

Neighborhood revitalization program 2019 grant guidelines

Purpose

In 1996, the City of St. Louis Park established this grant program to support neighborhoods and enhance community connections by bringing neighbors together. Financial support is provided for special projects initiated by neighbors to address issues, implement ideas or create opportunities that are meaningful and important to their neighborhoods. This purpose still applies today and supports the city's strategic priority: St. Louis Park is committed to creating opportunities to build social capital through community engagement. In 2019, the city expects to award up to \$40,000 in grants.

Grant term

The grant term will be May 1, 2019 to Dec. 31, 2019. Reimbursement can be issued for cost incurred within the grant term. All work must be completed within this timeframe. The last invoice for the 2019 grant must be submitted on Jan. 15, 2020.

Who we fund

Eligible applicants include organized St. Louis Park neighborhood associations recognized as a neighborhood association. To be recognized as a neighborhood association, you must demonstrate the following:

- Have at least three elected officers from the neighborhood
- Have a method of transferring leadership from one year to the next
- Written bylaws approved by its membership, which must be reviewed annually
- Hold an annual neighborhood meeting

Projects should be the idea of, and championed by, residents of the neighborhood area with input from residents.

What We Fund

Creative community projects that focus on the following criteria will be considered for funding:

- Enhances the aesthetics of the neighborhood.
- Provides a clear community benefit.
- Accessible to all members of the community.
- Addresses a known neighborhood deficiency.
- Strengthens existing community assets
- Increases sense of community.
- Activates community improvements or spaces.
- Focuses on community involvement.
- Helps inform neighborhood or city projects.

Special funding

Special grant funding is strictly for the use of environment, racial equity and inclusion, and insurance. Funds cannot be used for any other reimbursement.

Environmental

Neighborhood associations may apply for additional grant funding up to \$200 that incorporate an environmental component either in conjunction with an existing event or adding a new program/event. This new grant element ties to the strategic priorities: St. Louis Park is committed to continue to lead in environmental stewardship.

Racial equity and inclusion

Neighborhood associations may apply for additional grant funding up to \$250 that incorporate a racial equity and inclusion component either in conjunction with an existing event or adding a new program/event. This new grant element is tied to the strategic priorities: St. Louis Park is committed to being a leader in racial equity and inclusion in order to create a more just and inclusive community for all.

Insurance

Neighborhood associations may apply for additional grant funding up to \$500 to assist with purchasing additional insurance.

Note: When planning neighborhood events in parks, you may be required to make provisions to use your own insurance. Neighborhood associations are responsible for providing outside insurance when planning neighborhood events in parks that bring outside equipment into the park such as, but not limited to, moonwalks, petting zoos, etc. Without clear delineation of who is responsible in case of accidents, neighborhood leaders may be held liable.

Matching grant funds

To qualify for a grant, a neighborhood must demonstrate how it will contribute to or leverage the Neighborhood Revitalization Program grant funds. A match of neighborhood resources maximizes the use of limited city funds and confirms the commitment from each neighborhood. Neighborhoods should provide at least a 50 percent (dollar for dollar) match to the grant amount. However, applicants that demonstrate a 100 percent match will score better. Any combination of sources is acceptable in calculating the neighborhood match. These can be in the form of:

- Cash raised through fundraising
- Fees collected at activities
- Donations from businesses, civic groups, etc.
- In-kind services or sweat equity

What are the grant program terms and contract requirements?

- The city retains sole discretion in determining whether or not applications are eligible.
- Necessary permits or other approvals must be obtained by the applicant prior to starting projects. Examples of projects that need permits include but are not limited to, permanent improvements within the public right of way or on private property or activities requiring a street closure.
- Projects must be accessible and inclusive.

- Award maximum is \$2,950 per year.
 - Grant request maximum amount \$2,000
 - Group activities, social events and meetings are considered for funding up to a maximum of \$700 per activity.
 - Environmental request maximum amount \$200
 - Racial equity and inclusion maximum amount \$250
 - Insurance maximum amount \$500
- Only one Neighborhood Revitalization Grant per neighborhood associations per year.
- Projects may require a design review as a condition of the grant award.
- Projects must be completed within the grant's calendar year.
- Grants do not carry over from year to year. Previous 2018/2019 grant must closed by April 30, 2019 before new grant funds are awarded.

How are grants distributed for awarded projects?

- Applicants who are selected ("Grantee") must sign a contract before implementation of their project. Contracts can be signed before May 10, 2019.
- Grantees are required to pay for expenses upfront and will be reimbursed by the city.
- Receipts and invoices for project costs must be submitted as proof of expenses.
- Invoices will be processed on the 15th of the month for reimbursement. The last invoice will be accepted Jan. 15, 2020. The month following the conclusion of the grant term.
- Reimbursement may not exceed total grant award.
- Reimbursement for previous 2018/2019 grant will not be accepted or reimbursed after April 30, 2019.

What are the reporting requirements?

