



CITY OF MOUNT RAINIER BUSINESS TOOLBOX PROGRAM



Business Development Incentives

A Focused Economic Development Strategy: Business Attraction and Retention

A key strategy to ensure the city's economic vitality is a diverse mix of retail and commercial establishments. The City would like to leverage private and public investments to support the retention, attraction, and expansion of quality retail within the city's major commercial districts. The City would like to establish business incentives to fuel additional economic investments in the city's major commercial districts, which include: The Mixed-Use Town Center (M-U TC) zone; Queens Chapel Road; Varnum Street; and the industrial areas: Otis Street and Wells Ave.

I. TOWN CENTER BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND EXPANSION PROGRAM GUIDELINES

A. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The goal of the *Town Center Business Attraction and Expansion Program (TCBAEP)* is to support the City's economic development goals to attract high-quality retail businesses to Mount Rainier's Mixed-Use Town Center (M-U TC) zone. The City's M-U TC zone development plan (aka "The Plan"), identifies targeted areas of opportunity for infill and major/minor renovations. Specific vision strategies are broken down among three distinct districts. Business attraction and expansion efforts will focus on the development/renovation recommendations identified in the plan. Applications will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis, and will be reviewed and ranked based on meeting the program criteria and design guidelines.

B. FUNDING AVAILABLE

The program is supported by a \$50,000 grant from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, Community Legacy Program. The applicant will be eligible to receive a dollar-for-dollar matching grant, of up to 50% of the total project cost, not to exceed \$10,000 per building, to assist with exterior and interior improvements of eligible businesses in the M-U TC zone. Awards will be made on a reimbursable basis only. The City of Mount Rainier reserves the sole right to amend, add, or delete any part or subpart of this program.

C. PROGRAM AREA

The City of Mount Rainier's vision for a viable downtown incorporates the existing positive attributes and potential opportunities to create a revitalized mixed-use town center. The M-U TC's physical character, land uses, transportation connections, and cultural assets inform the plan vision to transform the area into a walkable, vibrant, and attractive destination for residents and visitors. Three distinct districts have been identified within the M-U TC zone.

A. RHODE ISLAND AVENUE (RIA): The "Boulevard/Gateway" is envisioned as an urban boulevard, characterized by a wide grand spatial enclosure, new development and destination retail with tenants who prefer more exposure.

B. CIVIC CENTER / CITY CENTER (CC): The "Civic Center" is envisioned as the new heart of Mount Rainier, with the introduction of a civil green space at the current bus turn-around location in order to create a community-oriented space in front of City Hall and the Mount Rainier library.

C. UPPER 34 STREET (34 St.): The "Main Street Neighborhood" is envisioned as a cultural and neighborhood hub for residents that builds upon the existing Glut Food Co-op grocery store, Joe's Movement Emporium and other newer businesses. It is the primary focus area for facade improvement and the preferred location for local neighborhood-serving retail tenants.

II. SPECIFIC PROPERTY OR BUILDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The M-UTC plan includes tables in the Implementation section that prioritizes between 40-45 buildings within the M-U TC and outlines specific recommendations for facade improvements for these properties. Recommendations suggest some form of rehabilitation, upgrade, and/or restoration action according to the development plan vision.

Applicants will be required to review the tables, which can be viewed or printed here: [Specific Property or Building Recommendations](#). Copies can also be obtained at the Office of Economic Development (OED) in City Hall. Please note that the existing conditions analysis for buildings identified in the implementation tables was conducted in 2010, and therefore, building conditions may have changed. As a result, recommendations provided, may or may not apply, but, can be used as a guide to understand the general improvement needs for each building/property identified. Applicants should use the professional guidance of an architect and/or engineer to develop a design plan for their proposed property improvements.

D. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

- A. All registered businesses within the M-U TC zone are eligible to apply for assistance through the ***Town Center Business Attraction and Expansion Program (TCBAEP)***. However, certain criteria must be met before funding is approved.
- B. **Property owners:** A property owner is eligible for grant if a Rent Relief Agreement exists between the property owner and tenant. A copy of lease stating terms of rent relief must be provided with application. The property owner will also be required to sign the application and award agreement authorizing mutual consent and validity of the proposed property improvements and application supporting materials.
- C. **Tenants:** A tenant is eligible for a grant if the tenant bears responsibility for renovating the storefront to accommodate the new business/existing business. The tenant must also submit a copy of their lease agreement, which must be a minimum of three (3) years from the date that the application is approved.
- D. **New Businesses:** A new business is eligible to apply for a grant if the business can provide proof of a business license, use and occupancy, and a lease term agreement for a minimum of three years from the date that the application is submitted for consideration.
- E. **Job Creation and Retention.** The application business and/or property owner will be required to provide employment information that verifies number of jobs created and retained as a result of the completed improvements.
- F. **Eligible Improvements:**

- Demolition of existing façade treatments
- Improvement/replacement of retail signage, with coordinated signage standards
- Erection of individual storefront signage/awnings
- Minimal Brick/exterior facade cleaning and surface maintenance
- Brick painting, repair, and other building exterior finishes, and complimentary color schemes (e.g. repair, painting and re-siding of exterior walls including cornice, roof, decorative features, etc)
- Storefront window merchandising (exterior/interior)
- Tenant fit-out improvements (i.e. utilities connection work, permanent equipment)
- Repair, replacement, and/or installation of exterior lighting
- Pedestrian enhancements such as retaining walls, steps, sidewalks, pavers, permanent planters, and improved access to the immediate front egress of the building/storefront

G. Non – Eligible Improvements (Not All Inclusive):

- Improvements that are not permanent
- Purchase of non-permanent equipment
- Purchase of property
- General periodic maintenance
- Annual landscape vegetation
- Sweat equity
- Debt Refinancing
- Business payroll and working capital

H. Relocation/Attraction Eligibility for Interior Improvements:

Eligible costs may include connection and transfer of new utility services which include the installation/construction of “interior work” related to utility connection services, installation costs of “permanent” equipment required for business operations (i.e. equipment that cannot be removed from the property); interior remodeling of new retail space, exterior signs, storefront (i.e. window/doors), and other building exterior renovations, with the exception of the building roof).

