

Love Local Storefront 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, CedarLou Corridor, Minnetonka Boulevard, Excelsior Boulevard and 36th Street areas. 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 districts.

Grant funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis and all projects receiving funding must be completed by December 31, 2026. This grant requires a 1:1 match from the applicant. The program is subject to funding availability from the City of St. Louis Park and Hennepin County's Love Local Storefront initiative.

Eligible applicants

Property owners, tenants and for-profit and not-for-profit businesses located in designated areas of Historic Walker Lake business district, CedarLou Corridor, Minnetonka Boulevard, Excelsior Boulevard and 36th are eligible to apply for a grant. View the [district map](#).

If the applicant is not the property owner, a signed and notarized letter of permission 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 \$5,000 to \$ 15,000.
- Grants require a 1:1 match from the applicant.
- Example: A \$5,000 grant would require the applicant to invest \$5,000 for a total project cost of \$10,000.

Examples of reimbursement

Total project cost	Reimbursement amount
\$30,000	\$15,000
\$20,000	\$10,000
\$5,000	\$0 (\$10,000 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:

- Exterior painting or re-siding
- Restoration of exterior finishes and materials
- Masonry repairs and tuck pointing
- Removal of architecturally incompatible exterior finishes and materials
- Restoration of historically appropriate or accurate architectural details
- Repair, replacement, or installation of windows and doors
- Window and cornice flashing and repair
- Canopy or awning installation or repair
- Installation or repair of permanent exterior signage on the building
- ADA improvements on the exterior of the property

All improvements must adhere to the design guidelines for specific district and/or zoning code ([Historic Walker Lake District Revitalization Plan and Design Guidelines](#), [Texa-Tonka Small Area Plan](#) and [Zoning Code | St. Louis Park, MN](#)).

Projects are to be completed by December 31, 2026. Verify project timeline with all contractors.

Ineligible improvements

The following activities are not eligible for matching grants:

- Improvements completed prior to date of city's grant award
- Improvements outside of the project scope
- Items considered routine maintenance
- Billboards
- Roofing
- Mechanical and HVAC systems
- Interior work
- Temporary signs or improvements
- Interior window displays
- Security systems
- Trash and mechanical enclosures
- Landscaping
- Parking lot improvements
- Fencing
- Improvements not visible from the street
- Improvements to buildings that have received façade improvement awards with Hennepin County funds within the last three years

Right to deny

The economic development authority retains the right to deny any application for grant funding.

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 Historic Walker Lake business district, CedarLou Corridor, Minnetonka Boulevard, Excelsior Boulevard and 36th Street.
- Contain at least:
 - one for-profit independent, locally owned retail, food and beverage, or service business with 50 or fewer employees that is open to the public, or;
 - one non-profit organization with an enterprise that is open to the general public and operates in a manner similar to a business with regular hours (i.e. a thrift shop, coffee shop, etc.);
- The property is up-to-date on all property taxes.
- All construction management is your responsibility.
- Review the applicable 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.
- Demonstrate their ability to complete the project within nine months of city approval. All work funded through Love Local Storefronts must be completed by December 31, 2026.

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 by December 31, 2026.

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 matching funds
- Proof of payment to a contractor, including but not limited to lien waiver(s), cancelled check(s), and/or final receipt(s). Applicants should be totally satisfied with the work performed prior to payment.

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 30 days for reimbursement. Reimbursement may take longer if additional documentation is required.

Contact

Jase Pater
952.924.2523
jpater@stlouisparkmn.gov