- When submitting an invoice, a status report will be required.
- All grantees will have a mid-grant year in-person meeting with the city's community organizer.
- Evaluation report along with a complete expense report will be due at end of grant year.

What types of expenses are covered by grant funds?

The city urges neighborhood leaders to think creatively when brainstorming about projects and types of community involvement. Neighborhood leaders are encouraged to be creative in assessing their needs and determining the projects they want to undertake as a neighborhood. **Neighborhood leaders are required to include neighborhood resident input for proposed projects. How you choose to receive this input must be included in the grant application. Projects that demonstrate greater community input and inclusion will be consider with more favor.**

The following types of projects will be favorably considered:

- Neighborhood identity (e.g., brochures, signs, festivals and education of neighborhood history)
- Neighborhood leadership training and development
- Start-up funds for specific neighborhood projects (e.g., newsletters, emailing services)
- Publicity of special events (e.g., community cleanups)
- Beautification (we will only consider Minnesota-friendly/bee-friendly planting)
- Social events that bring neighbors together (block party, youth event, art, holiday party)
- Deeping reach and connections with historically underrepresented community members
- Purchasing environmentally friendly products for a neighborhood events

Note: Physical improvements to any public property must be coordinated with the appropriate city department. It should not conflict with or duplicate a project in the city's Capital Improvements Program. A letter of feasibility must be included with a grant application that requests funding for park improvements. This letter should confirm that the appropriate city department has reviewed the proposed improvements, that the proposal is feasible, and that the project budget is a reasonable estimate of project costs.

City department contact for capital improvements: Rick Beane, parks and recreation division, 952.928.2854.

What types of expenses are NOT covered by grant funds?

- Routine maintenance (e.g., mowing and snow removal)
- General maintenance of public infrastructure (sidewalks, streetlights, alleys, street trees)
- On-going operating expenses (e.g., administration costs, office supplies)
- Payment for services provided by neighborhood residents such as babysitters, attendants (this should be counted as in-kind services)
- Advertisements for non-neighborhood related events
- Activities that duplicate a city service already in place
- Improvements to private property, of any kind

Grant application scoring criteria

The city retains sole discretion in determining how proposed projects, programs and activities meet the program guidelines and criteria. The nature of proposed projects can vary greatly. Therefore, the following scoring criteria are not absolute; rather they are intended to provide guidance for applicants while preparing their applications and for city staff in scoring them.

1. Scope of work/project/creativity: 0 - 35 points

- Defines scope of projects/activities, timeline, goals, process and measurable outcomes
- Identifies leaders/organizers of project
- Project timeline
- Project creativity and innovation
- Visibility, accessibility and inclusion
- Identifies future maintenance for permanent improvements, if applicable
- Defines budget, contributions and/or pledges for the project

2. Community benefit: 0 - 25 points

- Defines who will benefit from the project and how they will benefit
- Issue(s) addressed and problem(s) documented
- Creative and workable solutions
- Identifies long and/or short-term benefits

3. Neighborhood/community participation: 0 - 25 points

- Documentation of neighborhood/surrounding residents' approval of project
- Neighborhood/resident involvement in all project phases
- Participation level of residents
- Strengthens and/or builds new partnerships with other entities or groups
- Matching funds or in-kind goods/services

4. Consistency with city policies and adopted plans: 0 - 15 points

- Implements recommendations from or is consistent with city plans
- Complies with city regulations
- Understanding of permissions and permits necessary to implement project

5. Additional considerations: 0 - 10 points

- Projects that include a funding match will receive an additional 5 points.
- Projects that include an environmental component will receive an additional 10 points.
- Projects that include a racial equity and inclusion component will receive an additional 10 points.

Note: We have 27 organized neighborhoods eligible for funds, the process is competitive. Neighborhood leaders are advised to request funds for their most important needs. During the grant review process, greater consideration will be given to proposals that enhance community connections and show a greater match amount. Lesser consideration will be given to proposals for park improvements and proposals that show a large expenditure for a single activity. Garage sales will be given the lowest priority. If grant requests exceed the amount available for funding, garage sales will not be funded.

Grant process steps

1. Apply

Applications must be received by Sunday, March 24, 2019. Email applications to dgray@stlouispark.org, or mail them to:

Darius Gray, Community Organizer
City of St. Louis Park
5005 Minnetonka Blvd.
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Note: Any applications received after the deadline will not be eligible to receive a grant.

2. Review time

A committee will review the grant proposals and make recommendations for approval to the city manager.

3. Final Approval

Final authorization of the awards will be approved at a city council meeting mid-April.

4. Signed agreements

Within two weeks of approval, each recipient neighborhood will receive a grant agreement from the city. The agreement must be signed and returned prior to any funds being released.

Pre-application assistance

Applicants are strongly encouraged to talk to city staff as they work to identify projects and fill out their applications. This will help ensure applications are complete and accurate, and streamline the application review.

Questions?

Contact Darius Gray, Community Organizer
952.923.0265
dgray@stlouispark.org