

Urban Development
Action Grant

I have several brief project and administrative updates this evening.

First, I am pleased to report that City staff recently identified approximately \$290,000 in previously unused UDAG funding that can be applied toward the City's upcoming demolition program. These funds are eligible to support the demolition of unsafe structures at 136 Madison Street, 138 Madison Street, and 210 Sconondoa Street.

This represents considerably more than a one-time savings of \$290,000. Had that amount been financed over a period of 15 to 20 years at illustrative interest rates of approximately 4% to 5%, the City could have incurred an additional \$100,000 to \$175,000 in interest costs.

Stated another way, the identification of these funds may allow the City to avoid approximately \$390,000 to \$465,000 in total principal-and-interest payments over the life of the borrowing, in addition to applicable bond counsel, financial adviser, issuance, and administrative costs.

Depending upon the eventual borrowing term and interest rate, this could also remove approximately \$21,000 to \$28,000 in annual debt-service obligations from future City budgets. That preserves borrowing capacity for other critical infrastructure needs and reduces the long-term burden placed upon taxpayers.

These figures are necessarily estimates, since the actual savings would depend upon the financing structure and market conditions at the time of borrowing. However, the broader financial benefit is clear: every dollar the City can secure through an existing funding source, grant, or reimbursement is a dollar that does not have to be raised through property taxes or long-term debt.

I want to recognize Steve Vonderweidt and Donna Osier for their work researching the eligibility of these funds and obtaining the necessary confirmation. This is an excellent example of staff carefully examining the City's available resources and identifying a solution that produces both an immediate and long-term financial benefit.

The City Engineer has also confirmed that Abscope's proposal for the demolition project is fully responsive and meets the required scope of work. Staff are now working through the remaining financial, contractual, environmental-monitoring, and administrative steps necessary to advance the project.

We also recently met with the City's engineering team regarding the flood-mitigation initiative. That work is moving into a more detailed phase involving surveying, property access, potential easements, rights-of-way, and the practical engineering steps necessary to determine an implementable project.

Flood mitigation is not a simple or immediate undertaking. It requires accurate engineering, cooperation from affected property owners, and a clear understanding of the legal and physical conditions along the proposed project area. However, the City is moving beyond general discussion and into the technical and legal work necessary to establish a viable path forward.

The City has also submitted an application for \$200,000 through the NY Kicks grant program for improvements to the Wilson Street soccer fields. That funding would supplement the investment already being made through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and support improvements to a heavily used recreational facility serving local families and AYSO participants.

The administration has also completed a series of departmental budget workshops as we begin preparing the 2027 budget. We are reviewing departmental requests, staffing, capital needs, user fees, contractual obligations, and the City's broader financial condition.

That process will require difficult decisions. Our goal is to present the Common Council with a responsible and transparent budget that recognizes the services residents expect while also addressing the financial pressures facing the City and its taxpayers.

We are also continuing to provide oversight and coordination on the City's major DRI projects, including Hotel Oneida, Veterans Memorial Park, the Kallet Theater, and the remaining project reallocations.

I also want to briefly acknowledge that City Hall is aware of a video presentation being circulated by a member of the Common Council concerning the Veterans Memorial Park project.

The presentation contains a number of factual inaccuracies, incomplete statements, and misleading characterizations regarding the project's history, funding, scope, and development.

The administration is currently evaluating the operational and organizational implications created by the circulation of inaccurate information concerning an active City project. Staff are also preparing a comprehensive factual update that will provide the public and the Common Council with the relevant project history, source documentation, funding information, and current status.

I would also remind the public that no individual official has unilateral authority over City operations or administration. The City Manager, the Mayor, and individual members of the Common Council each have defined roles and responsibilities, but none may

independently direct the City outside the authority established by the City Charter and applicable law.

City policy and legislative direction are established through the Common Council acting collectively, while the day-to-day administration of City government is carried out through the City Manager and professional staff. One council member, acting alone, does not direct employees, manage projects, or speak for the City as an institution.

A project update meeting is scheduled for August 11, at which time the relevant records, project history, funding information, and current status will be reviewed in greater detail. Following that meeting, the administration will prepare and release a factual update for the Common Council and the public.

Until that information is available, I would encourage residents to consider the full record and rely upon official City documentation rather than isolated or incomplete representations.

There is a great deal of important work occurring across the organization, and I want to thank our employees and department heads for continuing to pursue funding, solve problems, provide accurate information, and move these projects forward on behalf of the City.

