2026 Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program– Policy

Program Description

The Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program ("Program") is designed to improve and enhance the City's neighborhoods by inviting eligible Associations to apply for a Program Grant in the maximum amount of $5,000 ("Grant") to fund a Project located in the Association's neighborhood. Three (3) $5000 matching grants provided by Arts United will be available to eligible with qualifying Public Arts Projects.

Direct Payment or Reimbursement of Grant Award Funds

An Association may elect to have the City pay the Association's Grant award directly to contractors, vendors, and suppliers contracted to provide labor and/or materials for the Project. Alternatively, the Association may elect to be reimbursed by the City upon providing the City satisfactory evidence of proof of the Association's payment to contractors, vendors, and suppliers for labor and/or materials to the Project.

Neighborhood Engagement Requirement

Applications must include evidence of neighborhood engagement in the selection, implementation, and support for the Project. Neighborhood engagement shall be of such character and amount satisfactory to City.

Allocation of Grant Funds

Applications from Associations not previously awarded Program funding for a Project will be prioritized in order to expand the Program's outreach. However, Associations which previously received Program funding for a Project are encouraged to submit Applications for new Projects.

Eligibility of Associations

Only Associations which are registered with the Department of Neighborhoods and whose neighborhoods are located entirely within the boundaries of the City of Fort Wayne are eligible to submit Applications.

All documents submitted by Association to City are subject to open records requests.

All professional planning, design, and consulting services for which funding is requested must be directly related to the Project. Payment of such professional services is limited in amount to __15_____% of a Grant Award.

Costs for food, entertainment, salaries, benefits, maintenance obligations, operating expenses, replacements of existing items (except to significantly enhance a Project), and overhead are not eligible Project costs.

Whenever possible, Projects should engage local contractors, vendors, and suppliers.

The purchase of movable assets for a Project must be used for the Project and directly impact the Project outcome. Any proposed purchase of moveable assets for a Project must include a detailed plan of the permanent storage and ownership following the Project's completion. The purchase of such assets shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine eligibility.

Decisions made by City regarding the acceptance or rejection of an Application and the eligibility of Project are final and not subject to appeal.

Application Scoring

Only completed Applications may be submitted. Incomplete Applications will be rejected. A point system for rating the Applications has been designed to identify and reward original, deliberative, comprehensive responses to each section of the Application. Associations are encouraged to become knowledgeable about the Application process by attending one (1) of the four (4) Program workshops or meeting with the Program Grant Administrator prior to submitting their Applications.

Each Section of the Application will be scored separately and the total score for each Application will be considered independently and in comparison, to the scoring of other Applications. Additionally, each Application will be reviewed to determine the extent to which a Project can achieve the following benchmarks:

- Project includes a comprehensive plan for significant neighborhood involvement in the selection and implementation of the Project.
- Residents will have the opportunity to participate, assume leadership roles, and/or develop new skills through the Project.
- Project will build neighborhood organizational capacity
- Project strengthens or builds new partnerships with public/private entities and community groups.

- Project generates letters of support, pledges of volunteer services, and/or other evidence of broad neighborhood support.
- Application clearly and specifically identifies issues to be addressed and resolved by implementation of the Project
- Application illustrates commitment to seek creative and workable neighborhood solutions
- Project will benefit a significant number of neighborhood residents
- Project improves health, safety, or quality of life for neighborhood residents, eliminates or reduces potential property damage or provides relevant neighborhood facilities.
- Project has a well-defined scope, timeline, goals, detailed phases, measurable outcomes and will be completed by Project Completion Date
- Required permits and approvals from applicable City departments and offices have or will been obtained prior to Project commencement
- Project has high level of visibility and impact and is accessible to all neighborhood residents
- Project has a realistic plan and budget for ongoing maintenance
- The contractors, vendors, and suppliers required for Project have been identified by Association
- Project has been approved by neighborhood residents (provide documentation)
- Project budget is well-planned and realistic
- Additional support exists for Project through cash and in-kind contributions from neighborhood residents, businesses, community groups and others.
- Project will be accomplished through a one-time expenditure. Multi-phased Projects have previously been approved with significant evidence that the new phase of the Project can be completed within a reasonable timeline. Ie. Installment of a pergola in 2026 with program funding followed by installation of a concrete patio under pergola in 2027 next year with Association funding.
- If a previous Grant by the City to the Association to fund an existing Project has been awarded, the new Project is unrelated to the existing Project.

