



Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED)

Date: November 19, 2013

To: Council Member Lisa Goodman, Community Development Committee

Subject: Cookie Cart façade grant

Recommendation: Authorize a grant up to \$30,000 of Year 34 CDBG dollars to The Cookie Cart to pay for and install bullet proof window in the Cookie Cart storefront located at 1119 West Broadway.

Previous Directives: None

Department Information

Prepared by: Jimmy Loyd, Project Coordinator (612-673-5026)

Approved by: Charles T. Lutz, CPED Deputy Director _____

Catherine A Polasky, Director of Economic Policy & Dev. _____

Presenters in Committee: Jimmy Loyd

Financial Impact

- Action is within the Business Plan
- Funds identified for investment are Year 34 CDBG dollars budgeted to the Great Streets program for real estate investments on commercial corridors.

Community Impact

- Neighborhood Notification – Staff notified the West Broadway Coalition and the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council.
- City Goals – Consistent with Jobs and Economic Vitality: Strong commercial corridors, thriving business connections and Teens prepared with career and life skills; A Safe Place to Call Home; Youth in school, involved, inspired and connected to an adult
- Comprehensive Plan – Consistent with plan
- Zoning Code – Complies with zoning

Supporting Information

The Cookie Cart is a North Minneapolis-based, non-profit organization focused on youth workforce development. The organization got its start in the early 1980s as a grassroots effort by Sister Jean Thuerauf, who opened her North Minneapolis home to neighborhood youth in an effort to help them escape gang recruitment. Every day after school, Sister Jean's home was filled with young people working on homework and baking cookies. Word quickly spread of Sister Jean's generosity, and, soon, her home was not large enough for the number of youth or cookies.

In 1988, the Cookie Cart was registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and the cookie baking was moved to a bakery on Emerson Avenue North, near West Broadway Avenue. In 1996, the Cookie Cart moved to its current prominent storefront location at 1119 West Broadway.

The Cookie Cart plans a significant building renovation in 2014 that will expand the organization's operations and services. The organization is committed to remaining a prominent, positive force on West Broadway, providing guidance and support to Northside youth and developing them as the leaders of our future workforce and contributors to a thriving Minneapolis. The project cost is estimated at \$1.4 million; to date, \$1 million has been raised. The Cookie Cart expects to raise the remainder of the needed dollars through charitable contributions, and does not expect to pursue any debt to cover the project cost.

As the fundraising was gaining traction early this summer, a stray bullet fired from the gas station across the street passed through the Cookie Cart's front window, narrowly missing a group of youth workers in the bakery. The Executive Director of the Cookie Cart wrote to CPED leadership about his concerns of safety and asked for assistance to enhance the building's security.

City staff initially identified Great Streets façade grant dollars administered by the West Broadway Coalition (WBC) as a source of assistance to install bullet proof glass in the building's prominent West Broadway storefront. However, these grant dollars were already earmarked by the WBC for higher-visibility façade improvements connected to the planned Cookie Cart expansion. Further, a Great Streets façade grant would only cover approximately half of the anticipated \$30,000 cost to install bullet proof glass in the entire storefront. Staff have identified another source for the investment – Great Streets CDBG dollars appropriated for real estate investments on commercial corridors. While these dollars are typically deployed as subordinate gap loans to finance real estate projects, in this case, due to the unique conditions and the fact that the Cookie Cart expansion does not contemplate any debt, as well as the small dollar amount needed, staff recommends investing these improvement dollars as a grant.

Staff recommends that the City Council authorize the use of up to \$30,000 in Year 34 CDBG dollars appropriated to the Great Streets program to install bullet proof glass at 1119 West Broadway. The glass installation will not only protect our youth, it will serve as a capital commitment toward the Cookie Cart's planned expansion at their current 1119 West Broadway site. An uncommitted balance of \$1.5 million in CDBG dollars budgeted to the Great Streets program would remain available for other commercial real estate investments in challenged corridors.