

City of Scottsbluff, Nebraska

Monday, June 6, 2016

Regular Meeting

Item Subdiv.3

Council to authorize Mayor to sign Greener Nebraska Towns Grant Application for \$25,000 of grant funds for the Downtown Plaza Project.

Staff Contact: Annie Folck, City Planner

Agenda Statement

Item No.

For meeting of: June 6, 2016

AGENDA TITLE: Council to authorize Mayor to sign Greener Nebraska Towns Grant Application for \$25,000 of grant funds for the Downtown Plaza Project

SUBMITTED BY DEPARTMENT/ORGANIZATION: Planning and Zoning

PRESENTATION BY:

SUMMARY EXPLANATION: The BID board has recommended a Phase I of the Plaza Project that would include demolition of the buildings at 15 E 18th St and 23 E 18th St and removal of the parking lot on the north side of the buildings. Staff will submit a grant to the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum for \$25,000 for landscaping in this area, and BID funds will be used for the grant match. This is the same grant program that provided the funding for the landscaping of our downtown parking lots. This will provide enough funding to landscape the area which is currently the buildings and parking lot. See the attached grant application for more details about the project.

BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: The BID recommends authorizing staff to submit a GNT grant application and providing \$25,000 of matching funds for the grant out of the BID budget

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends submission of the GNT grant

EXHIBITS				
Resolution	Ordinance	Contract	Minutes X	Plan/Map
Other (specify) <u>Grant application</u>				

NOTIFICATION LIST: Yes No Further Instructions

APPROVAL FOR SUBMITTAL: _____
City Manager

Rev 3/1/99CClerk

Greener Nebraska Towns – February 2016

A program of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

“Biodiversity is the greatest treasure we have. Its diminishment is to be prevented at all cost.” --

Thomas Eisner

“The first law of ecology is that everything is related to everything else.” Barry Commoner

The **Greener Nebraska Towns** initiative (GNT) improves the resiliency and environmental sustainability of communities across Nebraska through the implementation of public landscape projects that demonstrate water conservation, stormwater management, improved biodiversity, greater use of native plants and better soil management. In addition, the initiative educates and informs Nebraskans about landscape stewardship and how sustainable practices can be implemented at both public and residential scales.

A total of \$275,000 in funding has been made available to help implement up to 50 demonstration projects in communities across the state through 2017. All funded projects must meet the following environmental objectives.

- **Increased Biodiversity**: Projects must help build native biodiversity within a community.
- **Water Conservation**: Plantings should be relatively drought tolerant.
- **Stormwater Management**: Projects should help reduce stormwater runoff.
- **Soil Health**: Projects should be designed and managed to improve soil health.
- **Carbon Capture**: Projects should help capture and store carbon via the use of long-lived perennial plants and should be managed via carbon neutral practices.

Examples of eligible projects include landscape enhancements, rain gardens, bioretention plantings, native plant demonstration gardens, sustainable groundcover demonstrations, tree and shrub plantings, or a combination of these. All projects must be located in Nebraska and they must positively impact community green spaces such as parks, schoolyards, fairgrounds, libraries, courthouses, college campuses, transportation corridors or other properties open to the public.