I. Tax Payer Identification Number. All applicants are required to provide to the City a copy of the Internal Revenue Service Form W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification

Number and Certification. The City will only issue a **Notice to Proceed** after it receives the W-9 Form.

J. **Time of Project Completion and Fund Request.** The approved scope of work shall be completed by the date stated in the “Notice to Proceed;” and shall not exceed 120 days. The grant recipient shall request grant funds only after the project has been completed in accordance with the approved application, and all required inspections passed.

K. **Use of Grant Funds.** The grant funds shall not be spent on any other purpose(s) than the approved scope of work in the Notice to Proceed. Should the approved scope of work be modified, the grant recipient will receive a Notice to Proceed with revised scope of work.

E. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

In general, applications will be reviewed and evaluated based on the degree and quality of the proposed improvements, and how the improvements address the *Grant Guidelines*, *M-U TC Design Standards and Guidelines*, and the following *Program Evaluation Criteria*:

1. The projected economic viability of the business.
2. Promotion of high quality urban and architectural design
3. Adherence to the M-U TC Design Standards and Guidelines
4. The cohesiveness and attractiveness of the proposed design to the surrounding built environment
5. Preserve the character of the Historic District and building
6. Comprehensiveness of the project
7. Value of surrounding buildings
8. The contribution to the commercial diversity within the M-U TC Zone
9. Community pride and civic legacy
10. Influencing and supporting nearby projects, including public investment
11. Increased storefront occupancy and corresponding vehicular/foot traffic

F. APPLICATION PROCESS

- I. **Design Services.** If the applicant elects to proceed after attending the design workshop and pre-meeting, the applicant should engage a architect/engineer/design professional to develop a conceptual drawing, color/finish/texture materials, and/or signage, and building specifications that clearly show the exterior (also applicable to applications for interior work) design of the proposed work within its surrounding and adjacent context.
- II. **Permits and License Submittals.** The application must submit a project scope of the work, all required city and county permits (including Use and Occupancy and Business License); and if necessary, the property owner consent to the tenant to apply for permits must be provided with the application (A section is included on the program application to specify property owner consent, if applicable). For interior work, include all applicable utility paperwork and permit/applications with your program application. Final payment for approved scope of work will not be issued with copies of all approved state and county permits and/or inspection reports.
- V. **Program Application Submission Review Schedule.** The applicant must then submit a completed application for assistance with all required supporting information, to MROED, no later than four (4) weeks prior to scheduled M-U TC Design Review Committee (DRC) meeting date **(only if application include exterior work and/or signage).** The meetings are held the second Wednesday of every month and/or as applications is submitted. The applicant must be present at the DRC meeting and must bring a copy of the application materials to the meeting.
- VI. **Mixed Use Town Center (M-U TC) Design Review.** The M-U TC Design Review Committee (DRC) reviews all exterior renovations and new developments within the Mount Rainier M-U TC Zone to ensure that the applications comply with the intent of the plan vision, the design standards and guidelines, the implementation strategies of the development plan, and the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. All infill development projects, exterior renovations, signage, awnings, fencing, screening, exterior seating and displays, surface lot parking, site lighting, or other site improvements and/or changes within the M-U TC zone are reviewed by the M-U TC Design Review Committee (DRC).

A copy of the M-U TC application with all supporting documentation must be included with the program application, once the review committee (Director of Economic Development, M-NCPPC staff member, Economic Development Committee member, and/or City Manager) reviews the proposal for compliance.

The application's package, along with the M-U TC application, and all supportive documentation will then be submitted to the M-U TC DRC for preliminary review. The M-U TC DRC will meet within thirty days of receipt of the application.

VII. M-U TC Application Submission Process. A complete description of the application submission process and required materials can be downloaded here: [the M-U TC Design Standards and Guidelines](#) and can also be found on page 57-59 of the hardcopy plan.

VIII. Code Enforcement. All new construction and improvements requiring a building permit will be subject to review by Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections, and Enforcement (DPIE). New construction and improvements that are subject to the City of Mount Rainier's municipal ordinances are enforceable by the city. Applicants are responsible for obtaining any required city and county permits for exterior alterations to properties and scheduling inspections to ensure improvements comply with all applicable County and City codes. For all projects including exterior improvements, DPIE will contact the city to schedule a MUTC-DRC meeting to conduct a final review/approval of applicant's project, which will then be used in the approval of the applicant's permit(s).

X. Project Duration. Application must submit a project schedule. Once permits are received, the applicant is to submit all permits to the city, with a project schedule. All approved work must be completed by the date specified in Notice to Proceed; more specifically, within a 120 days. If for some reason, the applicant anticipates that they will not meet the pre-determined project schedule, a notice for request of extension must be sent to the city Economic Development office 30 days in advance of the projected completion date. Projects must be complete according to the term specified in the Notice to Proceed letter.

XI. Reimbursements /Project Close-out Submittals: Proof of all required inspections and approvals from the County and/or the City must be submitted prior to reimbursement. Receipts, invoices, or other evidence of payment for improvements and any other supporting records is required by the City prior to reimbursement. Once the project close-out submittals have been verified, the City will issue a reimbursement of 50 percent of the final project cost, which will reflect the amount approved in the Notice to Proceed letter.

Please allow up to 30 days for processing and delivery of final reimbursement.