

CITY OF COOS BAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY
Agenda Staff Report

MEETING DATE May 17, 2016	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER
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TO: Chair Jennifer Groth and Board Members

FROM: Eric Day

THROUGH: Rodger Craddock

ISSUE: Proposed Modification of the Urban Renewal Agency Façade Grant Program

BACKGROUND:

The Coos Bay downtown core, Front Street and Empire Districts have enjoyed some meaningful success utilizing the Urban Renewal Agency's (URA) façade grant program. The aesthetics and appearances of quite a few buildings have been transformed from bleak and plain to displaying beautiful historic aesthetic charm. What has been missing is a unified means of upgrading structures and buildings in a manner that assures coordinated improvements to both facades and interior improvements. In order to unify these, staff is proposing to modify the current façade grant program into a capital improvement program. This new program would provide the URA a more creative means of looking at comprehensive upgrades to existing buildings.

The use of public funds to leverage private improvements is not a new idea within the City. Staff is proposing to expand that approach to be project oriented and focused at helping building owners to more fully utilize their buildings. This proposal would not only improve the general appearance of the area but help to reduce district vacancies, thereby expanding the taxable base of the URA. As we know, healthy commercial areas generate increased vibrancy and appeal which, in turn, encourages more private investment and additional allure to residents and visitors alike.

Under this flexible proposal, facades can be improved, windows and awnings replaced, roofs repaired, elevators fixed, and murals installed on building walls. In short, the URA would have increased flexibility each funding cycle to decide where the money will be spent, be it on one large development project or many smaller ones. At the end of the day, this creates a more aggressive program to address blight in the entire urban renewal area.

Staff is suggesting that during 1 – 2 funding cycles per year applicants would bring their proposals to the URA for funding. The URA would then decide which proposals to fund for that cycle. A number of criteria could be utilized to aid in the selection. Some of these criteria could include:

- Matching funds (these would now not be required but criteria to consider),
- Importance of the project to the URA as a whole,
- Increase in tax assessment to the URA,
- Timing of the project and
- Visual impact to the area.

ACTION REQUESTED:

This topic is for discussion purposes only. Staff is looking for direction from the URA on this proposal.