General Information and Requirements

- A. **Application Process:** To qualify for consideration, the attached application should be completed and submitted for review. Proposals will be evaluated quarterly until all funds are allocated. Quarterly deadlines will be April 1st, July 1st and October 1st, 2016 and January 1st 2017. Proposals will be reviewed by a selection committee of landscape professionals.
- B. **Environmental Objectives:** All funded projects must meet the following environmental objectives.
- **Increased Biodiversity:** Projects must emphasize native plants and ecologically appropriate plantings that help sustain wildlife biodiversity including native insects, birds, amphibians, pollinators, microorganisms and other wildlife should be emphasized and celebrated.
 - **Water Conservation:** Projects should be relatively drought tolerant. Beyond establishment, supplemental irrigation should only be necessary during significant droughts.
 - **Stormwater Management:** Projects should help reduce stormwater runoff. Projects that creatively use stormwater for landscape sustainability will receive extra consideration.
 - **Soil Health:** Projects should be designed and managed to improve soil health including tillage, water absorption, organic content, and soil organism diversity/abundance (insects and microorganisms).
 - **Carbon Capture:** Projects should help capture and store carbon via the use of long-lived perennial plants and should be managed via carbon neutral practices.
- C. **Project Eligibility:** Examples of eligible projects include landscape enhancements, native plant demonstration gardens, tree and shrub plantings, rain gardens, bioretention plantings, sustainable lawns and/or groundcover demonstrations, or a combination of these. To be eligible, all projects must positively impact community green spaces in Nebraska such as parks, schoolyards, fairgrounds, libraries, courthouses, college campuses, transportation corridors or other properties open to the public.
- D. **Planning, Design and Implementation Objectives:** Applicants must demonstrate that they have the people and resources to create a well-planned and implemented project. All projects must be implemented from approved design plans. NFS can help develop design plans if needed, but it's desirable that local design professionals be utilized if possible.
- E. **Community Impact and Support:** Projects must clearly benefit the community. The more people who benefit from the project, the better. Applicants should show local involvement and community partnerships.
- F. **Education:** All funded projects must help inform and educate the public about the importance of biodiversity and landscape stewardship. Educational activities can include signage, tours, workshops or other more innovative ideas. An education plan will be developed as part of the design process.
- G. **Maximum Funding Request:** The maximum funding request is \$25,000. The minimum request is \$2,500.
- H. **Required Community Match:** A minimum 50/50 match of cost-share funds is required for all projects. Any other funding source is eligible for matching funds including donated and in-kind goods and services. Volunteer labor will be valued at the federal rate (currently \$21.36/hr). In-kind donations of skilled or professional labor can be valued at the actual local rate but must be verified by receipt. Projects demonstrating strong leverage of cost-share funds will be given extra consideration.
- I. **Reimbursable Project Costs:** Funds can be used to reimburse the following expenses.
- **Plant Material:** Cost of purchasing appropriate plant material.
 - **Installation:** Costs associated with installing plant materials and other project components.
 - **Site Preparation:** Activity necessary to prepare the project site for planting, not to exceed 20% of cost-share funding.
 - **Project Design:** Costs of obtaining professional landscape design services, not to exceed 10% of cost-share funding.

- Hardscape: Stepping stones, pathways, ornamental rock, stormwater management components, or other hardscape elements integral to the success of the project are allowed. Hardscape costs may not exceed 30% of cost-share funds and must be pre-approved.
- Critical Supplies: The reasonable cost of important supplies such as plant protection, tree staking, and watering supplies necessary to establish plant material (hoses, wands, sprinklers, drip irrigation, etc.). Supplies may not exceed 10% of cost-share funds and must be pre-approved.
- Educational Signage: Costs associated with education signage. Signage costs may not exceed 10% of cost-share funds and must be pre-approved.

J. Eligible Matching Costs:

- Any of the items listed above in “Reimbursable Project Costs” not covered by cost-share funds.
- Any labor or equipment usage, including that from government, private sector or by volunteers.
- Irrigation systems designed for maximum efficiency and utilized primarily for drought management.
- Education and public outreach: Costs associated with promoting the project to the community.
- Initial maintenance: The reasonable cost of maintaining new plantings during project development and for up to one year after planting. A detailed description is necessary for approval and may not exceed 5% of total project value. A one-year report of maintenance activities will be requested.

K. Ineligible Project Costs: The following costs are not eligible for reimbursement or matching purposes.

- Traditional high-input lawns and associated irrigation.
- Equipment purchases except those listed under critical supplies above.
- Property: any costs related to the purchase of real property.
- Non-organic mulches including gravel, rock, rubber or other non-organic material.
- Plastic edging and weed barriers. Such items should not be used in the project.

L. Plant Specifications: All plant material purchased and installed as part of any funded project must be of high quality and purchased from nurseries licensed to do business in Nebraska. It may be necessary to obtain plants from more than one vendor.

M. Project Reimbursement: Reimbursement will occur only after completion of the project or after completion of a significant phase. A project will not be reimbursed more than twice. Reimbursement checks will be made payable only to the project sponsor, government unit or organization suitable to act as an agent for the project. The reimbursements will not be made payable to any **individuals or businesses**. Only those costs verified by receipt or invoice will be considered for reimbursement.

N. Project Inspection: All projects will be inspected after completion. Any deficiencies are expected to be corrected as soon as possible.

O. Post-planting Maintenance: All projects are expected to be properly maintained after completion and throughout their useful life spans. Sustainable landscapes are not maintenance-free and will fail without regular and proper management, which is especially critical in the first few years after implementation. A management plan will be developed as part of the design process.

