Memorandum

Date: April 28, 2015

To: Bruce D. Glasscock, City Manager
Frank F. Turner, Deputy City Manager

From: Lori F. Schwarz, Director of Neighborhood Services

Subject: Neighborhood Revitalization Programs

Background:

The City Council approved a comprehensive study of City services that resulted in the Housing Value Retention Analysis in 2013. The development and implementation of an Incentivized Rebate Program and Neighborhood Vitality and Beautification grants were a few of the implementation strategies that were presented in the study. On April 14, 2014, the City council acknowledged acceptance of program standards for The Great Update Rebate (GUR). Approximately $610,000 was provided to fund rebates for eligible home improvement projects.

In the FY2014-15 City of Plano budget, City Council approved allocation of $500,000 in funding for neighborhood enhancement grant program as well as a Senior Neighborhood Planner to administer the program. The new staff member developed grant program guidelines that have been reviewed by city departments and neighborhood leaders at a public workshop. The Neighborhood Vitality and Beautification Matching Grant Program is designed to help achieve the strategic goal of "vibrant and renewing neighborhoods" by creating an incentive for residents to work together on a beautification project within their neighborhood.

Analysis:

In the last year, the Community Services division has processed one hundred-six applications and paid $346,020 in rebates to Plano homeowners. Currently, the unencumbered balance for the GUR account is $146,813. The GUR program is averaging nine (9) applications each month and the average rebate money paid to each program participant is $4,325. A map of the projects approved for the GUR program is included as Attachment A. Assuming the current rate of participation is maintained or increases, the GUR account will be depleted by August 2015.

As noted above, the guidelines for the Neighborhood Vitality and Beautification Matching Grant Program have been reviewed by City departments and the public. The final program guidelines are provided for Council's consideration as Attachment B. Upon Council's approval of the guidelines, Staff will finalize the enhancement grant program, which will only allow for one cycle of funding during the FY2014-15 fiscal year. While initial interest in the program has been significant, it is unlikely that the entire $500,000 allocated will be spent in the first round of projects.

Therefore, to ensure funding for home improvement projects is available through the end of FY2014-15, the Neighborhood Services Department has reallocated $150,000 from the neighborhood enhancement grant to the GUR program. The currently proposed project limitations for neighborhood grants will allow for twenty-eight (28) large-scale and thirty-five (35) small-scale neighborhood projects under the reduced funding of $350,000.

Based on the GUR program's success, Staff intends to request continuation of funding during the FY2015-16 budget process. Additionally, Staff will also request additional funding in the FY2015-16 budget to replenish the originally allotted funding for the neighborhood enhancement grant program to ensure City Council's goals are met.

Recommendation:

City Council review and approve the Neighborhood Vitality and Beautification Matching Grant Program Guidelines for implementation during FY2014-15.

Attachments:
"A" – Great Update Rebate Project Map
"B" – Neighborhood Vitality and Beautification Matching Grant Program Guidelines

Neighborhood Vitality and Beautification
Matching Grant Program Overview/Guidelines

FY 2014-2015

Purpose

The Neighborhood Vitality and Beautification Grant program provides matching grant funds to support Plano neighborhood groups in building strong relationships around a community-driven initiative. The grant provides an incentive to encourage neighborhood groups to develop initiatives that will improve physical neighborhood enhancements at completion. The financial assistance is in the form of a 1:1 match, with neighborhood groups providing 50% of the project budget. All projects must:

- support neighborhood goals
- be highly visible from the public realm
- have a community benefit
- enlist community participation
- result in an enhancement of the neighborhood appearance
- be within the City of Plano limits

Two matching grant options are available:

1. A Small Scale Initiative grant, valued between $500 - $2,000
2. A Large Scale Initiative grant, valued between $2,001 - $10,000

Neighborhood Group Eligibility

Small Scale Initiative Grants are available to neighborhood associations, homeowner associations and crime watch groups who satisfactorily identify the project objectives and meet the application requirements. Eligibility criteria for neighborhood groups is listed below.

