CITY OF COOS BAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY
Agenda Staff Report

MEETING DATE	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER
April 17, 2012	

TO: Chair Gene Melton and Board Members

FROM: Joyce Jansen, Economic Revitalization Administrator

Through: Rodger Craddock, City Manager

ISSUE **Review of the Façade Improvement Program**

BACKGROUND

The Urban Renewal Agency implemented the current façade improvement grant program in November 2006. Development of the program began in August 2006 with review of similar programs offered by cities located in Oregon. The Agency finalized the program in September and adopted resolutions to amend the Downtown and Empire plans to include the program on November 7, 2006. Funding for the grant program was approved with $100,000 for the Downtown district and $50,000 for the Empire district. A report of the grants approved in each district is attached.

Program Financial Assistance: The program provides 50/50 matching grants for eligible façade improvements.

a) Tenants/business owners: Matching grants from a minimum of $1,000 to a maximum of $5,000. A total project of under $2,000 would not be eligible for assistance under this program.
b) Commercial Property Owners: Matching grants with a maximum of $25,000. A total project of under $2,000 would not be eligible for assistance under this program.

Under Coos Bay's current façade grant program applications are processed on a first come, first serve basis. Documentation of the property owner's financial ability to complete the project is required as part of the application for the grant. Inspection of the completed project by city staff and proof of payment for the work completed is required before the city releases the grant funds. Public accounting practices and audit guidelines require proof of owner's payment to the contractor completing the project be submitted to the city before grant funds are released. The grant is made with the property owner and the City cannot be in the position to pay grant funds to the contractor. Grant recipients also complete a W-9 prior to receiving their grant funds.

Purpose of the Program: The purpose of the Façade Improvement Program is provide financial assistance to property owners and tenants of commercial properties to promote the revitalization of Coos Bay's Urban Renewal Districts.

Program Objectives:

a. To improve the aesthetics of existing businesses and buildings,
b. To provide financial assistance for façade improvements to small business owners and/or tenants of commercial properties,
c. To encourage urban renewal district façade improvements such as painting, awnings and changes to other exterior building features.

Area of Eligibility: All commercial property and/or businesses located within the Downtown and Empire Urban Renewal Districts. Maps of the districts are attached.

Eligible Improvements: Funds may be used for exterior façade renovation of commercial use buildings only. For purposes of this program "façade" will be interpreted to mean any exterior visible wall, so long as the font facing a public right-of-way is included as part of the improvements. Eligible improvements include, but many not be limited to, one or several improvement elements such as:

- Restoration of masonry, brickwork or wood and metal cladding
- Replacement or repair of architectural features
- Replacement or repair of awning(s)
- Installment or repair of exterior lighting
- Gutters and downspouts
- Window repair/replacement
- Structural support for façade only
- Entranceway modification
- Painting of exterior walls
- New Construction for façade treatments only

Services of a licensed architect or engineer are eligible for reimbursement to a building owner for up to a maximum of 10% of the total project cost, not to exceed $5000.

Architectural Guidelines: The program guidelines are advisory, providing suggestions for ways in which to rehabilitate existing structures.

For all properties:

- Protect and maintain masonry, wood and architectural metals through appropriate treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, paint removal and reapplication of protective coating systems.
- Evaluate the overall condition of the building materials to determine whether more than simple protection and restoration are required, or if major repairs to features will be necessary.
- A building with multiple tenants must be remodeled in a unified manner.
- The DRC and URA, at their discretion, may consider other conditions and building appurtenances.

For historically significant properties:

- Identify, retain and preserve storefronts and their functional and decorative features that are important in defining the overall character of the building, such as display windows,

doors, transoms, kick plates, corner posts, etc. Removing inappropriate, non-historic cladding, false roofs and other later alterations can help reveal the historic character of a storefront.

- Replace in-kind features that are too deteriorated to restore if the overall form and detailing are still evident, using the physical evidence as a model. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then comparable substitute materials may be considered.

For other than historically significant properties:

- Introduce a design that is compatible in size, scale, material or color to surrounding properties.
- Lighting standards and fixtures shall be of a design and size compatible with the building and adjacent areas.
- Building components, such as windows, doors, eaves and parapets, shall be coordinated with the design theme and proportional with each other.

Basic Color Guidelines for applicants and the DRC/URA to consider:

- Choose exterior colors that harmonize (rather than contrast) with the surrounding buildings. Color should not be used as a "sign" or to attract attention. Intense or extremely bright colors create disharmony that may distract from the attractiveness of the urban renewal districts.
- Using harmonizing colors does not limit applicants to the same colors as neighboring properties. There is broad latitude in these color guidelines.
- When considering color, applicants should include all elements of the property – walls, fences, planters, signs and other accessory structures.
- Keep it simple. Too many different colors or too many shades of a color are distraction and tend to detract from the building's appearance.
- Natural material, like stone or brick, usually are more interesting and attractive when left in their natural state, not painted.

Approval Process:

- Submission of a completed Façade Improvement Program application (available from the Economic Revitalization Office and the city's website)
- The Design Review Committee reviews the proposed project and gives a recommendation to city staff to forward to the Urban Renewal Agency for their consideration of approval. The committee also provides design assistance to applicants.
- After the URA approves the grant an agreement is prepared setting all terms and conditions of the award of grant. The agreement serves as the legal commitment of both parties.
- The applicant constructs project.
- Upon completion of the project to the satisfaction of the grant agreement and inspection by staff, applicant submits invoices for reimbursement of 50% of eligible costs. A request for payment is submitted by the Economic Revitalization Administrator to the Finance Department and a check prepared.

Grants Awarded:

The following chart show a summary of the Urban Renewal Agency's two districts and the façade grants awarded.

District	Year Established	Size of District	No. of Grants	Grants Funded
Downtown UR District	1988	1,298.3 acres	23	$360,316
Empire UR District	1995	271.3	5	$130,081

RESEARCH WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

Staff has contacted other cities for information on their façade grant programs. A brief summary of these programs is attached to this report.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PROGRAM

During the past several months a number of suggestions for possible changes to the program have been mentioned. A few of these include a change in the projects eligible for funding, a rating or point system to determine funding levels, setting a level at which an architect for the project would be required, and changing or increasing the grant amount for business owners not owning the building their business in located.

ADVANTAGES

The façade improvement program provides a way for the City of Coos Bay to assist commercial property owners and business owners in restoring and rehabilitating their buildings. Removal of blight not only is aesthetically pleasing, but it also improves the economic base of the city by increasing property values, encouraging business to remain or move to the business districts, and inviting visitors and shoppers to use the area. The program is a key component in revitalizing our community.

DISADVANTAGES

None identified.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget impacts at this time.

ACTION REQUESTED

The presentation of this report is intended as informational only. Should the Urban Renewal Agency wish to modify the façade improvement program staff's recommendation would be to schedule a work session for review and discussion of possible changes.

Attachments:

- Before and After Pictures
- District maps
- Report on Programs from Other Cities
- Summary Report of Grants Awarded
- Urban Renewal Brochure