

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: 2009/10 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT GRANTS

BACKGROUND:

For the 14th consecutive year, the City Council has appropriated Local Option Sales Tax funds to finance the Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP). This year, \$50,000 was approved for neighborhood programs, with \$25,000 earmarked for the NIP and the remaining \$25,000 allocated for a broader array of neighborhood projects to be determined by the City Council.

As you will recall, there are two main goals of the NIP: (1) To strengthen a neighborhood's appearance with the addition of permanent physical improvements, and (2) to promote a greater sense of community through resident participation in a neighborhood project.

Each project application is rated on the following 100-point system. A project must achieve at least 50 points to be considered:

Resident Involvement (30 points maximum):*

...the number of residents donating their time and/or labor to accomplish the project

...the number of residents donating funds to the project

*10 points 1-25 people; 20 points 26-50 people; 30 points over 50 people

Project Impact (30 points maximum):**

...the number of residents who will be positively affected by the improvement

**10 points 1-25 people; 20 points 26-100 people; 30 points over 100 people

Safety (10 points maximum):

...enhancement of safety in the neighborhood

Public Space (10 points maximum):

...promotion of social interaction by utilizing public space

Improved Housing (10 points maximum)

Environment (10 points maximum):

...support for the environment

This year, three applications were received for a total funding request of \$13,544.50. The Review Panel, comprised of City staff members and two citizens, scored the applications and recommended that two projects be approved for funding at this time. The third application received a sufficient number of points to make it eligible for funding; however, the Review Panel asked for further clarification of its total budget and where specific species of trees would be located. It is anticipated that it will be presented to the City Council for approval on September 8, 2009.

The Neighborhood Improvement Project Review Panel is requesting approval by the City Council of the following projects:

STATE/ARBOR STREET TREE PLANTING PROJECT:

This grant is for the second phase of a very successful neighborhood tree planting project that began in 2007. The request is for 20 trees of varied species – three will be planted on State Avenue, four on Wood Street, one at the east end of Lettie, and the remainder will be planted on Arbor Street. This first phase of this grant was an ideal neighborhood project as it brought together landlords, permanent residents, and renters (including students and non-students). The result has been an increased community awareness and neighbors getting to know each other who, otherwise, might not have met. The 2009/10 NIP application has received equally enthusiastic neighborhood support.

This project necessitates the relocation of 138 feet of overhead light wire. The City's estimate to move the wire underground is \$2,500; that cost is included in the total project cost. In addition, Iowa State University owns the land south of the section of Arbor Street where some of the trees will be planted, and a letter of support from the University has been received.

The total cost of the project is \$10,000. Requested City funding is \$5,000. The applicants are providing cash and in-kind contributions in the amount of \$5,000. Neighborhood involvement will include planning, research, cash, and in-kind labor for planting, wrapping, watering, and mulching the trees.

OLD TOWN PARK LANDSCAPING PROJECT:

This project will be accomplished in three phases. The first phase includes rebuilding the south perennial planter bed, the small planter box near the seating area, and creating a memorial plaque for John and Rowena Stevens, who, in the 1880's and early 1890's, owned the lot where the Park now exists. The project involves removal of badly deteriorated railroad ties that comprise the walls of a planter box. In keeping with the Old Town Historic District design guidelines, the replacement walls will be built of limestone. Because the proposed bed is shorter than the existing one, a shrub

border/barrier will be planted to the east of the new bed, continuing the separation from the residential property to the south. Current plantings will be removed from beds, potted, care for during construction, and then re-planted in the new bed. Incorporated into the small planter box near the seating area will be a memorial plaque detailing information about Mr. and Mrs. Stevens.

Neighborhood involvement will include planning, research, cash, in-kind labor for digging, potting, re-planting, watering, and weeding plants, and staffing a plant sale to raise funds for this project.

The total cost of the project is \$16,000. Requested City funding is \$5,000. The applicants are providing cash and in-kind contributions in the amount of \$6,000. In addition, since Old Town Park is a City park, the Parks and Recreation Department is providing \$5,000 towards the project.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can approve the expenditure of \$10,000 to fund NIP grants for the State and Arbor Street Tree Project and Old Town Park Landscaping Project.
2. The City Council can reject any or all of the projects for funding at this time.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Supporting projects that strengthen neighborhoods is in keeping with one of the City Council's goals.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1, thereby approving Neighborhood Improvement Program grants for the State and Arbor Street Tree Project in the amount of \$5,000 and the Old Town Park Landscaping Project in the amount of \$5,000.