Large Scale Initiative Grants are available to 501(c) nonprofit organizations, or to neighborhood groups partnering with an eligible non-profit to serve as the fiscal agent for the project and meet the eligibility criteria listed below. Applicants must also satisfactorily identify the project objectives and meet the application requirements.

Eligibility Criteria for Neighborhood Groups:

- Must register with the BEST Neighborhoods Division at http://www.plano.gov/988/Homeowners-Associations-in-Plano.
- Disbursement of funds requires the organization to have a bank account, as checks are not distributed to individuals.
- Must be active, open/inclusive and represent the neighborhood in which the project will be completed.
- Neighborhood groups must provide an annual budget and two forms of documentation from the following list to verify the organization is properly organized and active:

  Meeting minutes (last 2 meetings) Newsletters (2 editions)
  Membership directory Officer Contact List
- 501(c) organizations must provide their non-profit status, an annual budget, as well as one other form of documentation from the following list to verify the organization is properly organized and active:

  Membership Directory Board of Directors Contact List Articles of Incorporation
  Bylaws Newsletters (2 editions)

Project Eligibility

- Projects must meet the program objectives, including criteria such as:
  - support neighborhood goals
  - have a community benefit
  - community involvement
  - public improvements enhancement
  - visibility of improvements
- Projects must have a match of 50% of the total budget from the neighborhood group.
- Projects should be considerate of neighborhood diversity and adhere to ADA requirements, when applicable.
- Projects must adhere to existing City ordinances and not interfere with any current or planned Community Investment Program projects of the City.
- Applicants must consider future maintenance on completed projects, and provide a maintenance plan if applicable.
- Projects must be located within the city limits of Plano.

Project Examples

Typical projects will physically improve the neighborhoods. Examples include:

- Redesigned neighborhood entryway landscapes, with native vegetation or Smartscape plants
- New neighborhood entryway signs
- Existing gateway sign and screening wall enhancements
- Repair/replacement of screening walls
- Greenbelt improvements
- Lighting enhancements in public spaces
- Street Sign toppers
- Drip irrigation system in shared use/community areas
- Park development/ improvement
- Community Gardens, not on public property

Ineligible Projects

The following types of projects are ineligible for grant funding through this program:

- Applications without at least a 50% match of total project budget
- Applications promoting special interests
- Projects not providing a public benefit
- Applications requesting funding for salaries or operating expenses
- Applications for events, social/cultural education programs or public art
- Projects that conflict with existing city ordinances, or current/planned Community Investment Program
- Projects that may result in a public safety hazard

Project Details

The application should include as many details as possible to help support your grant request. Complete applications will include the need for the proposed improvement, support from the neighborhood and project feasibility. Photographs, project location and drawings supporting the proposal should be attached to the application to better convey the project idea.

Project Selection Criteria

Proposed projects are reviewed and selected based on meeting basic eligibility and the project's score based on weighted criteria (100 possible points). There are three additional criteria that can be met to gain

15 bonus points. To be considered for funding, the project must score a minimum of 60 points.

Criteria	Detail	Max Weight
Community Benefit	• Provides a community benefit by improving health, safety and/or appearance of neighborhood (20pts) • Project location is visible from public realm (15pts)	35
Neighborhood Participation	• Demonstration of neighborhood commitment to long-term and on-going maintenance plan (10pts) • Shows evidence of broad, diverse participation and support within neighborhood (10pts)	20
Neighborhood Impact/Need	• Improvements are accessible to neighboring residents (15pts) • Addresses a need identified in the community and provides a lasting impact/solution (10pts)	25
Feasibility	• Well-planned, cost effective and ready to implement (10pts) • Budget is reasonably set for expenses (10pts)	20
BONUS POINTS	• Neighborhood volunteer labor included as part of neighborhood match (5pts) • Collaborative effort with nearby church or organization (5pts) • Creative or innovative solution to a need in the community (5pts)	15

Funding Cycles

Grant funding cycles will be awarded twice a year in the spring and fall. For spring projects, the deadline for applications is Feb. 1st, due by 5pm, close of business. For fall projects, the deadline for applications is July 31st, due by 5pm, close of business. An optional grant workshop will be held approximately 6 weeks prior to application deadline. Please contact staff for exact dates and locations or see dates online at http://www.plano.gov/2554/Neighborhood-Beautification-Grants.

