Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency (IURA)

Neighborhood Investment Committee (NIC)

Agenda

8:30 A.M., Friday, May 8, 2020

Virtual Meeting

Committee Members and Members of the Public may participate using the link below
(all will enter through the Zoom Waiting Room)

Join URL: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/605925498?pwd=aXQ1ZFF6cEl0NEQxSTZRbHpuNmlhQT09

I. Call to Order

II. Changes to the Agenda

III. Public Comment

IV. Review of Meeting Minutes: March 13, 2020, March 20, 2020, April 2020

V. Chair’s Report - Small Business Revolving Loan (SBRL) Fund

VI. HUD Entitlement Grant Program 2020
   A. Status of IURA-Recommended Projects
   B. Next Steps/Look Ahead

VII. Overview: HUD Mega-waiver

VIII. New/Other Business
   A. CARES ACT CDBG - CV Funding to the City of Ithaca
      1. Amount, framework
      2. Approaches to select activities for funding from CDBG-CV funds
      3. Priority needs/gaps to respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic
      4. Identification of further priority needs
      5. Draft schedule to develop CDBG-CV Action Plan
   B. Amendment #3 to the HUD Citizen Participation Plan, COVID-19

IX.

X. Motion to Adjourn

If you have a disability and require accommodation in order to fully participate,
please contact the City of Ithaca Clerk’s Office at 274-6570 at least 72 business hours prior to the meeting.
Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency (IURA)

Neighborhood Investment Committee (NIC)

Draft Minutes

8:30 A.M., Friday, March 13, 2020
3rd Floor Conference Room, Ithaca City Hall
108 E. Green Street, Ithaca NY 14850

In attendance: Karl Graham (Chair); Fernando de Aragon (Vice Chair); Tracy Farrell; Teresa Halpert; Paulette Manos.

Staff: Anisa Mendizabal.

Guests: None

I. Call to Order
Chair Graham called the meeting to order at 8:42 a.m.

II. Changes to the Agenda
None.

III. Public Comment
None.

IV. Review of Minutes - January 2020 (February meeting cancelled; no minutes)
Moved by Manos; seconded by De Aragon. Approved unanimously.

V. New Business
A. Action Item: Review/ Discuss 2020 HUD Entitlement Funding Proposals (#13-23)

Mendizabal informed the Committee of three late applications. The Committee discussed the matter “blind,” that is, without knowledge or information about the sponsors, their proposed projects, or any application information. The Committee asked Mendizabal the facts surrounding the late submissions.

1. One applicant called the IURA office before the noon deadline, to say that the person delivering the application was en route to City Hall, but was concerned
about arrival time. That application arrived at 12:01 pm, according to the clock in the IURA office.

2. The next late application arrived at approximately 12:20 pm. The applicant called after 12 noon and stated extenuating circumstances regarding tardiness. Applicant asked if they could submit it. Mendizabal stated they could bring the application, but could not state whether it would be accepted. The application arrived at approximately 12:20 pm.

3. The third late application arrived at about 1:20 pm. The application’s sponsor called after 12 noon—and after the application above—to say that there some extenuating circumstances and ask if they could submit it. Mendizabal stated they could bring the application, but could not state whether it would be accepted.

The Committee discussed the information. The Committee noted it has been firm about not accepting late applications in the past. The Committee asked Mendizabal what she tells the public/prospective applicants about late applications during Action Plan outreach and related technical assistance meetings. Mendizabal said she directs attention to the deadline date and deadline time—it is noon, not 5:00 PM, not “close of business”, and not midnight. Mendizabal also shares an example of a late application from a prior year, which was denied.

The Committee discussed and agreed that the first late application described was leaning toward acceptable, because of the inability to determine whether the clock was exactly accurate and also because the delivery person was very likely in the building. The Committee determined, however, that the second and third applications called late and arrived late, and thus agreed those applications should not be considered. Further, the Committee directed Mendizabal to not accept late applications in the future, even if an applicant calls in advance. Mendizabal has been directed to thank such callers for their call, but let them know the application must be at IURA offices on time (12:00 noon on the day of the deadline).

The Chair then opened the discussion of the accepted proposals, instructing members to consider each one, and to save discussion of funding levels to each project for later. Public Facilities and Public Services applications were discussed at this meeting.

**#13 Southside Park Enhancement Project**

Farrell noted cost savings of volunteer labor and scalability of proposal. Halpert commented on solar lights and wondered how cost-effectiveness was determined. Mendizabal noted lights of this type are installed at the Inlet and there is an existing record of cost and performance. Who empties trash cans? City Forestry or volunteers? Answer: City Forestry (a City department).

