

## EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION & APPLICATION

### Program Purpose

The City of Highland Park is committed to supporting the local business community, laying solid foundations for sustaining a balanced and healthy business climate. The Exterior Improvement Grant Program (Program) is one of several initiatives demonstrating the City's support to business and the economic vitality of the community. The Program provides financial assistance and an incentive to owners of commercial property and sales-tax-generating businesses operating in one of the City's commercial districts to improve the look and functionality of their property and place of business.

### Grant Description

The City's contribution is a grant in the form of a rebate of up to 50% of the project cost to a maximum of \$20,000. Payment shall only be made after the project is complete, paid receipts are submitted to the City Manager's Office, and the City Council approves disbursement.

If the business ceases operations in Highland Park, the following payback schedule will apply:

Term of Grant Expired	Less than 1 Year	1 - 2 Years	More than 2 Years
\$ Repaid to City	66%	33%	0%

### Eligibility

The following prerequisites define eligibility:

- The business must be owned and operated within the United States, not owned by a parent corporation;
- The business operates within the City of Highland Park and produces sales tax;
- Owners of commercial property are eligible when the subject property is occupied by an eligible business or where such property owner has executed a lease agreement for future occupancy with an eligible business as described in this document.
- Eligible applicants may apply for a Grant annually (for five consecutive years) but may not reapply for the same improvement for five years.
- Grant applications may be submitted prior to initiation of eligible improvement(s) but submitted no later than 30 days after completion of the applicable eligible improvement(s).

### Ineligibility

The following stipulations, without limitation, delineate under what circumstances a property owner or business owner would not qualify for the Program:

- If the business moves to another location within the City of Highland Park, it would not have to pay back the grant but would not be eligible to apply for Grant funding for the same eligible improvements at their new location for five years from the date of original Grant award.

## Financing Structure

Eligible owners of commercial/retail buildings and business owners operating within a commercial/retail building in a commercial district within the City of Highland Park may apply for an Exterior Improvement grant that may reimburse up to 50% of the approved expenses to a maximum reimbursement of \$20,000 for eligible improvements, per year. Applicants may seek an additional \$20,000 in Grant funding for other eligible improvements annually to a maximum of \$100,000 over five years.

## Eligible Improvements and Reimbursements

- Improvements must be visible from the right-of-way and enhance the appearance of the building
- Removing excess exterior materials
- Repairing building damage and deterioration and restoring original building materials
- Building cleaning (acid or pressure wash, or steam cleaning and tuck pointing)
- Designing, manufacturing, and installing new awnings and signage
- Improving accessibility
- Replacing, repainting, or restoring exterior doors
- Repairing or upgrading exterior lighting
- Painting exterior
- Replacing, repainting, or restoring graphics (permanent)
- Replacing, repainting, or restoring gutters
- Replacing or repainting windows
- Replacing, repainting, or restoring that portion of a roof that is visible from the right-of-way
- Installing, replacing, repainting, or restoring permanent signs
- Replacing, repainting, or restoring trash enclosures that are visible from the right-of-way, or if undertaken as part of a comprehensive exterior improvement project
- Installing or replacing landscaping
- Purchasing outdoor dining furniture and décor
- Installing a parklet for outdoor dining
- Architect's and contractor's fees explicitly related and exclusively to an eligible improvement

## Ineligible Improvements

- New construction, which is defined as any alteration or enlargement of a building that requires the removal of more than 40% of the total linear feet of the existing exterior walls of the building measured around the outer perimeter of the building.
- Interior improvements of any kind, including, without limitation, interior accessibility improvements.
- Mural design and installation

## Application Review and Approval Process

- Applications are available from the City Manager's Office or on the City's website at [cityhpil.com/extimprovementgrant](http://cityhpil.com/extimprovementgrant)
- Applicant must submit a completed application form to the City Manager's Office along with the following:
  - Two itemized cost estimates from licensed contractors for all eligible improvement(s)
  - Digital photo of the existing façade
  - Digital photo of the proposed project area
  - Electronic version of a professional rendering of the improvement(s) within the context of the subject area, as required by City staff
  - Completed W-9 and Vendor forms
  - Once the project is completed, an electronic version of one picture of the improvement(s) and one picture of the improvement(s) within the context of the subject area
- Applications may be submitted before improvements are initiated
- Applications submitted after initiating improvement(s) will be accepted no later than thirty (30) days after project completion
- Applications will be reviewed by staff within 15 days of submission to determine eligibility
- Priority will be given to those projects that exhibit a clear and substantial public benefit
- If eligible, staff will notify the applicant of the time, date, and place of the public meeting at which the application will be considered
- Applicant or its designee must be present at all public meetings at which the proposed façade projects will be discussed
- The City Council has the final authority to approve the disbursement of the rebate