Neighborhood groups may submit one grant application per cycle. If proposed project is not awarded during one funding cycle, the neighborhood is encouraged to apply in the following funding cycle. Neighborhood groups are not limited to one award per calendar year.

Application Process

1. Review guidelines for the Neighborhood Vitality and Beautification Grant, attend optional grant workshop.
2. Contact city staff to schedule a pre-application meeting to discuss proposed project eligibility and feasibility.
3. Register with the BEST Neighborhoods Division at http://www.plano.gov/988/Homeowners-Associations-in-Plano.
4. Download an application online or request one from the City of Plano, Neighborhood Services Department. Contact information is listed below.
5. Submit application – includes project description, project impact, proposed schedule, proposed budget and maintenance plan – by the specified deadline.
    a. Provide proof of matching funds (50% of total project costs) with signed commitment letters for cash and volunteer hours (valued at city's current rate). For in-kind donations from

professional services or donated materials/supplies, donor must provide on their letterhead the proposed value of their service/material at their retail value.

   b. Provide supporting documents/materials for project details.
   c. Provide necessary documents to indicate eligibility for neighborhood group.
   d. For large scale initiatives, provide necessary documents to indicate eligibility for 501(c) organization.

6. Projects are reviewed carefully by a multi-departmental team and scored based on weighted criteria (found under project selection criteria section)
7. Applicant is notified within 30 days from application deadline

Grant Workshop

An optional grant workshop will be made available in advance to discuss program guidelines. Please check the grant program website for date and time at http://www.plano.gov/2554/Neighborhood-Beautification-Grants.

Pre-Application Meeting

A one-on-one pre-application meeting must be scheduled with city staff. This opportunity allows applicants to get feedback on feasibility of project and understanding of multi-departmental review. Some projects may involve other City departments, such as Parks and Recreation and/or Public Works.

Matching Funds Requirement

Neighborhood groups must provide a 50% match (1:1) of the total project budget. The match provided must be directly related to the project being undertaken. Matching resources may include the following:

- Cash contributions must be documented by submitting a signed commitment letter with the amount stated and bank statements from the organization showing funds available.
- Donated or discounted materials or services must be documented by providing on the donor's letterhead a commitment of resources with a listed retail value.
- Donated professional services, such as architectural, engineering, construction, etc., must be documented by providing on the donor's letterhead a commitment of resources with a listed retail value.
- Volunteer labor must be documented by submitting a signed commitment letter with the total number of volunteers and hours of labor (total value is calculated using the current city rate).

A section of the application form will allow for the calculation of the proposed volunteer labor value. Applicants can use this section of the form to describe volunteer activities, the number of volunteers and the total number of hours. A sample of a calculation for volunteer match is provided below.

Sample Volunteer Match			
Volunteer Activity Description	Date	# of Volunteers	# of Volunteer Hours
Neighborhood clean-up day	4/5/2014	20	60
Neighborhood landscaping day	4/6/2014	15	45
Project finish-out	4/12/2014	5	5
	Total # of Volunteer Hours		110
	x	city's current rate	$ 2,062.50

Project Budget

The proposed Project Budget section of the application form must be completed before submitting. Supporting documentation is required for the neighborhood match. A sample Project Budget is provided

below.

Sample Project Budget					
Expenses - Line Item Description	City Match	Neighborhood Match			Total Expenses
	Cash	Donated Supplies/ Materials/ Labor	Volunteer Value	Donation / Cash	
Screening wall repairs - contracted services	$ 4,000			$ 2,000	$ 6,000
Landscape material - trees, flowers		$ 900			$ 900
Landscape material - soil/mulch				$ 200	$ 200
Landscape services			$ 2,531		$ 2,531
Ice, water, snacks		$ 110			$ 110
Total Project Cost	$ 4,000	$ 1,010	$ 2,531	$ 2,200	$ 9,741

Notification of Awards

Applicants will be notified by mail and by phone within 30 days of the application deadline. Applicants selected to receive matched grant funds will be asked to attend a Grant Management meeting to discuss the project plan, reporting requirements and disbursement of funding as well as the contract/agreement in detail.

