

Item 23-1199: Request to approve the Neighborhood Grant Program request submitted by the Historic Central Neighborhood

Common Council

Wed, Oct 18, 2023 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 02:12

I have no business to present to you this evening, so we'll move on to public participation. At this time, we have one member of the public who signed up to speak, [Rebecca Z.]. So please approach the podium. Your name and address for the record. Thank you.

Rebecca Z. (Resident) 02:13

Hello, my name is [Rebecca Z.]. I live at [XXXXX]. I would like to speak in favor of approving the neighborhood grant program request submitted by Historic Central Neighborhood. I want to thank the city staff, the school district staff, and committee members who have supported this work alongside dozens of neighborhood leaders.

Rebecca Z. (Resident) 02:51

This grant combined with the increased investment it will generate from the school district will make a huge impact on the quality of life in our neighborhood. Nearly a decade ago when neighborhood kids shared about their dreams for their neighborhood playground, 73% of students mentioned their desire for grass. This was not a box they checked. They were not prompted. They drew pictures and wrote statements and nearly all of them dreamed of grass base to play on. The children who wrote these statements are now in high school, maybe even adults. They never got to play on grass at their elementary school and neighborhood park, the Columbus playground. There is now a new generation of students in our neighborhood, students who chip their teeth when they fall while running, skin their knees while trying to build confidence in sports and play, students who sit on asphalt for Field Day picnics.

Rebecca Z. (Resident) 03:45

The Columbus playground is a landmark of Appleton's historic central neighborhood. It's used as a de facto neighborhood park for community events as well as by two schools, Columbus Elementary and Appleton Bilingual School. Our closest city park, Arbutus Park, which is located in the most densely populated part of our city has been underinvested in. The phys—the physical layout provides unique challenges. This makes the Columbus playground the site that many families in our neighborhood utilize most. The playground at Columbus fulfils neighborhood needs no other site can. It has excellent visibility for young kids testing their independence. It's highly assessable. But it is in need of an update.

Rebecca Z. (Resident) 04:28

For this proposed playground renovation ideas were generated via Columbus staff who know the playground best, neighborhood families, community partners, and students. A large group of neighborhood members showed up at last week's Community and Economic Development Committee meeting to voice their approval. Most of those families are without students at Columbus. Thank you for your consideration, and please help us improve the most popular community gathering space in the Historic Central Neighborhood, and, yes, there will be plenty of grass.

Mayor Jake Woodford 05:03

All right. That was the only member of the public who signed up to speak, but this is public participation. So, did anybody miss the sign in and wanted to say something about an item that appears on the agenda? Seeing none, we'll close public participation.

[Cut]

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:30

All right, this is on the item from Community and Economic Development 23-1199 request to approve the neighborhood grant program request submitted by historic central neighborhood where we have a motion and a second to approve. Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 19:48

Thank you, chair. I don't in general have any issue with this particular—with approval of this particular grant request. But I am interested in hearing, if I could please, from the community and economic development folks in regards to what role Appleton Area School District is playing in this revitalization of Columbus Park.

Mayor Jake Woodford 20:08

Director Homan.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 20:16

So even though the grant application came from the neighborhood, it's actually the Appleton Area School District that's performing the work.

Mayor Jake Woodford 20:28

Alright, Alder Del Toro.

Aldersperson Israel Del Toro (District 4) 20:32

Just wanted to fill in folks who might have not had a chance to watch the Community and Economic Development meeting. I was really genuinely really pleased to see the amount of community input that came to that meeting. It was really heartwarming to see a community come together to provide green space for a much-needed school. So, I encourage us all to support and vote in favor of this grant.

Mayor Jake Woodford 20:57

Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 20:59

Thank you, Chair. I guess I was a little bit stunned there. I do have a follow up question. Why is the city paying for this if Appleton Area School District is doing the work?

Mayor Jake Woodford 21:13

Director Homan.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 21:16

So, this has been funded by the federal Community Development Block Grant. We have a special allocation within that program for neighborhood driven initiatives, and this was a neighborhood application that was put together in partnership with the school district, and we'll be reimbursing them for some of the costs that are eligible for CDBG reimbursement.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 21:42

Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 21:46

Any further discussion? We have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. Motion passes 15 to zero. The item has been approved.