

Grants for Small Businesses

Q: What would be the impact of the proposed budget of \$150,000? How many businesses and for what purpose?

A: *Staff has initially planned to award a maximum of \$5,000 grants per eligible business. Presuming each business receives this maximum award amount, the City would be able to award 30 grants at the proposed budget. Staff currently anticipates that grant funds could be used to support the day-to-day operation of a business. Eligible expenses may include, but are not limited to: rent or mortgage payments, utility payments, capital investments in business equipment, payroll expenses, operation or supplier costs.*

Q: What would be the impact if the budget were increased to \$450,000?

A: *A budget increase would allow the City to provide grants to additional businesses. Presuming each business received the maximum grant award, the City would be able to award 90 grants at the increased amount.*

Q: Will child care businesses be included as an eligible type of small business to receive a grant?

A: *Yes, provided those child care businesses operate with a legal business structure in the City of Takoma Park and are in good standing with the State of Maryland.*

Q: Will technical assistance be provided to small businesses as a part of this program?

A: *The Economic Development Team is always available to provide technical assistance to local businesses and offers one-on-one support to all City businesses whether they receive funding through this program or not.*

Q: How will the City prioritize applicants from the small business community? Will those applicants who have previously received financial assistance be allowed to apply for more funds? Will those small business applicants that are a part of one of the two existing business associations be eligible to apply for grant and/or loan funds?

A: *All businesses in the City that meet the eligibility requirements for the grant will be eligible to apply and be considered for funding. Priority will be given to businesses based on a number of factors: prior assistance received (both from the City and other relief efforts); minority business ownership; business revenue; ensuring a diverse geographic range of awardees throughout the City, particularly to those businesses that are not currently represented by a Takoma Park business association.*

Multifamily Rehab

Q: Who are the beneficiaries of the Multi-Family Rehabilitation Project? Tenants, Building Owners, etc. Please elaborate.

A: *Many of Takoma Park's multifamily buildings are aging and require rehabilitation. The goal of the Multifamily Rehabilitation Fund is to spur rehab that may not be financially feasible for multifamily building owners, many of whom are small business owners themselves. By utilizing these funds to incentivize repairs and rehab to buildings, tenants*

will benefit as they will live in upgraded and safer buildings. Beneficiaries of the funds will include all current stakeholders in the buildings themselves (tenants, owners, visitors) as well as those who may call Takoma Park home in the future. Condominium associations will also be eligible to apply for funds.

Q: How does the renter benefit? Can you provide examples of projects? Is this enough funding?

A: *Renters will benefit from upgraded building systems and energy efficient updates. Living in buildings with systems past their useful life can submit tenants to outages of essential services such as heat, hot water, elevators, and electricity, as well as unnecessarily high utility bills if the tenants are paying for utilities. By incentivizing owners to make upgrades to these systems through this fund, renters can receive full value for their rent, live in safe and decent buildings with consistent services, and possibly receive lower energy bills, depending on the scope of the rehab project.*

There are more needs in Takoma Park's facilities than there are funds available. Partnering with the City's Sustainability Manager, a common application will be created in which applicants can access both the Multifamily Rehabilitation Fund as well as the Energy Efficiency Upgrades fund to maximize the impact of both funds.

Business Incubator

Q: What is the intent of this project?

A: *The goal of the project is to seed the development of more affordable commercial spaces or market-style locations for local entrepreneurs who are looking to expand their businesses into brick and mortar locations but cannot afford existing commercial rents in the City.*

Q: What partners will be involved in the acquisition of property for this project?

A: *The City would seek private and non-profit partners who could assist with the development of additional physical commercial space and the day-to-day management and operations of the property, including assistance for entrepreneurs and business operators.*

Q: How long might acquisition take?

A: *The City does not currently own nor control property that would meet the requirements of this project. Pending approval of funding, City staff will work with our partners and the community to identify the best locations and models for the project. At that time, an acquisition or construction timeline can be more accurately determined. Acquisition may not be required if the City finds a partner that currently owns property that meets the requirements of the project.*

Q: Should Council include provisions to mandate a timeline over the next 5 years?

A: *City staff believes that we can encumber and spend the funds on the U.S. Treasury required timeline. A development project such as this may be difficult to assign a timeline,*

as we are looking for private sector partners whose timelines may not align with a Council-mandated timeline created without the partner's input.

Recreation Center Redevelopment

Q: Can you provide more information about the design of the facility?

A: *Design of the future facility has not yet commenced. The first step in the process of the recreation center redevelopment is to procure a Site and Financial Feasibility Study that will assess the level of redevelopment that can realistically occur on the site within topographical, financial, and zoning constraints. The study will inform the City how to approach the design of the facility, if it is to be procured by the City alone or in combination with a development partner. The RFP for the study will be released by the end of February. The City has also received \$145,000 from the State in a NED Grant to support design services.*

Q: Is this project for rehabilitation or planning? What is the status of the design plans?

A: *The funds are for both rehab and planning on an as-needed basis. The redevelopment of the recreation center is realistically three to four years from breaking ground and the recreation center has short-term conditional needs. To continue functioning as a recreation center for our residents, the facility will most likely need work done in the interim between now and groundbreaking, so these funds can be accessed in event that other general funds cannot cover cost of emergency repairs needed to maintain the level of service our residents expect and deserve. The funds will also be utilized for soft costs of the redevelopment of the recreation center, such as planning and design.*

Laptop Lending Program

Q: What would be the impact if the budget for purchasing Laptops for the Laptop Lending program was increased to \$25,000?

A: *Increasing the Laptop Lending program budget to \$25,000 would give us flexibility to fully flesh out this program over the duration of ARPA fund eligibility, but it would likely not be spent immediately. The original request for funding for 30 laptops and a charging cart was based on the idea that we would have enough devices to explore how demand actually plays out. As a program without precedent at this library, we believe that the program will be both used and useful, but there will be a learning curve for us. Thirty laptops were enough to be ambitious while still allowing for existing staff capacity to evaluate, learn from, and manage a new program.*

Increasing the budget would allow us to either: a) purchase more laptops immediately, for which we may or may not have staff capacity to manage; b) purchase more expensive laptops, for which patrons may be reluctant to assume responsibility; or, c) replace all of the laptops after a period of use, assuming the program is successful. I do not believe we would be prepared to immediately spend more money on this program, but after a year

or two we will have a better idea of the wear and tear on devices, as well as the resident demand and required staff resources to scale up.

Broadband Program

Q: How many people will the broadband program serve? How does it work?

A: The budget for this program will support subsidized Internet Essentials by Comcast subscriptions for approximately 1,500 households. This would support 100% participation for 34 months (March 2022 through December 2024) for the number of households listed as having a household income under \$35,000, per the Takoma Park Data Explorer information available at the time of initial proposal, but it is unlikely that we would have 100% participation from any demographic. Including households that earn up to \$50,000 makes an additional ~500 households eligible and would have a better chance of utilizing all of the funds and reaching the most households in need.

The way the program works is that the City would request an initial number of promotional codes, which would be redeemed by residents as they sign up for their own Internet Essentials account. The City would then be billed for the number of codes that are used through the date we determine. The subscription includes the rental of a modem/router. Everything from setup onwards is handled by Comcast; the City is just responsible for paying the invoice. Any residents who qualify for Internet Essentials under Comcast's terms would be able to stay on after the City's subsidy ends at the Internet Essentials rate (currently about \$10 per month before taxes).