Program Grant Funding Eligibility

Eligibility for Program funding requires that a Project fit within one (1) of the following categories: (1) Public Art Projects, (2) Community Living Improvement Projects, (3) Eco-Friendly Improvement Projects, or (4) Neighborhood Identity Projects. Routine or required maintenance projects are not eligible for Program Grant funding.

- Public Art Projects –include **creative or artistic** seating, lighting, signage, and landscaping; interactive, upcycled, musical, interpretive, and historical; murals, sculptures, and fountains.

- Community Living Improvement Projects– include playscapes, athletics/ physical activities spaces, alternative transportation access improvements, dog park/equipment, improved gathering spaces, benches/picnic tables/pergolas/pavilions, share shed/ lending library, safety/ lighting improvements, path and/or trail improvements, and curb appeal microgrants.

- Eco-Friendly Improvement Projects –include vacant lot adoption/clean up, community food gardens, pollinator gardens, heat reduction through tree planting, native plants, rain gardens, community hanging flower baskets or planters, waste/recycling receptacles, composting sites, community birdhouses, wildlife/native habitat restoration, shoreline restoration, light bulb replacement program, and little free plant library/ seed sharing/ community greenhouse.

- Neighborhood Identity Projects– include logo/branded signage, wayfinding signage, communication bulletins, historic district signage and plaques, historic landmark signage, neighborhood storytelling signage.

Program Grant Award Process

The award of a Program Grant requires the review, unconditional approval, and, if applicable, permitting of a Project by all municipal departments and divisions and private sector entities having jurisdiction over the Project. For example, a Public Art Project must be reviewed and approved by the Public Art Review Committee, a Project involving public right-of-way must be reviewed and approved by the Department of Public Works, and a transit-related project requires an agreement between the Association and Citilink.

Projects may not promote, advance, depict, or include any religious or political belief, practice, or affiliation or any derogatory reference. Projects may not promote discrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, gender identification, sexual orientation, or disability.

Submission of current Bylaws and/or Covenants is required to assist in determining if a Project would constitute a maintenance obligation.

Program Grant recipients shall maintain timely and responsive communications with the Project Grant Admiinistrator. Failure to do so may result in recission of a Grant Award.

Applications shall include a description of how the Project will be maintained over an initial five-year term and identify both the funding source and the parties responsible for such maintenance.

Projects located on the property of a private property owner must obtain and submit written consent from the property owner and a five (5) year maintenance agreement signed by the property owner and the Association prior to the execution of the Grant Agreement.

Evidence of the Association's site control for the Project must be submitted prior to the execution of the Grant Agreement.

Grant Workshops

- **Tue 1/13 at Dupont Library 6- 7pm**
- **Sat 1/17 at Hessen Cassel Library 10a- 11am**
- **Sat 1/17 at Main Library 1- 2pm**
- **Thur 1/22 at Georgetown Library 5- 6pm**

Grant Applications Open

- **Tue 1/20 at 8am**

Grant Applications Deadline

- **Fri 3/13 at 5pm**

Grant Awards Announcement

- **Mon 4/13 (approx.)**

Grant Agreement Deadline

- **Fri 5/8 at 5pm**

50% Project Report Deadline

- **Fri 9/11 at 5pm**

Project Completion Deadline

- **Fri 11/13 at 5pm**

Program Survey Report Deadline

- **Fri 12/11 at 5pm**