJOURNMENT

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Chiplunkar and seconded by Commissioner Preston to adjourn the meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 7:38 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.

3. Program Eligibility

To be awarded the maximum amount of funds available, successful projects include:

- Energy Conservation improvements
- Accessibility improvements for handicapped persons
- Façade cleaning
- Fences (other than chain-link)
- Restoration of historic interior architectural features, including ceilings, light fixtures, floors, and architectural detailing
- Pitched roofs



FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT

- Landscaping retaining walls and improvements
- New siding and siding repair
- Painting
- Front and wrap-around porches
- Front and rooftop patios or walkways
- Windows and doors
- Signs, sign fees, and related costs
- Decorative masonry walls
- Tuckpointing
- Exterior cornices
- Awnings/canopies
- Restoration of brick using a non-abrasive stain removal material
- Removal of inappropriate exterior finishes, materials, or features
- Replacement of sidewalks in the public right-of-way
- Parking lot improvements/repairs/resurfacing
- Similar and compatible projects 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
- 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
- Lighting fixtures
- Product inventory
- Utility service upgrades, including water and sewer
- Acquisition of land and/or buildings
- New construction or development not directly related to improving a façade
- 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 renderings of the proposed improvements.
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. Priority will be given to projects that:
 - i. Improve the overall aesthetic of the commercial district
 - ii. Incorporate energy-efficient or sustainable design elements.
 - iii. Enhance the accessibility of the property.
4. Approval
 - 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.



FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT

- 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:

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%



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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.