- If an application is approved, the applicant is responsible for future maintenance of the eligible improvement(s) installed pursuant to the Program
- Applicant agrees to repair any damage to any public right-of-way that may be caused by or in connection with the installation of the eligible improvement(s)
- Applicant agrees not to reapply for another grant for the same improvement within five years of the City's grant approval
- Applicant may not alter, tear down, or remove the eligible improvement(s) installed pursuant to this program
- Construction must be completed within 120 days from the grant approval date
- An extension may be granted, provided the applicant has applied for the proper City permits within 30 days of the approval letter; if there is difficulty obtaining the issuance of these items in a timely fashion, the applicant may formally request an extension in writing, and provide copies of all permit applications to the City Manager's Office along with an explanation of the basis for why such an extension should be granted.
- Failure to complete such work within the 120-day deadline without applying for and being granted an extension shall constitute a material breach of the Program requirements, resulting in the withdrawal of funding for the applicant's project without further notice.
- Upon project completion, the applicant must contact the Building Division to schedule an improvement(s) inspection and notify the City Manager's Office of the inspection date.
  - The City Manager's Office will contact the Building Division to confirm that the project was satisfactorily completed and complies with the Program's guidelines and the pre-approved plans.
  - Once compliance with the Program's guidelines is confirmed, the applicant will be notified and, from that date, has 60 days to submit paid invoices and canceled checks from the selected contractor that show all work has been paid in full. Failure to do so will result in the applicant forfeiting the award.
  - Payment will be made to the grantee after the project is completed as agreed and approved per the final inspection. All cost receipts and applicable lien waivers are submitted by the property owner or business owner to the City Manager's Office and reviewed and approved by City staff, and the City Council approves disbursement.

EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION

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City of Highland Park  
Office of Business Development  
1707 St. Johns Avenue  
Highland Park, Illinois 60035  
847.926.1027

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Business Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address, City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner Name if Different than Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner Address, City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the business meet all the eligibility criteria?

- The business is located and operating in a commercial building within a commercial district in the City of Highland Park;
- The business produces sales tax;
- The business is owned and operating within the United States, and;
- A parent corporation does not own the business:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If the applicant is a commercial property owner, do you have a lease agreement executed for future occupancy of an eligible business as described in this document?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the proposed improvement(s) to the building:

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Project Cost:

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Describe how the proposed improvement(s) will advance the goals of the Program:

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All application materials must be submitted to the City Manager's Office along with the application. Partial applications will not be accepted.

**Please provide the following materials with your completed application at the time of your submission:**

- The property owner's written consent to implement the improvement(s) and participate in the Program, either directly on the application form or via email
- A professional rendering of improvement(s) within the context of the subject area, as may be required by staff dependent on type of improvement(s)
- An electronic picture of the existing façade, landscape, or area to be improved
- An electronic picture of the proposed project area
- Once the improvement(s) is/are completed, one electronic picture of the improvement(s), and one electronic picture of the improvement(s) within the subject area
- Two written itemized competitive cost estimates from qualified, licensed contractors must be obtained for all eligible expenditures proposed under this program
- Completed W-9 form

The Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ asserts that the preceding information is correct and will comply with all City regulations applicable to this program. The applicant fully understands that the City Manager's Office can make no variances to the guidelines or requirements except as authorized in writing. The applicant fully understands that if their project fails to meet federal regulations or municipal ordinances, they will be ineligible for a rebate and agree to forfeit all rights pursuant to the acquisition or recovery of any claims or damages regarding those funds. The applicant also agrees to comply with the Program guidelines in the Exterior Improvement Program Ordinance and Program Description. The applicant agrees that in the event of their breach of any condition or provision, as described in the Exterior Improvement Program Ordinance and Description, the City of Highland Park has the right to terminate this agreement on thirty (30) days' notice and to cancel this agreement, without prejudice to any other rights or remedies of the City. The applicant understands that they must submit detailed cost documentation, including canceled checks, bills, copies of building permits, and professional rendering. If the applicant is other than the property owner, written consent by the property owner must be provided below.

Applicant's Signature

Date

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If the Applicant is other than the owner of the building, the following line must be completed:

I certify that I, the trustee and owner of the property, give the above-signed applicant authority to implement improvement(s) at the above property as may be required under the Exterior Improvement Program.

Property Owner's Name

Property Owner's Signature

Date

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January 4, 2024