P. Project Completion Deadline: Projects must be completed by November 30, 2017.

Important: Before filling out the application, please visit the NSA website at www.arboretum.unl.edu for links and information about some of the key concepts of sustainable landscaping that should be addressed in this application.

Please Note: Additional specifications and limitations will be delineated for funded projects within a document titled “Specifications for Partnership Projects”.

Greener Nebraska Towns — Funding Assistance Application

Name of project: Scottsbluff Downtown Plaza _____

Project address or general location: 23 E 18th St, Scottsbluff _____

Project sponsor(s): City of Scottsbluff _____

Name of project coordinator: Annie Folck _____

Mailing address of coordinator: 2525 Circle Drive, Scottsbluff, NE 69361 _____

Daytime phone number(s) of coordinator: (308) 630-6244 _____

E-mail address of coordinator (required): afolck@scottsbluff.org _____

Project will be completed on land owned by: City of Scottsbluff _____

Project will be maintained by: City of Scottsbluff _____

Amount of funding requested: \$25,000 _____

Estimated amount of cash match: \$15,000 _____

Estimated amount of in-kind match: \$10,000 _____

Estimated total value of project: \$50,000 _____

IMPORTANT: The application must be signed to be eligible! Type in your name, date, title and organization below or add an electronic signature image in the space provided.

_____	_____
Signature of Applicant	Date

Title & Organization of Applicant	

Answer the following questions within the word limits specified. Be bold and convincing but also as brief as possible! The best answers are not the longest ones, but rather the ones that succinctly inspire the reviewer.

1. **In 1,000 words or less**, describe the project being proposed including the need. Be sure to address how the project will improve community resiliency and environmental sustainability through such things as water conservation, stormwater management, improved biodiversity, greater use of native plants and better soil management. Include information about project location, unique site challenges or opportunities, how the project will address those needs, and other anticipated outcomes.

The City of Scottsbluff has been working diligently over the past few years to make the downtown a more sustainable environment. While we have made great strides in removing impervious cover and replacing it with sustainable landscaping, there is a lot that remains to be done. The Scottsbluff Downtown was designated as an affiliate site of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum in 2014. In order to live up to this designation, it is our goal to continue making improvements in the area and to continue to demonstrate best practices for sustainability in the hope that other residents and businesses in the area will see these practices and want to replicate them.

The proposed project is located in an area that is currently a parking lot and two buildings (see attached site map). The plan for the project is to remove the two buildings and the concrete in the parking lot to create a Downtown Plaza, a gathering space for events. While it is the goal of the City to create a comfortable space where people will want to come together, it is also equally important to us that the project be installed in a way that showcases best practices for water conservation, stormwater management, and overall sustainability.

Previous projects in the area have experimented with several different plants that are not commonly used in landscapes in the area. Sedges in particular have been showcased to great effect, and are the real workhorses of many of our stormwater demonstration projects. This project would continue to incorporate many of these same plants, while also adding in a few new selections as needed to continue to broaden our plant palette. The focus will be on native and well-adapted plants which will require a minimal amount of supplemental watering.

One of the challenges of the site is that it is currently all under impervious cover. For this reason, proper soil management will be a key part of the project. Compost will be brought in to add in organic material. Organic mulch will be used and allowed to break down over time to continually build the soil. Large shade trees will be planted to help cool the area and to assist with carbon capture. Planting beds will be sized appropriately to give these trees plenty of rooting space for better long-term success. While poor soils are definitely a challenge, the City in past years has had great success with plantings located in areas that were previously covered in concrete. Our experience in this area will help us to properly prepare the site before planting to give the plants the best possible chance at success.

Another challenge of the site is also one of its greatest opportunities, and that is the amount of foot traffic that we expect to experience in the area. Great attention will have to be given to the overall layout and placement of plantings and hardscape. We are excited to incorporate permeable pavers into this project; we believe this will be a great way to incorporate the hardscape needed to handle heavy foot traffic without sacrificing the permeability of the site. We have been looking for a good place to try out permeable pavers, and as of yet, we do not have any demonstration sites anywhere in town. The large amount of foot traffic will make this an ideal place not only to showcase the permeable pavers, but also to draw attention to all of the other sustainable landscaping practices that we want to encourage

throughout the City. Signage will be used to inform passers-by of the functionality of all of the different landscape features. The signage will also include links to a website where people can receive more detailed information about the project.