Graham asked about the Wood Street Volunteers. Mendizabal said some of the volunteers were involved in the Southside Planning process. Local group.
Members noted that the play area is situated in a spot that remains wet after rains, runoff.

#14 Reimagining Ithaca Community Gardens
De Aragon wondered about the group’s capacity to implement. Graham pointed out this volunteer group (sponsor) has a 40 year history. De Aragon discussed the need for a “champion” within the group, due to the project being outside the group’s usual scope. Manos pointed out the coordination piece. Mendizabal noted that the project sponsor would need documentation that 51% are LMI.

#15 New Gym Renovation
Farrell observed that Dormitory Authority of the State of NY (DASNY), a match funder, moves slowly. Another IURA project with DASNY funds did not expend funds for quite a while--spend-down issues for request of this size. Members wanted to know more about the extent of the City of Ithaca’s Engineering Department's involvement. They directed Mendizabal to look into regulations about “plans and studies” projects. General enthusiasm about GIAC’s acquisition of the resource, discussion around the need for solid estimates, questions about the ability to phase. Committee observed that in past GIAC capital improvement projects, there was a lot of complexity, such as Davis-Bacon compliance, and GIAC had a major role in monitoring. Graham pointed out that over a million dollars is unsecured in the project’s budget.

#16 Food Pantry Mechanical Dock Leveler
The Committee wondered how many beneficiaries the IHA food pantry (an indirect beneficiary noted in the application) served. De Aragon noted the difference between construction vs. installation. It’s a piece of equipment, not a building.

#17 Roof Replacement
Excluded from discussion - late application.

#18 Curb Ramps to Complete ADA Compliance at West Village TCAT Bus Stop
Members had many questions. Members recalled IURA specifying that curb ramps were a priority at this location during a previous IURA meeting about the TCAT Bus Stop, and asking the City to ensure they would be created. Mendizabal explained that these curb ramps were not named as a priority in the upcoming year’s Sidewalk Plan. Members further wanted to know how priorities are determined and what the Engineering Department’s planning process is. Members discussed the importance of ADA compliance. The bus stop is adjacent to affordable housing in an LMI neighborhood. The neighborhood has challenging slopes.

#19 GO ITHACA Low Income Support
There is a navigator. Questions arose about jurisdiction/boundaries of the project area. Chair Graham summed up: Sounds like there is support for this project, with questions/reservations about project boundary.

#20 2-1-1 Information and Referral
Positive history of compliance and completion; scalable if needed. Scaled last year.
#21 Work Preserve Job Training: Job Readiness
Large number of the 20 youth served live outside the City. The Committee discussed the difficulty finding housing in the City for low-wage workers, especially youth, and prevalence of couch-surfing.

#22 Immigrant Service Program
Well-established program with history of compliance and completion. Scaled last year. Committee Members recalled Project Director Sue Chaffee’s recent presentation/discussion with them. Breadth of services is large.

#23 Fair Housing Enforcement Project
Excluded from discussion - late application.

Next week’s meeting will be by Zoom virtual meeting platform, due to growing COVID-19 crisis. Mendizabal will send links.

VI. Adjournment
Meeting adjourned by consensus at approximately 12:00 noon.
Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency (IURA)

Neighborhood Investment Committee (NIC)

Draft Minutes

8:30 A.M., Friday, March 20, 2020
Virtual Meeting

In attendance: Karl Graham (Chair); Fernando de Aragon (Vice Chair); Tracy Farrell; Teresa Haupert; Paulette Manos.

Staff: Anisa Mendizabal; Nels Bohn.

Guests: None

I. Call to Order
Chair Graham called the meeting to order at approximately 8:35 a.m.

II. Changes to the Agenda
None.

III. Public Comment
None.

IV. Review of Minutes
None. March 13, 2020 Minutes will be reviewed in April 2020.

V. New Business
   A. Action Item: Review/ Discuss 2020 HUD Entitlement Funding Proposals (#1-12)

   Note: Due to the growing COVID-19 crisis and social distancing requirements, this was the first NIC Meeting held by Zoom. Minutes were affected, as a result, and somewhat briefer.

   #1 2020 Homeowner Repair
   Well-established program with documented history of compliance and completion.

   #2 Small Repair
   Well-established program with documented history of compliance and completion.
#3 Founder’s Way For-Sale Townhomes
Committee members expressed enthusiasm about new, affordable homeowner opportunities. Excellent, walkable, connected location within the City. Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to develop such a site.

