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Small Business Façade Improvement Program Overview

The City of Hartford is directing up to \$2,000,000 in the format of forgivable loans to small businesses and property owners in the City of Hartford through its Small Business Façade Improvement Program. The intent of this forgivable loan program is to improve the physical appearance of their storefronts in order to increase storefront traffic and promote business attraction and retention in the City of Hartford.

This is a forgivable loan program. The maximum loan amount is \$50,000. The applicant must provide 25% match of the loan amount and agree to use a city-selected architectural and engineering firm and contractor. Annual reviews of the owner's property tax history will be conducted to ensure compliance. The loan will be forgiven at the end of the second year at the rate of 50% per annum.

I. Eligible Applicants

- a. Property owners and small business tenants of a property
- b. Located in defined eligible areas within the City of Hartford
- c. Not delinquent on real or personal property taxes
- d. In good standing with all City of Hartford codes and regulations (i.e., no violations of Zoning, Building, or Fire Codes, etc...)
- e. Can demonstrate financial capability to provide 25% private matching funds
- f. If the applicant is not the property owner, the applicant must provide written, signed, and notarized permission from the property owner to be considered eligible. If approved, the applicant will also need to have written, signed, and notarized permission from the property owner upon confirmation of a defined scope of work. Additionally, property owners will be required to sign a Promissory Note and Mortgage Deed securing the forgivable loan.
- g. Property owners must provide a signed and notarized property maintenance form upon the completion of construction.

II. Defined Eligible Areas

- a. Major commercial corridors including Albany Avenue, Wethersfield Avenue, Franklin Avenue, Maple Avenue, Farmington Avenue, North Main Street, and Blue Hills Avenue. Other areas are subject to approval by the Façade Review Committee.

- b. The City will prioritize projects of significant economic development contribution and will appropriate funds by geographical areas.

III. Eligible Uses of Funds

- a. Improvements to the building façade(s) which are visible from the street, including the front façade and side façades fronting side streets. Treatments to include cleaning, painting, replacement and repair of openings, accessibility improvements, security improvements, graffiti removals, masonry repair, signage, siding, and awnings.
- b. Landscaping may be eligible and is subject to approval by the Façade Review Committee on a case-by-case basis.
- c. The Small Business Division reserves the right to fund a designated area of buildings that adds to an existing or future improvement of proposed large-scale economic development efforts within the City.
- d. Priorities are given to adjacent buildings that demonstrate substantial need for improvement; significantly contribute to the integrity, uniformity, and aesthetics of a block; and maintain the characteristics of the neighborhood.

IV. Ineligible Uses of Funds

- a. Properties targeted for demolition
- b. Properties without retail or commercial uses
- c. Buildings that are structurally unsound
- d. Buildings that are exempt from property taxes
- e. Interior renovation and flat roof repair and replacement
- f. The refinancing of existing debt and payment of interest generated from interim financing
- g. Payment or reimbursement for participant's in-kind labor
- h. Payment of any taxes
- i. Site work or ancillary activities on the property including septic systems or laterals, roof repairs, grading, parking lots, sidewalks, fences, or general maintenance
- j. Any work that, in the Review Committee's opinion, is inconsistent with the goals of this program

V. Consideration and Requirements for Applicants

- a. The owner or tenant of a mixed-use or commercial building
- b. Applicants must return an IRS W-9 form
- c. Applicants must show proof of matching funds to be eligible for the forgivable loan
- d. Property owners must be willing to sign a property declaration form upon completion of the Project
- e. Selected applicants shall conform strictly to all federal, state, and municipal laws; applicable rules and regulations; any and all amendments thereto; and to the methods

and procedures of all governmental boards, bureaus, offices, commissions, and other agencies

VI. Pre-Application

During Pre-Application, applicants will fill out an online survey identifying the property address and a preliminary scope of work. This process is designed for the City to have a better understanding of desired areas of façade improvement.

VII. Application and Reward Process

- a. The City of Hartford will form a Façade Review Committee (FRC) to determine the approval/disapproval of all applications
- b. Applications are evaluated based upon the following:
 - i. Applicant eligibility and readiness: readily available funding and property owner agreement for façade improvement of the building;
 - ii. Physical impact: visible improvement to the building block and commercial corridor;
 - iii. Economic impact: proximity to other economic development projects within the City of Hartford and is of strategic importance to the City;
 - iv. Co-location with other properties;
 - v. Environmental impact: addresses blighted properties and brings properties back up to standard.
- c. Priorities are given to adjacent buildings that demonstrate substantial need for improvement, significantly contribute to the integrity, uniformity, and aesthetics of a block, and maintain the characteristics of the neighborhood
- d. Once approved, the applicant shall enter an agreement with the architect and start on schematic design. The architect is responsible for verifying that all the façade designs meet the City of Hartford planning and zoning requirements and Hartford Historic Properties and/or Historic Preservation requirements.
- e. After final design approval, the project is then ready to be packaged for contractor selection and entering a standard agreement between the property owner and contractor

VIII. Architect, Engineer, and Contractor Selection

- a. Architect and Engineer Selection

The City of Hartford shall select a qualified full-service architectural and engineering (A&E) firm from a pre-qualified list of architects provided by the City of Hartford through the bidding or lowest and most responsible quote. This Firm will be selected based upon professional qualifications and knowledge and experience of local architecture. A standard A.I.A. (American Institute of Architects) agreement is entered into between the City of Hartford and the Firm. To ensure the highest level of quality, all drawings must contain specifications of all material used in the construction of the project. The selected firm is responsible for verifying existing conditions, schematic design, design development, and construction administration for all awarded projects. The selected firm is also required to

conduct regular site visits at least once a week, prepare field reports, review pay requests and attend meetings. Additionally, the selected firm must be available to answer questions from the Contractor, Façade Review Committee, City of Hartford staff, and any Board or Commission having property oversight powers.

b. Contractor Selection

The City of Hartford, in collaboration with the selected A&E firm, shall issue an RFQ for qualified contractors after projects are approved. The City will select 2-3 contractors working on different packages of projects through a closed bid process. The general contractor(s) selected for a commercial façade project must be licensed and insured. Any work performed by the Contractor that is outside the contracted scope of work will not receive funding. The City reserves the right to withhold payments if the work is not performed satisfactorily. The City highly encourages strong MWBE contractor participation in this program.

The Owner/Contractor agreement shall contain all applicable state and local requirements including Affirmative Action and the use of lead-free and mercury-free paints with a focus on environmentally friendly practices.

IX. Promotion of Equitable Outcomes and Program Awareness

The City of Hartford is committed to ensuring equitable distribution of this fund to any women and minority owned businesses. The City will deploy necessary methods to market the program and allow greater access to women-and minority-owned businesses.