



CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS

Public Works Committee Agenda Communication

Meeting Date: November 1, 2021

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Agenda Item: Rebuild Downtowns & Main Streets Project Application Consideration

Explanation: DCEO recently opened its call for projects for the Rebuild Downtowns & Main Streets (RDMS) grant program. Applications must be submitted to DCEO by January 10. This program has some similarities to the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP), which is administered through IDOT. RDMS is intended to provide capital grants to support economic recovery in commercial corridors and downtowns that have experienced disinvestment, particularly in communities hardest-hit by COVID-19. Areas located in a disproportionately impacted area, Opportunity Zone, Qualified Census Tract, or a corridor or business district with a significant presence of businesses in industries impacted by COVID, including hospitality, tourism, and the arts, will be given greater emphasis through this program. Any such project should advance initiatives that are part of a regional or local plan.

RDMS does not require a financial match for units of local government. However, a match would likely improve the chances of receiving an award and staff would highly recommend including a match, with 20-25% consistent with many grant programs. The program has \$50 million available with awards ranging from \$250,000-\$3 million. A variety of expenditures are allowed through the RDMS program including architectural planning and engineering design, land and building acquisition, utility work, new building construction, and the reconstruction or improvement of existing buildings. Construction and rehab projects can include roads, parking, sidewalks, water/sewer mains, parks, and streetscapes.

The PE I portion of the Square streetscape project undertaken by Hutchison Engineering through a prior ITEP grant is nearly complete pending IDOT's review of the Project Development Report. Having PE I complete or in progress often helps in the scoring of future applications. A Square streetscape application would appear to be a solid fit, as a tie-in could be made with businesses that were impacted as a result of COVID.

Fiscal Impact: The FY 21-22 TIF Fund budget includes \$100,000 for the completion of PE II and construction engineering and more than \$400,000 for various construction improvements that are intended to be used as a match to leverage a possible local match requirement or as a smaller phased local project without grant funds. The remaining project (engineering and construction) carries a current estimated price tag of about \$2 million, though it should be noted that Tazewell County and its consulting engineer have been completing PE II for ADA sidewalk upgrades on the south side of the Square and other sites around the county. It is feasible that that portion of a project could be constructed separately as soon as 2022, though that would strictly be for ADA upgrades and not other softscape elements or a bumpout that would reduce the crossing distance to the interior park.

The next ITEP cycle is anticipated in the fall of 2022. Should that be the case, an awards announcement would generally be made in the spring of 2023 and if awarded, construction likely would not occur prior to the spring of 2024. The Notice of Funding Opportunity indicates an approximate announcement on RDMS awards about three months following the

January 10 application deadline. Even if that occurred, the need to complete design engineering would not allow for a construction letting any earlier than spring 2023.

Should there be interest in submitting an RDMS application for a Square streetscape project, staff would recommend only including a portion of the remaining construction. This would allow for some of the work to be completed but not utilize as much of the TIF Fund for a local match and allow for more financial flexibility for possible private redevelopment projects. Staff recommends focusing on all of the components on the north side of the Square and wrapping around to include N. Main St. between Peoria St. and Zinser Pl. and the short segment on the northeast side. These limits would allow for “clean” places to stop rather than trying to match new sidewalks and crosswalks that may eventually be replaced in the future. This portion of the project carries an estimated cost of \$655,000 for the Phase II and III engineering and construction. Staff recommends providing up to a 20% local match, which would commit the City to about \$131,000 of the project. Attached is a map showing these proposed project limits.

Please note that there is some uncertainty about what exactly would be included in the eventual Business 24 reconstruction project. It has been in IDOT’s capital improvement program for about two years but the selection of a project engineer has not begun. Given the possible timing for the review, announcement, and grant agreement as part of the RDMS program, staff figures that PE II would not be able to begin until at least the summer of 2022 if this proposed project were to be awarded by DCEO. Staff is very cautiously optimistic that more clarity on the BR 24 project may be known by then, which could therefore slightly reduce the scope of what would be included in an RDMS project if IDOT would be picking up some additional cost associated with sidewalk construction.

Action Requested: Staff seeks feedback on the possible submittal of an RDMS application. While the Square streetscape project is specifically identified above, other projects that fit the eligibility criteria can be considered.



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**POSSIBLE
RDMS GRANT
LOCATION MAP**



*Prepared by the City of Washington
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