#4 Hawkins 622 Clinton Street Project
Committee Members expressed interest in this project, brought forward by a small-scale developer. Questions about commitments from Elmira Savings and Tompkins Trust, as noted in the application. Committee directed Mendizabal to reach out to Mr. Hawkins to inquire.

#5 Benton 532 Clinton Street Project
Committee noted the similarity between this project’s application and the application submitted/withdrawn last year by Hawkins.

#6 Security Deposit & Rental Subsidy Assistance for Formerly Incarcerated (OAR)
Graham noted the well-established need of the beneficiary group, people in reentry. Committee members wondered whether the project sponsor had conferred with CCTT, which operates an existing security deposit program. CCTT has established program and history of completion. Could the two agencies collaborate on security deposits? The rental assistance portion of the application raised regulatory questions.

#7 Northside Apartments
Committee Members commented on the rare opportunity to support the improvement/redevelopment of a large affordable housing site. Questions about level of support needed in order for applicant to secure 4% tax credit financing. Questions about the design and proposed pathway to development. Sponsor seems to be in process of discerning which pathway to take. Ask at Public Hearing.

#8 Security Deposit Assistance for Vulnerable Households (CCTT)
Well-established program with documented history of compliance and completion.

#9 ReUse Job Skills Training & Employment Connections
Questions about how many apprentices can be supported. Value of reentry apprenticeships and immediate employment.

#10 Work Preserve Job Training: Job Placements
Works with young population with high barriers.

#11 Hospitality Employment Training Program (HETP)
Questions about level of funding.

#12 Family Child Care Microenterprise Business Development
Questions about development of proposed curriculum. Does curriculum already exist or is it to be developed. If the latter, is there a candidate identified/ready to do so?

VI. **Adjournment**
Meeting adjourned by consensus at approximately 11:30 AM.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2020

Contact: Tom Knipe, City of Ithaca Deputy Director for Economic Development
607-274-5560, tknipe@cityofithaca.org

96 Small Business Resilience Fund loans awarded in Ithaca and Tompkins County

(Ithaca, NY – May 6, 2020) In mid-April, a consortium of local economic development agencies and community partners announced the Ithaca Tompkins County COVID-19 Small Business Resilience Fund (SBRF). The purpose of the fund was to provide forgivable loans of up to $5,000 for working capital to micro-enterprises and small businesses in Ithaca and Tompkins County experiencing hardship related to the COVID-19 pandemic. 160 local small businesses applied within 48 hours, and the fund was quickly closed to new applications due to tremendous demand.

96 loans have now been recommended for funding. A review committee made up of representatives of partner organizations used the funding priorities established in the program guidelines to make their recommendations. The committee had a difficult task, and many eligible applicants were unable to be funded. Priority was given to ground floor storefront businesses open to the general public and businesses in established commercial districts. Other priorities included businesses that provide the owner with their primary source of income, businesses owned by persons of color and/or women, and businesses for whom resources will help them stay in business.

Loans carry a zero-interest rate, an 18 month term, and will be forgiven for businesses open and in operation on December 1, 2020 that have complied with the program rules. Alternatives Federal Credit Union (AFCU) is managing the application process, and disbursing approved loans.

Funding came from the Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency (IURA), Tompkins County Development Corporation (TCDC), Cornell University, Community Foundation of Tompkins County, and individual donors; and loans were made available to businesses across Tompkins County. Other partners included the City of Ithaca, Downtown Ithaca Alliance, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, and Tompkins County Area Development.

Loan recipients will use the funds in a variety of ways to help recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic. Comments from businesses receiving SBRF funding included the following:

For me, this means my transition into a more efficient space is not compromised, my new employee who I just hired right before all of this has a promised job to come back to on the call date of her furlough.
- Adrina Graham, Adrina Dietra Luxury Lingerie And Apothecary Goods
This loan significantly impacts our capacity to continue to serve our mission. Although we are not able to provide circus education in the conventional sense, we still have a strong community to care for, cultivate, and connect with. The loan supports our ability to pay our rent, along with support from our landlord, as well as contribute to staff costs during a time when income does not cover them, as well as modest capital improvements that will allow us to modify our space for use in the "new normal" we anticipate once we can re-open.

– Amy Cohen, Circus Culture

This loan means survival. The inn is at $0 revenue, but fixed costs remain. This loan will keep the inn afloat while we await the new ‘normal’. We are so grateful.