Project Implementation

Small scale initiatives must be completed within 6 months after the contract has been signed and processed. Large scale initiatives must be completed within 12 months after the contract has been signed and processed.

Extensions of deadlines are only granted by the City of Plano under special circumstances that are not the result of actions by the organization. Extension requests must be brought to the attention of the city representative immediately.

Permitting (if applicable)

The applicant is responsible for obtaining all building permits and any other required permits for the work to be completed. The applicant is responsible for conformance with all applicable safety standards and conditions. Work can begin once the grant contract has been processed. The applicant also agrees to maintain the project or improvement once completed, if applicable.

Maintenance Agreement (if applicable)

The applicant is responsible for maintaining the improvements after completion. If the improvements made are on public rights-of-way, a Memorandum of Understanding will be required between the City of Plano and the neighborhood group.

Contract/Agreement

Each grant recipient and the City of Plano will enter into a contract outlining the scope of work, funding, and reporting requirements under the grant program. The contract will be drafted to reflect the recipient's proposed work plan and budget contained in their grant application. The recipient will receive one (1) copy of their contract from the City of Plano, which should be reviewed and signed by an official representative of the organization. The original must be returned to the city for signature by the city representative. A copy will be sent to the grant recipient.

Disbursement of Funds

Projects may not start until the grant contract is processed. The matching grant funds will be released to the neighborhood group on a reimbursement basis. Funds are not awarded in advance. All reimbursement requests must include original receipts/invoices for expenditures for processing. The Reimbursement Request Form can be found at http://www.plano.gov/2554/Neighborhood-Beautification-Grants. Please allow 10 business days for invoice processing. Checks are made payable to the organization or fiscal agent. Your association must have a bank account established. Funds are only to be used to support activities described in the project description. *Significant changes in the project must be approved by the City representative before funds are expended.*

Contracting Services/Bidding

Recipients are urged to acquire at least three bids on projects and select competent, reliable vendors with valid credentials to avoid potential problems or delays. The city is contracted solely with the recipient neighborhood group. Therefore, any discrepancies that may result from the hiring of contractors or private vendors must be resolved by the grantee.

Reporting/Outcomes

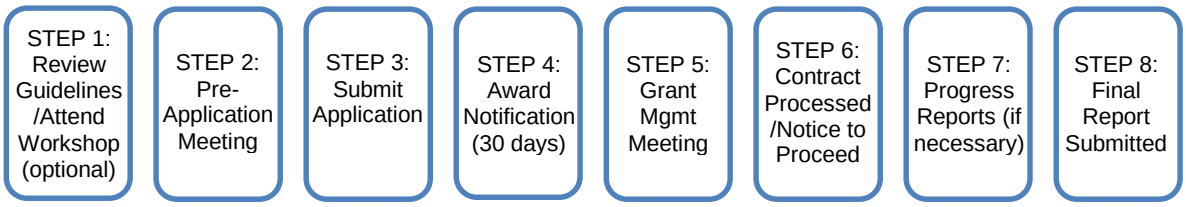
The City of Plano promotes collaboration within neighborhoods. Therefore, the program is designed to have a two-fold outcome: community-building through the implementation of a successful project and a physical improvement within the community.

Certain reporting requirements are necessary to further help the City monitor this grant program and make revisions, if necessary, to increase effectiveness.

All projects are required to submit a Final Report Form no later than 30 days after completion. This report will include documentation of final/actual expenses and donation information such as total volunteer labor, actual donated material/supplies and in-kind professional services.

In addition, projects with timelines over 90 days require the submittal of a progress report form at a determined point(s) of the implementation phase. Staff will work with applicants to ensure appropriate timing for progress reports to be submitted.

