



SMALL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT

1. Program Purpose

The Village of River Forest is proud to introduce the Small Business Improvement Grant Program, designed to support local businesses and property owners to enhance the exterior appearance of their buildings. This program aims to revitalize commercial areas, boost property values, and attract more visitors to our business districts, ensuring that River Forest remains a vibrant, welcoming, and attractive community.

The Small Business Improvement Grant Program offers financial assistance to businesses and property owners looking to make improvements to the visible portions of their properties. Whether it's restoring historic charm, modernizing storefronts, or improving accessibility, the program helps foster a strong, appealing streetscape while preserving the unique character of River Forest. By investing in our local business community, we can enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Eligible applicants can receive funds for a variety of facade improvements, including but not limited to new signage, lighting, windows, painting, and masonry work. This initiative is part of the Village's broader commitment to economic development, sustainable growth, and the enhancement of River Forest's commercial corridors.

2. Program Guidelines

All businesses must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ The property must be located within the North Avenue TIF District or the Madison Street TIF District.
- ✓ All proposed projects must conform to the Village's Codes for Building, Zoning, and Signs.
- ✓ Grant funding shall be administered in the form of reimbursement following the completion of an approved project, and presentation of a receipt or similar material.
- ✓ The grant is intended to share the cost of expenses with the Applicant; therefore it shall not exceed 50% of all eligible activities or \$5,000, whichever is less.
- ✓ Funding of this program is subject to Village Board approval of the fiscal year budget.
- ✓ Upon approval, applicants must secure a building permit within 60 days and adhere to all building, zoning, and inspection requirements.

3. Program Eligibility

To be considered for the award available, proposed projects may include the following improvements:

- Energy conservation upgrades
- Exterior accessibility enhancements for individuals with disabilities
- Façade cleaning and maintenance
- Installation of fences, excluding chain-link fencing
- Restoration of historic exterior architectural elements, such as storefront windows, doorways, cornices, and similar features
- Installation or repair of pitched roofs along primary storefront facades
- Landscaping, sidewalk replacement, streetscape enhancements, planting beds, and related improvements along primary facades
- New siding installation and siding repairs along primary facades
- Front façade enhancements, including but not limited to painting, tuckpointing, brick restoration, removal of non-contextual or inappropriate exterior finishes, and window or door restoration/replacement
- Construction or repair of front and wrap-around porches
- Installation or improvement of front and rooftop patios or walkways
- New primary signage
- Construction of decorative masonry walls
- Installation of awnings or canopies
- Parking lot improvements, repairs, or resurfacing
- Other similar and compatible projects that enhance the overall aesthetic of the commercial district, subject to approval by the Village Administrator.

**these are not exhaustive lists. Please contact the Building Department if your project is not listed here to determine eligibility.

4. Ineligible Projects

Examples of projects that are ineligible:

- Costs associated with building permits and related expenses
- Painting masonry surfaces that have not been previously painted
- Fees for professional services, including but not limited to design, engineering, architectural, and structural consulting
- Sandblasting of brick surfaces
- Flat roof installations or repairs
- Interior signage

- Interior lighting fixtures
- Purchase of product inventory
- Upgrades to utility services, such as water and sewer connections
- Acquisition of land or buildings
- New construction or development that is not directly tied to enhancing the primary façade(s)
- Routine landscaping maintenance
- Projects that are not visible from the public right-of-way
- Projects completed before receiving approval for this grant program.

**these are not exhaustive lists. Please contact the Building Department if your project is not listed here to determine eligibility.

5. Program Review and Approval Process

1. Initial Application Submission

- a. Applicants must submit a completed Small Business Improvement Grant Program application along with all necessary project plans, cost estimates, and descriptions of proposed improvements to the Village's Building Department.
- b. Applications must include photographs of the existing façade and a narrative description of the proposed scope of work improvements along with any supporting graphic materials (drawings, elevation mock ups, sketches, precedents pictures, etc.) illustrating the proposed intent.