– Eileen Stout, Rogues Harbor Inn

This loan is an important piece of the puzzle in getting Benjamin Peters up and running successfully in the near future. I also see it as a good faith agreement between a local business, local government and other interested local parties to invest in the future of Ithaca.

– Peter Parkes, Benjamin Peters

I’m pivoting most of my business efforts to online sales. In addition to using the money for payroll, I’ve hired a local photographer to photograph some new products to enhance our website. Artists and independent contractors are especially vulnerable during this crisis, so I’m glad that I can help a bit.

– Lesli Sagan, Avital’s Apiaries

Each day into each week gets tougher. But with programs like the SBRF, it keeps us going, it helps keep employees, and it gives us hope. All of the funders and partner organizations coming together to create this fund really exemplify the uniqueness of Ithaca and Tompkins County and how much of a supportive community we are. For that, I am grateful.

– Chuck Dong, Shortstop Deli

For individual donors interested in supporting local small businesses during COVID-19, Alternatives Impact, the 501(c)3 affiliate of AFCU which raises funds to support community programs and create economic opportunity for underserved people and communities, is also now taking donations for the COVID-19 Economic Crisis Response Fund: https://www.givegab.com/campaigns/covid-19-economic-crisis-response-fund. Additional funds received will increase capacity for direct technical assistance to local small businesses.

Additional information about the SBRF program is located on the City of Ithaca’s website for COVID-19 business resources - bit.ly.coicovid.

SBRF loan recipients are listed below:

Adrina Dietra
Alkeme Salon
Allechant
Newfield Convenience
No Barks About It
Nothing Nowhere
Odyssey Wellness
One Ring Donuts
One World Market Ithaca
Over the Moon Ithaca
Petrune
Ports of New York
Rogue's Harbor Inn
Sammy's Pizzeria
Satori Salon
Shortstop Deli
Snabb
Sunny Days of Ithaca
Sweet Melissa's Ice Cream
Terra Rosa
The Bloomwell
The Brain Shoppe
The Bramble
The Frame Shop
The Gym
The Inn & Spa at Gothic Eves
The Jewelbox
The Metal Smithery
The Pilates Room & Antigravity Studio
The Rhine House
The Rook
Thee Amish Structures
Tre Bella's Dance Studio
True Dat Barbershop
Trumansburg Main Street Market
Upstate Collision
Urban Blendz
V's Hair Salon
Waffle Frolic
Your CBD Store
Yumi Asakura, Siatsu & Massage Studio

- END OF NEWS RELEASE -
WHEREAS, the City of Ithaca (City) has received an initial supplemental funding allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, & Economic Security (CARES Act), which funding is hereafter referred to as CDBG-CV, and

WHEREAS, additional supplemental CDBG-CV funding may be forthcoming, and

WHEREAS, HUD is providing administrative flexibility and waivers to speed approval and delivery of funds for activities responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and

WHEREAS, the 15% cap on public service activities is waived for CDBG-CV funds, and

WHEREAS, the initial CDBG-CV allocation to the City provides $321,299 to invest in CDBG-eligible activities, and

WHEREAS, the City has contracted with the Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency (IURA) to administer, implement and monitor the City’s HUD Entitlement program in compliance with all applicable regulations, and

WHEREAS, in order to expedite delivery of funding to the community, IURA has gathered information from stakeholders and solicited proposals for disaster response/recovery/prevention projects, and

WHEREAS, the IURA is following a two-prong approach to determine recommended uses of CDBG-CV funding:

- Directed activities to address priority needs where a capable sponsor is pre-identified, and
- Activities selected through an open competitive process, and

WHEREAS, the IURA has preliminarily identified the following priority community needs:

1. Renter households whose ability to pay rent has been reduced by COVID-19 impacts
2. Persons experience homelessness and homeless prevention
3. Small businesses adversely impacted by public health mandates and guidelines
4. Anchor non-profits entities with at least 51% earned income adversely impacted by public health mandates and guidelines

WHEREAS, according to the City’s 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan for HUD Entitlement Funding 74% of the City’s residents are renters, of which 56% are cost-burdened, and 41% of these are severely so, and
WHEREAS, at least 25 million Americans have filed jobless claims since March 2020 and the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, including many renters in the City of Ithaca, and

WHEREAS, emergency grant payment for a household’s rent for up to three consecutive months is an eligible CDBG public service activity authorized at 24 CFR §570.201(e), and

WHEREAS, Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. (INHS) proposes to implement an emergency rental assistance activity in partnership with Tompkins County and other funders with the following preliminary parameters subject to finalization:

- rent/current income ratio > 31%
- proof of adverse COVID-19 impact/client statement
- landlord signs a form agreeing to accept rent, waive late fees, not pursue eviction for non-payment, no code violations
- household AMI < 80%
- asset cap of $5,000 liquid assets (netting out stimulus payment)
- must have a current lease or landlord willing to sign for current rent amount, waive late fees, accept payments
- building must pass environmental requirements for CDBG
- tenant NOT to pay any portion of the rent, because it is only three months of relief and this will hopefully allow clients to build savings,

the projected average total assistance per renter household is $3,700, and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County CDBG funding of approximately $590,000 for the activity can only be used to assist renter households located outside of a HUD Entitlement community, such as the City, and

WHEREAS, INHS possesses the knowledge and administrative capacity necessary to effectively administer such a program, and

WHEREAS, supporting housing stability in the form of three consecutive months rental assistance for people in vulnerable groups with extremely low- and/or very-low-income (0-60%) AMI can prevent widespread eviction, homelessness and economic hardship for tenants and landlords, and

WHEREAS, emergency rental assistance furthers disaster recovery goals by stabilizing neighborhoods and communities, and

WHEREAS, the City can take final action to approve use of CDBG-CV funds following a Public Hearing and a 5-day Public Comment period; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the IURA recommends the City authorize an allocation of $190,000 from the CDBG-CV funding source to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program activity to be implemented by Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc., and be it further
RESOLVED, CDBG-CV funds shall be used first to assist renter households earning 0-60% of AMI with less than $5,000 in liquid assets, before assisting other CDBG-eligible renter households, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the current household income calculation for eligible households to be assisted with CDBG-CV funds shall include unemployment benefits, but exclude any one-time CARES Act stimulus payment, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City requests INHS to conduct affirmative marketing to underserved persons, such as persons who speak English as a Second Language (ESL), to provide them with an equitable opportunity to take advantage of the program, and be it further

RESOLVED, that should availability of CDBG-CV funding be delayed, the IURA hereby authorizes use of the Housing Development Action Grant (HODAG) funding source to pay eligible costs in the first instance and be reimbursed when CDBG-CV funds become available, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Urban Renewal Plan shall be amended to include activities funded in the adopted 2020 HUD Entitlement Program Action Plan.
Adopted Resolution
IURA
April 23, 2020

3rd amendment to HUD Entitlement Citizen Participation Plan - COVID-19 Amendment

Whereas, the Citizen Participation Plan establishes the City of Ithaca’s procedures for involving the public in development and implementation of the HUD Entitlement Program, and

Whereas, on March 31, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and mandated social distancing, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued a Mega-waiver covering HUD-administered programs that included flexibility regarding citizen participation and public hearings for Consolidated Plans and Action Plans, and

Whereas, the City of Ithaca seeks to establish expedited procedures necessary to quickly and effectively administer federal funding made available to respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic in accordance with the HUD Mega-waiver, and

Whereas, an annual Action Plan contains a description and budget for individual activities to be undertaken with funding made available to the City of Ithaca through the HUD Entitlement program, including the CDBG and HOME programs, and

Whereas, the HUD Mega-waiver identifies a minimum five (5) day public comment period, to include a virtual public hearing with opportunity for citizens to comment in real time, provides reasonable notice and opportunity for comment to meet citizen participation requirements for Consolidated Plans and Action Plans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the IURA hereby recommends the City of Ithaca Common Council adopt the proposed 3rd amendment to the City of Ithaca HUD Entitlement Citizen Participation Plan, dated April 23, 2020, which implements the following general amendments in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Notice Time Period for Public Hearings
IURA must submit notice to implement the modified procedures of the HUD Mega-waiver to the HUD Buffalo Regional Office at least two (2) days in advance of the five (5) day public comment period. Public notice of the five (5) day public comment period must be posted on a variety of community platforms.

Public Comment Period on Propose Plans or Amendments
Reduce the minimum time period for opportunity for public comment on proposed plans to five (5) days rather than thirty (30) days as normally required.

Virtual Public Hearings
A virtual public hearing, rather than an in-person public hearing, will meet public hearing requirements if:

1. National/local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons; and
2. Virtual hearings provide reasonable notification and access for citizens to comment and raise issues in real time; and
3. A record of comments received and responses shall be made available for public review within 5 days following the public hearing.

**Applicability of Temporary COVID-19 Pandemic Amendments**
April 2, 2020 – July 31, 2021
Draft Schedule for CDBG-CV “Action Plan” for COVID-specific recovery, relief, and prevention may be viewed on the IURA Website:
