

# Historic Walker Lake Façade Improvement Grant Program guidelines

## Program overview

The St. Louis Park Economic Development Authority (EDA), in conjunction with Hennepin County, established the Façade Improvement Grant Program to stimulate investment in the Historic Walker Lake business district. The goal of the program is to provide an incentive to businesses and property owners to make lasting physical improvements to their buildings to enhance the overall aesthetics of the district, while also establishing a cohesive design and identity for the area.

Grant funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis from May 30, 2019 – Dec. 31, 2021. The program is subject to funding availability from the City of St. Louis Park and Hennepin County's Business District Initiative.

## Eligible applicants

Property owners, tenants and for-profit and not-for-profit businesses located in the Historic Walker Lake business district are eligible to apply for a grant. View the [district map](#).

If the applicant is not the property owner, a signed letter of support from the property owner is required. The property must be up-to-date on all property taxes and assessments at the time of application submittal.

Business owners and property owners are only allowed one matching grant per calendar year. If grant funds remain after the first year, additional grants may be applied for on a case-by-case basis.

## Grant amounts

This grant program reimburses businesses or property owners for eligible façade improvements up to 50 percent of the total project cost.

- Grants range from \$2,000 to \$ 10,000.
- Grants require a 1:1 match from the applicant.
- Example: A \$2,500 grant would require the applicant to invest \$2,500 for a total project cost of \$5,000.

## Examples of reimbursement

Total project cost	Reimbursement amount
\$20,000	\$10,000
\$10,000	\$5,000
\$3,000	\$0 (\$4,000 minimum investment required)

This is a reimbursement program. Applicants must complete all improvements and pay for the total project cost prior to receiving reimbursement through this program.

## Eligible façade improvements

A façade is an individual storefront or commercial building principle side which faces a public right of way or is otherwise visible to the public from the street.

Façade grants may be used for a variety of exterior building façade improvements. The work must be visible from the public street. Projects along active, more visible alleys may be eligible under certain circumstances, as determined by the façade grant committee.

The following improvements are eligible for matching reimbursement grants:

- Restoration of exterior finishes and materials
- Masonry repairs and tuckpointing
- Exterior painting or re-siding, (professional cleaning)
- Removal of architecturally inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes and materials
- Repair or replacement of windows and doors (replacement must be architecturally appropriate)
- Canopy or awning installation or repair
- Exterior lighting
- Green façade improvement (i.e. living wall, ecofriendly [non-VOC] paint, reclaimed wood, etc.)
- Repair or replacement of exterior signage
- Outdoor patio seating
- Decorative bike parking
- Improvements to building access for pedestrians and people with disabilities
- Exterior building or accent lighting (parking lot lighting ineligible)
- Landscaping work done as part of a larger project (up to 25 percent of total project cost eligible)
- Contracted labor related to any of the above improvements, including design work for improvements that are to be completed (up to 25 percent of total project cost eligible)

All improvements must adhere to [Historic Walker Lake District Revitalization Plan and Design Guidelines](#).

*Projects are to be completed within nine months of project approval. Be sure to verify project timeline with all contractors.*

## Ineligible improvements

The following activities are not eligible for matching grants:

- Improvements already in progress or completed prior to contract approval
- Routine maintenance that is not part of an eligible façade improvement project
- Improvements to a building interior, rear or side not visible from a public street
- Improvements to residential buildings (excluding buildings with a mix of residential and commercial/retail)
- Roofing
- HVAC systems, building mechanicals or security systems
- Fencing (excludes decorative fencing as part of landscaping improvement)
- Parking areas
- Billboards, roof signs or temporary signs
- Monument, dynamic display or electronic message signs

- Nonconforming signs or awnings, other than to bring them into compliance with the zoning code and/or Historic Walker Lake District Revitalization Plan and Design Guidelines
- Purchase or rental of tools and equipment or for labor performed by the building or business owner, family members, employees or any other person with a financial interest in the property or business. Grant funds may be used to pay for materials.
- Seasonal decorations or temporary improvements
- Any other improvement not deemed eligible

## **Application process**

### **Step 1: Ensure project eligibility**

Before applying, be sure your proposed project is eligible for the program.

- The property is located within the boundaries of the Historic Walker Lake district.
- The property is up-to-date on all property taxes.
- All construction management is your responsibility.
- Review the Historic Walker Lake District Revitalization Plan and Design Guidelines and application prior to submission to verify project eligibility.
- This is a reimbursement program; you must complete and pay for the improvement for the work before the program administrator will issue a reimbursement check.

### **Step 2: Meet with program administrator**

Schedule a meeting with the program administrator to discuss your project.

### **Step 3: Complete and submit application**

Submit the façade grant application to the program administrator, including:

- A written description of the project, including drawings, before photographs of the building and other supporting materials that accurately represent scope and intent of project improvements.
- At least two contractors' bids that meet the following guidelines:
  - Bids must be for identical scopes of work. If two bids are not possible, applicant must demonstrate that multiple bids were sought.
  - If qualified to do so, you may perform the work yourself. However, grant funds can only be used to compensate for materials, not for labor or the purchase or rental of tools and equipment. Sweat equity labor includes that of a friend, relative or anyone with a financial interest in the business or property.
  - Evidence that contractors are licensed, bonded and/or insured.
  - Applicants are encouraged to solicit estimates from women, minority and veteran-owned contractors.
  - Grant amounts are based on the lower bid; however, applicants are free to accept the higher bid.
- All complete applications are reviewed and approved by a façade grant committee, the makeup of which varies. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant.

#### **Step 4: Grant award**

The applicant will receive a signed copy of the façade grant application from the program administrator after the project has been approved. Before proceeding, the applicant must obtain all necessary city permits for the project or ensure your contractor pulled the necessary permits. Payment verification for permits and taxes is required prior to grant disbursements.

If the application is not approved, a meeting can be scheduled with the applicant and the program administrator to further discuss project eligibility. If other, more appropriate applications are pending, they will take precedence. However, efforts will be made to help applicants succeed.

#### **Step 5: Submit required documents after project completion**

Complete the project and submit documentation to the program administrator within nine months of the start date stated on the application.

Grant funds will be disbursed to the applicant by the program administrator upon receipt of the following items:

- Proof of final inspection by the City of St. Louis Park Inspections Department for work requiring a city permit (a copy of the permit signed off by the responsible city inspector).
- Final invoice from the contractor clearly indicating the total project cost.
- Before and after photographs highlighting the improvement project from the same vantage point.
- Proof of payment paid to contractor in one of the following two forms. Applicants should be totally satisfied with the work performed prior to payment.
  1. A lien waiver – A statement issued by the contractor that advises the client that they, the contractor, (a) have been paid in full for the total project cost, (b) are satisfied with the compensation for the work they performed and (c) waive their right to place any liens on the property for the work completed.
  2. The program administrator will inspect work for conformance with the approved application.

**Note:** If more than one contractor is used, you must submit all items for each contractor.

#### **Step 6: Grant reimbursement**

Grant reimbursements will occur after the work is completed in accordance with the grant requirements. Please be aware that once work is finalized and the required documentation is submitted to the city for reimbursement, it can take up to 21 days for reimbursement. Reimbursement may take longer if additional documentation is required.

#### **Contact**

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