Application/Project Timeline



* 12 month time frame for large scale initiatives; 6 month time frame for small scale initiatives

Contact

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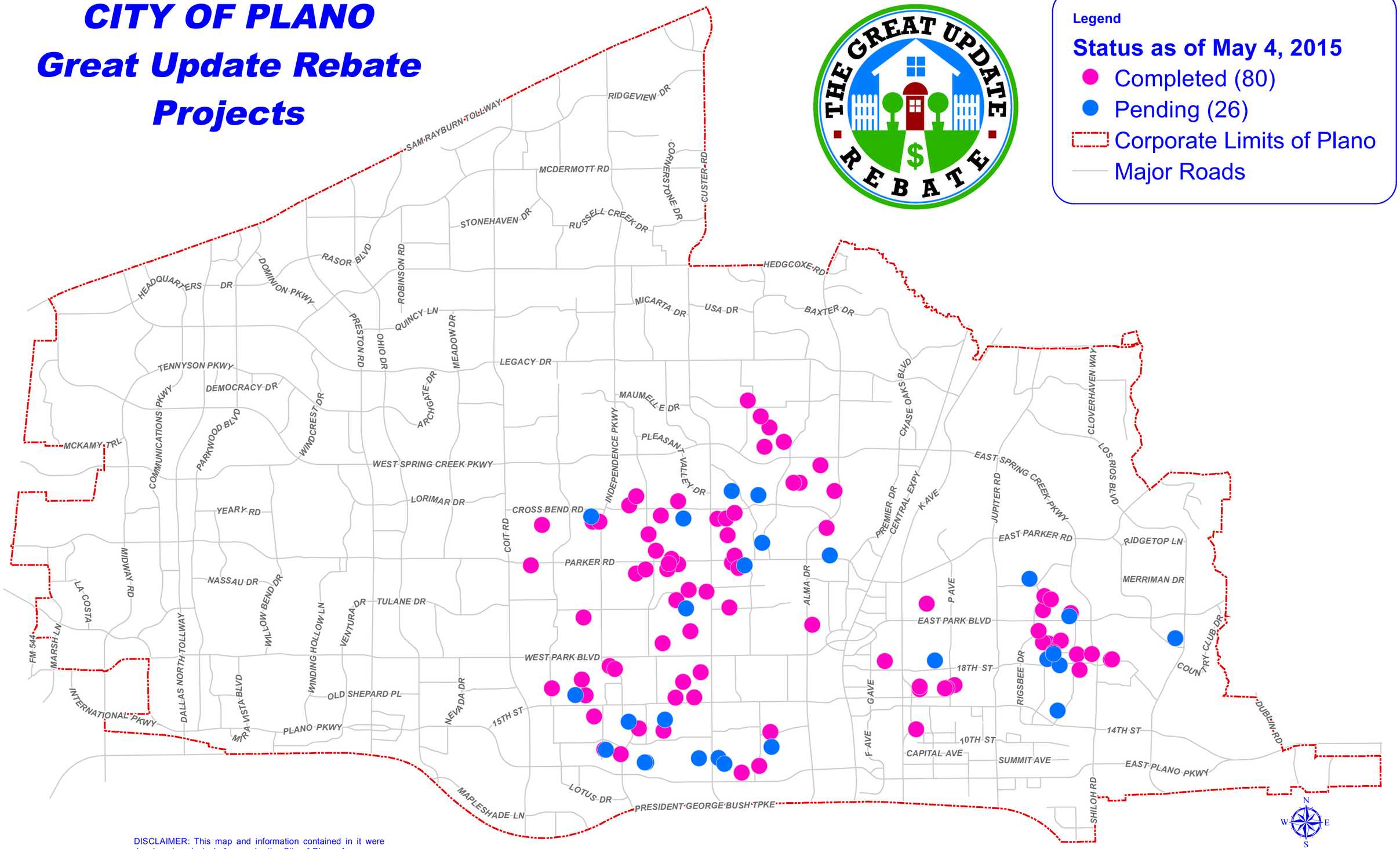
CITY OF PLANO
Great Update Rebate Projects



Legend

Status as of May 4, 2015

- Completed (80)
- Pending (26)
- Corporate Limits of Plano
- Major Roads

Plano

DISCLAIMER: This map and information contained in it were developed exclusively for use by the City of Plano. Any use or reliance on this map by anyone else is at that party's own risk and without liability to the City of Plano, its officials or employees for any discrepancies, errors, or variances which may exist.

Not to Scale

Source : City of Plano, GIS Division

Date : 5/4/2015

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