

THE CITY OF WEST COLUMBIA
TRIANGLE CITY FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT – PHASE I

ADDENDUM to Section 13 – Narrative Questions

BACKGROUND:

From the 1940s to the 1980s, the commercial center of West Columbia was an area called Triangle City. Located along the axis of 12th Street between Augusta Highway (US Highway 1) and the city's southern boundary with Cayce, the area contains a number of small shopping centers and locally owned businesses. The accompanying maps show the entire Triangle City area and its relationship to other areas within the City of West Columbia.

The economic decline of Triangle City and its current unsightliness were heralded in the 1980's when residential development near the core of the Columbia Urbanized Area moved outward from historic settlement areas to the west and northwest of West Columbia. With this shift in population location, many of the former Triangle City businesses closed or relocated. This loss of major retailers in Triangle City marked the beginning of its erosion as a commercial hub of activity. Since the 1980s, this decline has taken its toll on the appearance of the area. The once thriving Triangle City area became a visually unappealing streetscape of utility poles, derelict signage and deteriorating commercial facades. Inadequate facilities for pedestrians, insufficient lighting, and poorly marked parking areas further detracted from its appearance and hindered any redevelopment efforts.

Although there are only a relatively few vacant storefronts in the Project Area at any given time, the vacancies keep shifting from one storefront to another. There is also a dichotomy in the types of businesses in this area. Although there are strong anchor businesses such as Zesto's, Creative Sewing and Gold Line Framing, the presence of more and more businesses that are less family-oriented (such as pawn shops and payday lenders) are steadily infiltrating and perpetuate the further decline of this area.

NEED AND INITIAL STEPS TAKEN:

The principal obstacle to economic competitiveness has been the lack of seed capital to kick-start an economic renaissance to match the residential investment being made throughout the city. To address long-standing problems in Triangle City, the City of West Columbia prepared a citywide Strategic Plan for West Columbia, and contracted with the consulting engineering firm of HPG and Company in 2005 to develop a specific plan for revitalizing Triangle City. The city had been working with HPG for several years in planning for and structuring its TEA-21 application, but in 2005 wanted to develop a plan that would coordinate TEA-21 funds and CDBG funds. The new plan outlines the work to be done in each overall phase:

PHASE I:

- a) TEA 21 Streetscape Project for two-block area of 12th Street (to be completed by December 2007)
- b) CDBG Funding for rehabilitation of two parking areas (FY 2007-2008 - planning and engineering underway)

PHASE II: CDBG Funding for Façade Improvements – Phase I - for two blocks on east side of 12th St. (Current application)

PHASE III: CDBG Funding for Façade Improvements – Phase II for two blocks on west side of 12th St (Future Application)

Improvements made in the Project Area will directly impact the overall economic competitiveness of Triangle City, including its livability, its attractiveness to investors, its business environment, and the appeal of the area to those who may choose to develop residences at or near their places of work.

To get to this stage and to ensure that there is full and active participation in project activities after grant approval, the city worked with Triangle City property and business owners to form an active committee in 2005. Meetings held in the course of preparing the Plan for the Revitalization of Triangle City and this CDBG grant application revealed that the priorities identified by this group are:

- a. **Improvements to building facades (Phase I to be addressed with this grant request)**
- b. Improved parking designation and signage
- c. Development of a theme or identity to carry through each phase of area improvements.
- d. Storm drainage improvements
- e. Building on current streetscape efforts to relocate utilities, and to beautify and landscape the area.

These planned improvements (some already underway) will address safety, accessibility issues, beautification and economic stability.

To undertake a planned streetscape improvement program, West Columbia was awarded \$435,000 in TEA-21 funds and has matched this amount with \$108,750 of local funds for a total of \$543,750. Streetscape improvements are structured to connect the new city hall with Triangle City. Two of these TEA-21 grants are directed to make streetscape improvements in the Triangle City Project Area. With CDBG funds used in harmony with TEA 21 grants, the city can begin a serious and substantial program of revitalization of Triangle City and maximize its potential as a neighborhood commercial center for hundreds of dwelling units lying within a two-mile radius. ***Failure to reverse economic decline will affect all of the people residing in the city because the tax base from the area will decline, job opportunities will not be realized and job losses may be the result of failure to act.***

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

For purposes of this grant, the Project Area will consist of a 2-block area along the east side of 12th Street (from B Avenue to D Avenue) shown on the maps included with this application. There are currently 19 businesses within the project area. Overall, the facades are aesthetically unappealing and consist of a hodgepodge of façade materials, colors, styles and signage. This grant will be used for façade improvements to include painting, new awnings, walkway and signage lighting, and more uniform signage.

This project will be in conjunction with improvements being made to 12th Street rights-of-way and the two parking lots in front of the project area. Utilizing multiple financing sources shows a cooperative regional effort between business/property owners, the city, and state and local

governments to address a community issue. The health of Triangle City, traversed by and lying near major arterial roads leading into the heart of Columbia is critical for the economic health of the three municipalities who make up the core of the urban area of eastern Lexington County: West Columbia, Cayce and Springdale.