MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM HELPS NEW YORK MILLS BUSINESSES REVITALIZE

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By Heather Rule

New York Mills developed a matching grant program in 2024 and is doing it again in 2025 for businesses to make improvements to the exterior or certain interior parts of their buildings.

The city applied for a grant through the Otter Tail County Community Development Agency, and then the grant was matched with $25,000 from the agency. Most of the improvements for businesses within this grant are for outdoor improvements, with certain specifications for indoor improvements.

"We'll match up to $5,000," said Julie Roberts, New York Mills city clerk. "So, it's a one-for-one grant. One dollar for one dollar, up to $5,000. It's a loan that is forgiven over five years."

The funds available are community partnership grants, according to Betsy Roder, president of the New York Mills Economic Development Authority. The New York Mills EDA applied for one of those grants and received it from the CDA to create this fund for matching grants for business revitalization.

"The CDA is trying to provide whatever assistance it can to build up the region, and so New York Mills was trying to do the same thing," Roder said.

Some examples of repairs done through the first round of grants were parking lot repairs, new signage for businesses, new windows or new doors, landscaping, or window tinting to help with energy efficiency. These grants are available to local businesses to help them "revitalize their storefronts and their business," Roberts said.

"Just spruce things up if they have any need," Roberts said. "That's what it was meant for, and we had an overwhelming response on the first round."

Those first-round projects will be completed by the end of summer 2025. They were thrilled with the response for the first round, Roder said, and most of the funds were allocated to various businesses.

This second round of grants will consist of $50,000 which will be on the table starting in February 2025. Businesses can apply for that funding to help make improvements to their buildings. With the city's match, there's a potential of up to $100,000 worth of improvements to business fronts in town.

"It's just something we're trying to do just because the dollars are available through Otter Tail County CDA, and doing what we can do with our EDA budget to match, to

get some matching funds to help out our business district, our business storefronts," Roberts said.

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