

First two applicants seek money from DESA

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Two applicants want funding from Kansas City's new Downtown Economic Stimulus Authority, an authority staff member said Wednesday after the group's first meeting.

Missy Wilson, an official with the Economic Development Corp. of Kansas City, said backers of the South Loop that includes a proposed entertainment district and H&R Block Inc.'s new headquarters to be built at 13th and Main streets want assistance through the Missouri Downtown and Rural Economic Stimulus Act.

The act, better known as Modesa, diverts state taxes generated by downtown developments to offset the cost of public improvements such as parking garages. The city will own property that receives Modesa money.

Wilson declined to identify the second funding applicant because its request hasn't been made public.

The authority was established to avoid conflict-of-interest questions surrounding the Greater Downtown Development Authority that Kansas City Mayor Kay Barnes established two years ago to lobby state legislators for Modesa. Barnes co-chairs the development authority with Tom McDonnell, CEO of DST Systems Inc., a large downtown property owner.

Other large downtown developers also serve on the development authority's board. Co-chairing the stimulus authority with Barnes is Peter Yelorda, chairman of the Kansas City Tax Increment Financing Commission.

Other TIF Commission members serving on the stimulus authority are Gwen Grant, Barbara Pendleton, Joe Serviss, Chester Wittwer and Ron Yaffe. Serviss formerly was Barnes' chief of staff.

Other board members include Kansas City Councilman Troy Nash, Cathy Brown, John Paul Chaurand, Michael Clarke, Charles Myers and Helen Ragsdale.

The stimulus authority will next meet on March 1. Meetings will take place on the first Wednesday of each month.