

January 16, 2024

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Sheryl M.M. Long, City Manager

Subject: Tenant Improvement Program Update – Small Business Grant Approvals

SUMMARY

The Tenant Improvement Program (“TIP”) was created in 2023 to encourage economic development by reducing barriers small businesses face when securing commercial space. With the passage of Ordinance Nos. 191-2022 and 205-2023, City Council allocated approximately \$300,000 in general capital funds for the program. Following an extensive review process, **eleven applications totaling \$218,500 were approved for funding**, many of which will activate previously vacant spaces across Cincinnati.

*[See **ATTACHMENT** for List of Awarded Projects]*

BACKGROUND

Program Overview

The City of Cincinnati recognizes that supporting and empowering local business owners is critical to creating vibrant communities and fostering a healthy regional economy. In honor of this, TIP was established to help alleviate the barrier of renovation costs for small businesses by offering grants of up to \$20,000 for necessary fixed asset improvements to commercial spaces. The Department of Community and Economic Development (“DCED”) partnered with the Department of Economic Inclusion (“DEI”) to execute this programming, promoting TIP through a variety of mediums, and conducting a robust review process of the grant applications received.

Application Review & Award Process

DCED received 71 applications for TIP on or before September 18, 2023, totaling \$1,418,500 in funding requests. A six-person committee, comprised of City staff from DCED and DEI, reviewed the applications. The review committee evaluated each TIP application on 1) economic impact, 2) project readiness, 3) project location, and 4) project scope, placing a high emphasis on projects that involved a business either expanding or relocating to previously vacant space or newly developed space.

After applying the evaluation criteria, eleven projects measured higher than the others. The review committee met with each of the eleven business owners and visited the spaces they planned to occupy. Once all businesses confirmed their readiness to proceed, the awards were finalized. Contracts are in the process of being drafted and executed.

NEXT STEPS

DCED is working to execute a funding agreement with each awardee. This memo is for informational purposes only and no action by City Council is required.

cc: Markiea L. Carter, Director, *Department of Community & Economic Development*

ATTACHMENT

Summary of Awardees

Applicant	Project Address	Project Description
6 ‘N the Mornin’ <i>Award: \$20,000</i>	1535 Madison Road, Cincinnati, OH 45206	6 ‘N the Mornin,’ a restaurant that specializes in southern-style breakfast foods, is relocating from Kenwood to East Walnut Hills . <i>The City’s funds will be used for an interior mural, installation of a sound system, and other finishings.</i>
Artist City Properties <i>Award: \$18,500</i>	2907 Colerain Avenue Cincinnati, OH 45223	Artist City Properties is comprised of a shoemaking business that is expanding within the Camp Washington neighborhood. <i>The City’s funds will be used for HVAC installation and lighting.</i>
Aunt Flora’s <i>Award \$20,000</i>	4380 Reading Road, Cincinnati, OH 45237	Aunt Flora’s is a restaurant that specializes in cobblers, both savory and sweet. It is opening a new location in Paddock Hills. <i>The City’s funds will be used for plumbing, electric, flooring, and HVAC.</i>
College Hill Pilates & Physical Therapy <i>Award: \$20,000</i>	5836 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45224	College Hill Pilates & Physical Therapy is relocating within College Hill. <i>The City’s funds will be used to modernize an outdated space, including new flooring, bathroom upgrades, painting, HVAC.</i>
Cutman Barbershop <i>Award: \$20,000</i>	3117 Warsaw Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45205	Cutman Barbershop is expanding into East Price Hill, opening its third location. <i>The City’s funds will be used to upgrade HVAC, plumbing, and electric.</i>
DANCEFIX <i>Award: \$20,000,</i>	934 E. McMillan Street Cincinnati, OH 45206	DANCEFIX is a business that offers high energy dance fitness classes. Currently in Blue Ash, it is expanding to Walnut Hills. <i>The City’s funds will be used for installation of a state of the art “sprung floor.”</i>
Mediterranean Imports <i>Award: \$20,000</i>	4024 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45223	Mediterranean Imports, a specialty food and import store located at Findlay Market, is expanding to Northside. <i>The City’s funds will be used for renovation of a building built in 1885 that has been vacant for many years.</i>

<p>Just Q'in <i>Award: \$20,000</i></p>	<p>5901-5903 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45224</p>	<p>Just Q'in, a Texas-style BBQ restaurant located in Walnut Hills, is expanding to College Hill.</p> <p><i>The City's funds will be used for flooring, walls, and lighting.</i></p>
<p>Pour Candle Co. <i>Award: \$20,000</i></p>	<p>6204 Hamilton Avenue Cincinnati, OH 45224</p>	<p>Pour Candle Co. sells candles and offers a full do it yourself candle-making experience. It is opening a new location in the College Hill neighborhood.</p> <p><i>The City's funds will be used for HVAC, lighting, plumbing, and electricity.</i></p>
<p>Sweet Mae's Cookie Co. <i>Award: \$20,000</i></p>	<p>125 West Elder Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202</p>	<p>Sweet Mae's Cookie Co. is opening a new location at Findlay Market.</p> <p><i>The City's funds will be used to relocate electric, install plumbing, and other finishings.</i></p>
<p>Sweets & Meats BBQ <i>Award: \$20,000</i></p>	<p>3440 Burnet Avenue Cincinnati, Ohio 45229</p>	<p>Sweets & Meats BBQ, an award-winning full-service caterer and food truck located in Mt. Washington, is expanding to Avondale.</p> <p><i>The City's funding will be used for new electric, plumbing, and adaptation of a wall.</i></p>