



CITY OF CLEARWATER

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

POST OFFICE BOX 4748, CLEARWATER, FLORIDA 33758-4748

600 CLEVELAND STREET, CLEARWATER, FLORIDA 33755

TELEPHONE (727) 562-4039

To: City of Clearwater Community Redevelopment Agency Trustees

From: Jesus Niño, Executive Director – Community Redevelopment Agency Department

Date: July 15, 2024

Subject: Request for Approval of \$900,000 Business Renovation Grant for 520, 522, and 528 Cleveland Street (The Nash Keys Dueling Piano Bar & Restaurant developments)

Background and Purpose

The Clearwater Downtown area is currently experiencing a significant need to fill vacant units and activate the downtown space to stimulate economic growth and community engagement. A vibrant downtown is crucial to the overall health of the City of Clearwater, as it serves as the heart of economic and social activities, attracting residents, businesses, and tourists. Active downtowns contribute to the city's identity, offer diverse amenities, and provide opportunities for local businesses to thrive.

Grant Request Recommendation

CRA staff recommends the approval of a \$900,000 Business Renovation Grant for three new prospective businesses at located at 520, 522, and 528 Cleveland Street. These units are to house the expansion of The Nash Keys Dueling Piano Bar & Restaurant, Captains Lounge, and Prelude Sports Bar business developments. The grant is intended to reimburse eligible construction costs incurred by the business owner and support future expenses necessary for the completion of these projects.

Importance of the Grant

The Business Renovation Grant Program is designed to assist business owners with funding to renovate downtown units. This program aligns with the Downtown Community Redevelopment Area Plan goals to revitalize downtown Clearwater by encouraging the establishment of new businesses and improving existing ones.

On March 7, 2024, during the public comment section of the Community Redevelopment Agency Trustees meeting, Mr. Tony Tello, a partner of The Nash Keys Dueling Piano Bar & Restaurant, Captains Lounge, and Prelude Sports Bar, highlighted the limitations of the CRA Vacancy Reduction Grant Program he was pursuing, noting its inability to cover retroactive

Ryan Cotton, Councilmember
Mike Mannino, Councilmember

Bruce Rector, Mayor



David Allbritton, Councilmember
Lina Teixeira, Councilmember

“Equal Employment and Affirmative Action Employer”

construction costs and low grant amount. This hinders small businesses that only discover about grant programs well into unit construction since the grants are useful only from the date of grant approval. In response, CRA staff proposed a modified Business Renovation Grant for Mr. Tello to alleviate some of his incurred and pending construction expenses. The Business Renovation Grant program fits Mr. Tello's needs better compared to the Vacancy Reduction Grant program.

Details of the Request

The grant will cover eligible expenses retroactive to the issuance date of the primary construction permits, contingent upon final grant funds being dispersed after obtaining certificates of occupancy. The grant funds will assist in covering approximately \$1,628,700 of eligible construction expenses from a total project cost of approximately \$2,500,000.

Upon approval, Mr. Tello will enter into a grant agreement, satisfactory to the City Attorney's Office, that specifies the terms and conditions for accessing the grant funds in increments. All necessary construction estimates, budgets, invoices, and requested documentation must be submitted and reviewed by staff before disbursement of the funds.

Examples of Eligible Expenses (not limited to the following):

- **Interior Improvements:** electrical/plumbing upgrades, HVAC systems, ADA accessibility, structural stabilization, interior walls, paint, and fixtures, floors, etc.
- **Exterior Improvements:** repair of exterior walls, exterior painting, signage and lighting, ADA accessibility, etc.

Fiscal Impact

\$900,000 – This investment is expected to yield significant community impact and returns by activating three downtown units, enhancing the downtown environment, and contributing to the overall economic vitality of Clearwater.

Appropriation Code:

Funding for this grant is available in CRA Project Code R2003 Economic Development-City.

Conclusion

The approval of this Business Renovation Grant is crucial for the successful activation of the 500 block in downtown. It supports the CRA's objective to revitalize the downtown area, reduce vacancy rates, and encourage further private investment.