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DDA Revises Its Principles Guiding DDA Partnership Grant Decisions

In 1999 the DDA established guidelines for itself which would help it determine when it might consider assisting new developments in the downtown area with a DDA Partnerships Grant. These guidelines have been revised several times by the DDA in the intervening years, but the goal has remained the same, which is to support exceptional projects that may serve as catalysts to encourage similar future downtown projects. The DDA has defined how it will deem a project to be exceptional by establishing certain standards, such as historic preservation of a significant downtown building or construction of a significant number of residential units, particularly affordable housing units. In the past several years the DDA has used its guidelines to provide DDA Partnerships Grants to several outstanding downtown projects, including Liberty Lofts, 200 S. Ashley (Tierra Place), and Ashley Mews.

At its November 2007 meeting the DDA voted to approve an amendment to its existing Partnerships Grant guidelines that would make its commitment to “green” building standards more clear. Previous guideline text said that the DDA might consider a grant if a development included a “provision of sustainable architectural elements, such as a green roof or solar heating system. The amendment approved by the DDA at its most recent meeting replaces that line with the text that a grant might be considered if a project achieved “a minimal Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification or higher.” The purpose to this amendment is to encourage more downtown developments that minimize their impact to the environment by such strategies as using less energy and reusing more recycled construction materials. Although there are various ways to measure these efforts, LEEDS is a recognized certification process, and would make it easier for the DDA to determine if a project has met its environmental goals.

The guidelines limit the amount of a potential DDA Partnerships Grant to a project to an amount equal to 1% to 25% of the ten year TIF captured by the DDA from this project, with the grant amount determined by the DDA. When DDA Partnerships Grants are provided funds are to be used to assist with the cost of project elements that directly benefit the public, including historic façade repairs,

pedestrian improvements, and storm water capture.
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