THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: July 27, 2021

Subject: Application for Fiscal Year 2021 Federal Transit Administration "Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant" funds for the purpose of completing a community engagement and planning process for the future Transit Center expansion and mixed-use development of 50 Asheland Avenue, aka the "Talbert Lot."

Staff Resource(s): Jessica Morriss, Assistant Transportation Department Director
Nikki Reid, Community and Economic Development Director
Stephanie Monson Dahl, Urban Design and Place Strategies Manager

Action Requested: Authorize the City Manager to submit an application for the Fiscal Year (FY 2021 Federal Transit Administration "Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant Program" in the amount of $850,000 (including a 10% match), for the purpose of completing a community engagement and planning process for the future Transit Center expansion and mixed-use development of 50 Asheland Avenue (aka the Talbert Lot); and if awarded, to accept the funds and sign all of the necessary agreements.

Background:

- At the May 25, 2021, City Council meeting, the purchase of 50 Asheland Ave. was authorized for the purpose of:
    1. planning, designing, and constructing a new and/or expanded downtown transit center in conjunction with
    2. a larger mixed-use development to include affordable housing, and
    3. to advance racial equity in the development of the property, constructing the improvements, and defining the uses (such as potential partnerships with community land trust(s), community spaces, a "Purpose Built Community" type structure around intention, etc.).
- The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) released a Notice of Funding Opportunity for its FY21 "Areas of Persistent Poverty" grant program in mid-July.
- The application is due August 30.
- The competitive grant program provides funding for projects that help lift communities out of poverty by supporting transit service improvements in underserved communities.
- FTA's Areas of Persistent Poverty Program supports "planning, engineering and technical studies or financial planning to improve transit services in any areas experiencing long-term economic distress…"
- The existing Transit Center, and recently 50 Asheland Ave. (aka Talbert Lot), are located within a Census tract that is considered to be an "area of persistent poverty," which is defined as having a poverty rate of at least 20% between 2014-2018 per Census data.
- Projects are expected to address the following criteria:
    - System condition and service reliability
    - Enhanced access and mobility
    - Accelerating innovation
    - Emission reductions
    - Barriers to low income housing
    - Racial equity and barriers to opportunity
    - Environmental justice
- The grant, if awarded, would provide funding to conduct the necessary comprehensive and targeted community engagement to develop a vision, program of uses, and concept design for the future development of 50 Asheland Avenue in accordance with the direction set by Council when the property was purchased.
- Extensive community involvement and engagement will be included in the scope of the grant project, and will integrate community leaders, transit riders, and affordable housing advocates into the overall project team to assist in gathering public input.

Vendor Outreach Efforts:

- N/A

Council Goal(s):

- Transportation and Accessibility
- Quality Affordable Housing
- A Well Planned and Livable Community

Committee(s):

- None

Pro(s):

- The grant funding will allow for the City and community to take the next steps toward future development of 50 Asheland Avenue, including expansion of the transit center and providing quality affordable housing.
- The funding would also serve to further build relationships among transit riders, affordable housing advocates, and various community stakeholders/leaders and nearby property owners.

Con(s):

- None

Fiscal Impact:

- The total project request is $850,000; the match requirement is 10%, or $85,000.
- Potential sources include available affordable housing bond funds or other available affordable housing dollars, to be determined if the grant is awarded.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to authorize the City Manager to submit an application for the FY21 Federal Transit Administration “Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant Program” in the amount of $850,000 (including a 10% match), for the purpose of completing a community engagement and planning process for the future Transit Center expansion and mixed-use development of 50 Asheland Avenue (aka the Talbert Lot); and if awarded, to accept the funds and sign all of the necessary agreements.

Attachment(s):

- Resolution
- Map

RESOLUTION NO. 21-____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR THE FY21 FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION "AREAS OF PERSISTENT POVERTY GRANT PROGRAM" FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMPLETING A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE FUTURE TRANSIT CENTER EXPANSION AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT OF 50 ASHELAND AVENUE (AKA THE TALBERT LOT)

WHEREAS; the City is authorized to make contracts for and to accept grants from the federal and state governments and their agencies for constructing, expanding, maintaining, and operating any project or performing any function which the City may be authorized by law to provide or perform; and

WHEREAS; the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity for the "Areas of Persistent Poverty" grant program which seeks to provide funding for projects that help lift communities out of poverty by supporting transit service improvements in underserved communities; and

WHEREAS; the FTA's Areas of Persistent Poverty Program supports "planning, engineering and technical studies or financial planning to improve transit services in any areas experiencing long-term economic distress…"; and

WHEREAS; the City of Asheville recently purchased real property at 50 Asheland Avenue for the purpose of "(1) planning, designing, and constructing a new and/or expanded downtown transit center…in conjunction with (2) a larger mixed-use development to include affordable housing, and (3) to advance racial equity in the development of the property, constructing the improvements, and defining the uses (such as potential partnerships with community land trust(s), community spaces, a "Purpose Built Community" type structure around intention, etc.); and

WHEREAS; the grant funding, if awarded, will provide funding for the City and community to conduct the necessary comprehensive and targeted community engagement to develop a vision, program of uses, and concept design for the future development of 50 Asheland Avenue in accordance with the direction set by Council when the property was purchased; and

WHEREAS; if the grant is awarded, agreements will be executed between the City of Asheville and the Federal Transit Administration, and required matching funds will be budgeted, prior to receipt of the grant;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City Manager is authorized to submit an application for the FY21 Federal Transit Administration "Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant Program" in the amount of $850,000 (including a 10% match), for the purpose of completing a community engagement and planning process for the future Transit Center expansion and mixed-use development of 50 Asheland Avenue (aka the Talbert Lot); and if awarded, to accept the funds and sign all of the necessary agreements.

Read, approved and adopted this the 27th day of July, 2021.

City Clerk

Mayor

Approved as to form:

City Attorney