



Diane Nichols Tradd
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

Craig Thomas
Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*

FROM: Diane N. Tradd, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

DATE: April 14, 2019

SUBJECT: COUNCIL MOTION OF 3/10/2020 BY COUNCILOR ELLIOTT
REQUEST CITY MANAGER HAVE DPD REPORT ON THE STATUS OF EXPENDING FY20
EARMARK FROM THE STATE TO SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND
SECOND EARMARK FOR EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS TO SMALL BUSINESSES

The City was able to obtain \$125,000 of FY20 funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts via the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) as a result of the efforts of Representative Tom Golden, who secured earmarked funds for creation of an economic development grant program that will be administered by the City's Department of Planning and Development, through its Economic Development Office.

The grant program will focus on providing support to existing businesses located in the following commercial corridors:

- Lakeview Avenue at the intersection of West Sixth Street
- University Avenue
- Mammoth Road
- Bridge Street (north of the Merrimack River)

Businesses located in these corridors provide a valuable service to their respective neighborhood and support our local economy; however, they face many barriers to economic viability, resiliency, and further growth. Especially in light of the current pandemic, these small businesses need support in the areas of technical assistance, access to capital, workforce development/training, and sign and façade improvements.

With this earmark funding, the Economic Development Office will provide free technical assistance, education and training to our target group in the form of individual, one-on-one consultation or in a classroom/workshop setting on the following topics: accounting, financing, budgeting, marketing and store layout. Workshops will be free to participants of the target group and will provide them with the tools they need to stay competitive. After completing the workshop, businesses become eligible to apply for a grant up to \$2,000 to implement their strategies (e.g. website development) or for grants ranging from \$2,500-\$10,000 for sign and facade improvements. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Economic Development Office is prepared to offer virtual workshops and consultations.

Additionally, the Economic Development Office in collaboration with the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Cultural Office of Lowell (CASE) will implement other streetscape improvements to include the installation of new trash receptacles, banners, street furniture, landscaping, public art projects, and other critical infrastructure improvements as needed if identified as critical to business support, development, and/or expansion. This includes, but is not limited to, sidewalk repair, and utility relocation. These beautification projects will not only benefit small business owners but will also benefit customers, residents, students as well as visitors in these neighborhoods.

The primary intent of the program is to support long-term small business resiliency, profitability and improved commercial real estate within these business corridors. The broad scope of the grant is intentional so as to provide flexibility in meeting the needs of businesses in Lowell.

We are waiting to receive the funds from EOLWD and are prepared to begin outreach in mid-April.

DNT/ns

cc: Christine McCall, Director of Economic Development