2. Staff Review

- a. Village staff will review the submitted application for completeness and to ensure compliance with the Village's Building, Zoning, and Sign Codes.
- b. If additional information or revisions are required, the applicant will be notified and must provide the necessary updates.

3. Evaluation

- a. Applications will be evaluated based on project impact, alignment with the Village's goals for improving commercial districts, adherence to the program's guidelines and availability of funding. Priority will be given to projects that:
 - i. Improve the overall aesthetic of the commercial district to enhance attraction to the area, vitality of the business and corridor of River Forest's commercial properties within TIF Districts
 - ii. Enhance the accessibility of the property.
 - iii. Incorporate energy-efficient or sustainable design elements.

4. Approval

- a. The Village Administrator or his designee will review the recommended applications. Some projects may also require Village Board approval if they exceed specific funding thresholds or require zoning variations.
- b. Applicants will be notified in writing once their project has been approved or denied.

6. Reimbursement Process

1. Completion of Project

- a. Approved applicants must complete their improvement project within the timeframe specified in the Grant Agreement, typically within 12 months of approval.
- b. All improvements must be made according to the approved plans. Any significant changes to the scope of the project must be pre-approved by the Village.

2. Final Inspection

- a. Once the project is completed, applicants must request a final inspection from the Village's Building Department. Staff will inspect the project to ensure that it complies with the approved plans and local codes.

3. Submission of Documentation for Reimbursement

- a. After the final inspection is approved, applicants must submit the following documents to the Village for reimbursement:
 - i. Letter requesting reimbursement
 - ii. Proof of payment for all project-related expenses, including final invoices and receipts
 - iii. Lien waivers from contractors and supplies
 - iv. Photographs of the complete improvements

4. Reimbursement Payment

- a. The reimbursement shall not exceed 50% of the total cost of the improvements, not to exceed \$5,000 per project.
- b. Upon successful submission of all applicable reimbursement materials, reimbursement will be placed on the Village Board's list of invoices to be approved at a regularly scheduled Village Board meeting. Please note, this process can take up to 4 weeks.



SMALL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

Property Address:	
Located in which TIF:	<input type="radio"/> North Ave <input type="radio"/> Madison Ave
Applicant Name:	
Property Owner Name (if different than owner):	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	

Description of Project

Project Budget: \$ _____

Reimbursement Request: \$ _____

Checklist of Required Attachments

- ☐ Completed Façade Improvement Application
- ☐ Completed and Signed Grant Agreement
- ☐ Proof of Property Ownership
- ☐ Photos of Structure to be Improved
- ☐ Detailed Description and Sketch/Rendering of the Work to be Performed (including building materials and other relevant details)
- ☐ Schedule of Work to be Completed

Statement of Understanding

- I agree to comply with the stipulations, guidelines, and procedures of the Village of River Forest's Small Business Improvement Grant program. I have read and understand the policy as described.
- I certify that the information supplied in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, true, accurate, and complete, and is provided for the purpose of obtaining approval to participate in the Program.
- I understand that I must submit detailed cost documentation, copies of bids, contracts, invoices, receipts, and contractor's final waivers of lien upon completion of the approved improvements.
- I understand that all work requiring a Village building permit must be performed in accordance with and must meet any and all Federal, State, and local building code standards, including that my contractors must be registered with the Village prior to commencement of any work.
- I understand that work done before a Small Business Improvement Agreement is approved by the Village is not eligible for a grant.
- I understand that the Small Business Improvement grants are subject to taxation and that the Village is required to report the amount and recipient of said grants to the IRS.
- I agree to hold harmless, indemnify, and defend the Village of River Forest, and their employees and agents, for any and all liabilities arising out of this application, loan, construction, or other projects and any agreement to share costs, including but not limited to any and all lawsuits or other disputes.

Applicant's Signature

Date

Owner Authorization (if applicable)

If the applicant is not the owner of the property, you must have the following certificate:

I certify that I am the owner of the property at _____, and that I authorize the applicant to apply for a reimbursement grant under the Village of River Forest's Small Business Improvement Grant Program and undertake the approved improvements.

Owner's Printed Name

Date

Owner's Signature

Date