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City Council

Approval of 2024 Neighborhood Matching Grants Awards

Agenda Date: 3/5/2024
Agenda Item Number: 4.E
File Number: 24-0171

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Title

Approval of 2024 Neighborhood Matching Grants Awards

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to approve the 11 Neighborhood Matching Grant proposals recommended by the Grant Review Team and authorize the completion of contracts for the proposals.

Report

Issue:

Whether to approve the 11 Neighborhood Matching Grant proposals recommended by the Grant Review Team and authorize the completion of contracts for the proposals.

Staff Contact:

Lydia Moorehead, Associate Planner, Community Planning & Development, 360.570.3746.

Presenter(s):

None - Consent Calendar Item.

Background and Analysis:

The Neighborhood Matching Grant program helps Olympia's Recognized Neighborhood Associations (RNAs) fund community-driven projects.

The program goal is *“to encourage projects that foster civic pride, enhance, and beautify neighborhoods, expand citizen involvement, and promote the interests of the Olympia community. To accomplish this goal, the Olympia City Council will make available grant funds to Recognized Neighborhood Associations up to a 50/50 matching basis. The City Council firmly believes that community participation and commitment to accomplish improvements within our City are mutually beneficial to all Olympia residents.”*

2024 Application and Review Process

The City Council approved an increased budget of up to \$33,000 to fund the Neighborhood Matching Grant program. Grant awards range from up to \$5000 for a single RNA and up to \$10,000 for multiple RNA's. Grant awards can cover up to 50% of project costs and must be matched by the RNA with direct financial contribution and/or in-kind labor and materials.

A total of 13 applications were received for 2024. They were reviewed by an interdisciplinary team of city staff. Applications were evaluated against the following program goals:

- Result in a direct and lasting environmental benefit to the neighborhood and/or wider community;
- Enhance and beautify the neighborhood and/or wider community;
- Foster community engagement and enrichment opportunities through the use of neighborhood sweat equity;
- Ready to begin after funding has been approved;
- Completed by December 31, 2024 (or by December 31, 2025 for projects within the public right-of-way);
- Easily accomplished with volunteers; and
- Does not require extensive City staff involvement to be completed.

The attached table provides a summary of the applications recommended for funding. Since the total amount requested falls below the amount budgeted, all eligible projects can be fully funded. Two applications were deemed ineligible for the program.

Climate Analysis:

Several of the proposed projects will result in long term reductions of greenhouse gas emissions in the following sectors: Transportation & Land Use, Water & Waste, and Agriculture, Forests and Urban Tree Canopy.

Projects will support the following strategies:

- Increase the use of active travel such as walking and biking through the establishment of opportunities to gather and play within neighborhoods and maintaining existing pathways.
- Reduce water consumption by using and expanding rain gutter/rain barrel watering systems for green areas.
- Preserve and manage forests and other ecosystems to sequester carbon and preserve and manage urban tree canopy to provide shade and mitigate urban heat island effects through the maintenance, addition and preservation of existing green areas and trees within neighborhoods.

Equity Analysis:

Residents that are part of RNA's who chose to apply for grant funding and scored highest, will benefit from this action. Each application was scored by the grant review team after analyzing the proposals against the program goals.

An equity score was assigned to each application based on the RNA's burden level as determined by the Thurston County Stormwater Equity Index. This index assigns a burden level to specific geographic areas of the city using factors such as education, homeownership rate, poverty rate,

unemployment rate, percent of residents using SNAP/food stamps, proximity to services and livability scores.

Residents of RNA's that did not apply for a matching grant and residents that do not live within an established RNA will be burdened as they are not eligible for grant funding. Some areas currently not represented by RNA's are within areas of higher burden per the equity index map.

The equity index map includes many relevant demographics; however, it does not directly address race, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, and immigration. While the application scoring included an equity score based on each RNA's burden level, which helps to distribute benefits more equitably, this does not consider populations that live outside of RNA's or those RNA's who chose not to apply for grant funding. Providing grant opportunities outside of the RNA system and/or scoring applications from new RNA's or first-time applicants higher may be more equitable.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

RNAs continue to show a strong interest in this program. Over the last eight years, the city has funded an average of 9 applications per year. The 2024 Neighborhood Matching Grant funds will support exciting projects including community events, beautification efforts through maintenance of green spaces, RNA communications, administration, and landscape, signage and mural improvements that increase community pride and a sense of place. These projects bring residents together and benefit the wider community of Olympia by strengthening the vitality of neighborhoods. The proposed projects continue a strong partnership that provides environmental, aesthetic, and community engagement benefits to City residents and businesses.

Financial Impact:

The 2024 budget provides up to \$33,000 to fund the Neighborhood Matching Grant program. This amount was increased by an additional \$10,000 above previous years' funding levels. The total recommended grant level for 2024 is \$28,106 which includes fees for the use of an online application platform.

This funding will leverage \$88,897 in projects and improvements across the City and engage 1,491 volunteer hours of residents working together to strengthen Olympia's neighborhoods.

Estimated staff time to support each matching grant ranges from 10-20 hours each, for a total of 120-240 staff hours for the 12 recommended projects. Funding for this time is included in the City budget.

Options:

Note: All options would be contingent on negotiation of agreements with recognized neighborhood associations to complete each project in 2024.

1. Approve the Neighborhood Matching Grants as recommended by the Grant Review Team.
2. Approve partial or full funding of a subset of grant requests that the Council finds consistent with the goals of the program.
3. Do not fund some of the applications recommended by the Grant Review Team.

Attachments:

Grant Review Team Recommendation