

ECONOMIC GARDENING, ANOKA COUNTY, Q & A

WHAT IS THE BALANCE OF RAMSEY HRA FUNDS AT THE COUNTY?

The fund balance is over \$811,000

WHAT CONTROL DOES THE CITY HAVE OVER THEIR HRA MONEY? MORE SPECIFICALLY, HOW MUCH MONEY CAN WE TRANSFER FROM THE HRA TO THE EDA (IF WE ELECTED THE EDA POWERS)?

The city has great control over the funds it has been our practice to place the collected Lucy [money] into a fund that is then made available for eligible projects selected by the city. Typically staff makes a request to me and I confirm that the project meets the requirements laid out in state statute. The next step requires the city council to pass a resolution requesting \$xxx of funding to undertake xxx project. The ACHRA board approves the request and the money can be accessed. The only time a project was denied the city did not consult with our HRA staff and requested a project prohibited by statute.

Because we do not levy separate taxes for the HRA and the EDA all funding can be used for either purpose as long as the city has opted into the economic development portion of the ACHRA. At this time Ramsey has not opted in and would have to do so by city council resolution. Once this is done the city can use all funding for housing, redevelopment or economic development. There are no caps or limits on how the city decides to allocate their projects.

WHAT CITIES IN ANOKA HAVE ELECTED THE EDA POWERS?

Originally it was the smaller communities like St. Francis, Nowthen, Columbus, Lexington and Hilltop to name a few. Ramsey opted into the HRA for the purpose of developing senior housing. Once economic powers were added Columbia Heights joined both the HRA and the EDA as did Spring Lake Park. I will be visiting with all cities in the county this summer and anticipate more cities will opt into the EDA for two reasons. First, there are no additional taxes levied. We were formed with explicit direction to only have one levy not both. The second reason I anticipate more cities opting is to take advantage of the economic gardening program.

WHAT ARE THE KNOWN DRAWBACKS AND/OR COMMON CONCERNS CITIES HAVE FOR ENTERING THE COUNTY EDA JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT?

The question on concerns cities have had with our program is interesting. To date (I've worked here 11 years) there was only one city that decided to drop out of the program. A new city council wanted full control of activities. Outside of this city I believe you would hear very positive things from our participating cities. We provide technical assistance, respond to your cities funding requests and make periodic presentations as the city requests.

For a city already working with us in the housing and redevelopment area, adding the ability to fund economic development activities is extra value added. It opens up the types of projects a city can undertake and there are no additional taxes levied.