The City is also attempting to rework our landscaping codes in order to create a more attractive, liveable, sustainable community. The knowledge we gain by installing and managing these landscape projects in our Downtown Gardens arboretum is invaluable when it comes time to make changes to the landscape code. It allows us to write codes that are practical guidance for designers, complete with suggested plant lists. Over time, this will help improve the overall practices for landscaping throughout the City, on public and private property.

2. **In 500 words or less**, name and briefly describe the most important people, businesses and organizations that will assist with the project, including any professional design resources.

Annie Folck and Leann Sato, both with the City of Scottsbluff, will be managing the overall project. We will be working with MC Schaff and Associates for any engineering services necessary (particularly looking at drainage). Anita Gall with Anita's Greenscaping will be consulted when looking at design and long-term management of the area. Amy Seiler with the Nebraska Forest Service will be consulted about plant selection, and we also welcome suggestions for plant selections from any of the NSA staff. City staff will assist with site preparation, including removal of pavement and soil amendments. The City's Business Improvement District (BID) Board, which is made up of downtown business owners, will help promote the project and assist with funding.

3. **In 300 words or less**, describe how public outreach and education will be incorporated into your project?

The City already does a great amount of outreach in promoting our Downtown Gardens Arboretum. The Garden Coffeebreak is a series of gardening talks held in different downtown businesses. After the landscape talk, attendees walk out to downtown landscape areas to see firsthand examples of the topic at hand. Topics include low-water use landscapes, Great Plants, beneficial insect environments, phytoremediation, LID landscaping, etc. This program would be expanded to include any projects within the Downtown Plaza area.

Additionally, signage has been placed at all of our downtown parking lots, and similar signage would be used throughout the Plaza to inform passers-by of the benefits of the landscaped areas as well as to provide them with resources (websites) where they can go to get more information. At the time of installation, press releases will be sent out to inform the news media of what is being installed and how it will help improve the sustainability of our downtown.

4. **In 300 words or less**, please address ongoing maintenance and funding of your project. Who will maintain it? Where will the funding for maintenance (labor, plant replacements etc.) come from? What experience do they have managing landscapes?

On all of our previous downtown projects, we have contracted maintenance with Anita's Greenscaping. This is paid for out of the Business Improvement District (BID) budget, which is funded by additional property taxes on downtown properties. This has been extremely successful as this is a City funding source that is specifically for the downtown and cannot be taken away to be used in other areas of the

City. Anita has done an excellent job of maintaining all of our previous projects, and this is the model that we would plan on continuing to use for the proposed project.

5. **Project Budget:** On a separate document, please delineate your anticipated costs for the project and where the funds will come from, including these grant funds, cash-value donations and in-kind donations. This is a preliminary budget. A final budget will be created after projects are selected. Categories to consider include: design services, grading/site preparation, plant material costs, plant installation, mulch/soil amendments, equipment usage, irrigation supplies, hardscape and initial maintenance. Projects may or may not have all these expense categories.
6. **Attachments and Supporting Information:** Attach at least three photographs of the project site or sites. In addition, up to five pages of supporting information can be included with the application including such things as letters of support, planning documents, design plans, etc.

Applications, including any supporting information, must be submitted electronically in Microsoft Word or PDF format. E-mail applications to jeverson1@unl.edu with the subject heading "Greener Towns Application".

Application Deadlines: Proposals will be evaluated quarterly until all funds are allocated. Quarterly deadlines will be April 1st, July 1st and October 1st, 2016 and January 1st 2017.

IMPORTANT!! Before submitting your applications review it for accuracy, being sure to follow all instructions and formats. Incomplete or inaccurate applications will not be accepted for review.

Scottsbluff Downtown GNT Project
Proposed Budget

Reimbursable Expenses

	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total
Permeable Pavers	\$10/ft ²	750 ft ²	\$7,500
Plant Material	\$4/ft ²	6000 ft ²	\$24,000
Drip system	\$3,500	1	\$3,500
Mulch	\$30/yd ³	40	\$1,200

In-kind expenses

	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total
Concrete Removal	\$1/ft ²	7500 ft ²	\$7,500
Soil Amendments	\$1/ft ²	4500 ft ²	\$4,500
Volunteer Labor- Planting	\$21.36/hr	60 hrs	\$1,282
Educational Signage	\$300/ea	4	\$900
Year 1 Maintenance			\$2,500