City of Columbia
701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Housing & Neighborhood Services
To: City Council
From: City Manager & Staff
Council Meeting Date: February 3, 2025
Re: Authorizing the City Manager to enter into mini-grant agreements for the Love Your Block program

Executive Summary

The City of Columbia was one of 16 cities selected for the 2024-2026 cohort of the Love Your Block program in cooperation with Johns Hopkins University and funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies. The Love Your Block grant includes up to $20,000 in funds to support neighborhood activities and minor home repair, including mini-grants, for Fiscal Year 2025. This resolution authorizes the City Manager to enter into mini-grant agreements with local organizations and individuals.

Discussion

Columbia's initial application for the Love Your Block program included three priorities focused in the central city, specifically Census tracts 9 and 21:
- Neighborhood cleanups and dumpsters for resident use.
- Home maintenance on owner occupied structures.
- Transformation of City-owned lots on West Sexton Road.

Since our selection in the program, City staff have worked with staff with the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation (BCPI) at Johns Hopkins University to refine our Public Problem Statement: *With support from Mayor Buffaloe, the City of Columbia, Missouri's Love Your Block project will revitalize central neighborhoods, zip codes 65201, 65202 and 65203, by enhancing safety, cleanliness, green spaces, tree canopy, and the arts. The project aims to boost neighborhood pride, improve appearance, and create safer, beautiful communities by 2026.*

Conducting a mini-grant program to support this work is a requirement of the Love Your Block program. BCPI is asking participating cities to open their mini-grant program on or near February 14, announce the recipients on or near April 22 with work to be completed by August 31, 2025. A second year of funding is available to conduct a similar process in 2026.

Staff are proposing a mini-grant program that would provide up to $2,500 for projects in central and northeast Columbia. Eligible applicants are individuals (including individuals on behalf of neighborhood groups), non-profit organizations, faith organizations and schools.

Informational meetings will be held in February and March to assist potential applicants. Mini-grant applications will be reviewed by a committee using a scoring process based on the priorities of Love Your Block. Post-project reporting and photos will be requested from each recipient.

This resolution will authorize the city manager to enter into the mini-grant agreements; these agreements shall be substantially in the form of Exhibit A. A document that includes the mini-

WARD 1

R18-25: Authorizing the City Manager to enter into "Love Your Block" grant agreements to support neighborhood activities and minor home repair.

This is a wonderful program and I have heard a lot of interest already. A few questions I have gotten from interested citizens this week. When will the application questions become available? When are applications due? When and where will the informational meetings be held? Do you have a flyer that I can use to help get the word out for meetings?

Staff Answers

The application will be available on February 14 and applications are due on March 21. We hope to announce the recipients by April 7; projects need to be complete by August 31. Informational sessions with assistance in completing applications will be held:

- Tuesday, Feb. 25 - Columbia Public Library - 4:00-7:15 p.m. (tentative)
- Thursday, Feb. 27 - The ARC - 4:30-7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 5 - The ARC - 1:00-3:00 p.m.
- Saturday, March 8 - Columbia Public Library - 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. (tentative)

City staff will also be available to meet with residents individually as needed. We will have flyers and will get those to you as soon as available. We are meeting with the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation tomorrow (2/4) to get additional guidance on the outreach plan for the mini-grants.