Redevelopment Roundtable Recap

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Redevelopment Roundtable discussion at the Brownfields and Beyond: 2022 Minnesota Redevelopment Conference. We heard a lot of feedback about the Redevelopment Grant Program which will help us shape future policies and programs. Here are some themes that emerged from the discussion.

What’s working well?

Some general ideas were that there were some things that are working well, such as a proactive review process, knowledgeable and helpful staff and scoring projects based on improved tax base.

What’s not working?

A common theme emerged when discussing what isn’t working well, was inconsistent, unreliable and lack of adequate funding. Also discussed was a lack of awareness and capacity in smaller, or rural communities.

What is missing from the program’s goals?

There were some concerns that the scoring criteria disfavored smaller communities when considering things like taxes. There is a need for more pre-application technical assistance, particularly for smaller communities. There also needs to be more transparency and post-application discussions for projects that did not receive funding. Also less emphasis on Job creation in the current jobs climate.

What changes to eligible activities should be considered?

Most discussed suggestions were:
- Fund projects with only an infrastructure need
- Fund interior demolition, piling costs, debris removal, code compliance and rehabilitation
- Allow administrative costs, planning costs, and holding costs
- Earmarking funds for specific types of projects

What new programs might we consider?

Help with historic preservation, predesign, planning, energy upgrades and securing property

How do we improve program outreach?

It was clear that more face-to-face meetings, regional meetings and conferences such as LMC would help to get the word out.

Any other ideas?

There were many thoughts shared from having additional grant rounds, adding additional eligible applicants, weekly zoom meetings, and many others. There was also a lot of discussion about capacity of smaller communities to seek out, apply for and manage grants.
Results:

Absolutely!

We heard a lot of great ideas. Some that we can implement now, such as more personalized pre-application technical assistance, and providing post-application feedback. Also, more information about our scoring process may address some misperceptions about inequity of funding by community size.

Nice, but . . .

Some ideas we would like to implement, such as expanding eligible costs, could be considered, but with limited funding, we struggle to fund the current projects and activities, and expanding those activities would only put more pressure on the limited funding and even fewer projects would be funded. We are interested in re-examining this on a larger scale if or when the program is funded at levels where program expansion is possible.

Needs more thought and legislation.

Some ideas we heard need more time to think about how best to address. Some suggested new activities may be out of the Redevelopment Program’s scope and therefore need time to consider including under other programs or creating something new. Some need a deeper dive to understand the breadth or scope of the issue.

We really appreciated learning what the needs are in the State and continue to make improvements to our programs so that they have widespread benefits to the communities of Minnesota.