



The City of St. Charles is a motivated partner in helping to preserve our existing downtown building stock, fill vacancies, and attract new businesses to the area. To assist with these efforts, City Council has created the Business Improvement Grant (BIG). The program offers 50/50 matching awards for structural modifications, plumbing and electrical repairs, as well as life safety upgrades. The City also offers to reimburse recipients with 75% of costs for ADA improvements, up to \$10,000.

Applications become available once the City Council approves the budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis. The City strongly encourages potential applicants to discuss their project with City staff before submitting an application.

1. PROGRAM GUIDELINES:

The Business Improvement Grant provides matching 50/50 expenditures for eligible improvements up to \$15,000 for individual businesses. Multiple businesses located in multi-tenant buildings shall be eligible for individual awards. In addition, the City will reimburse 75% of costs for eligible ADA improvements up to \$10,000.

All businesses must meet the following criteria:

- The property must be located along the Main Street/Route 64 corridor, Lincoln Hwy/Route 38 corridor, Randall Road corridor, or zoned CBD-1 or CBD-2.
- The business must be considered one of the following uses as defined in Section 17.030.020 of Title 17 the Zoning Ordinance:
 - Art Studio
 - Personal Services
 - Cultural Facility
 - Coffee Shop or Tea Room
 - Indoor Recreation & Amusement
 - Restaurant
 - Retail Sales
 - Live Entertainment
 - Tavern/Bar
 - Hotel/Motel
 - Theater
 - Outdoor Sales, Permanent
- The leasable space must be located on the first floor/street level of the eligible building. Primary point of sale for merchandise/services in the store must be the location of the physical business.

2. ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

The following improvements shall be considered eligible to receive the Business Improvement Grant award:



- Interior and exterior accessibility improvements that meet the provisions of the Illinois Accessibility Code or the Americans with Disabilities Act, such as widening entrance doors, installing ramps, bathroom modifications, etc. (75% of cost will be covered, up to \$10,000 and not exceeding total maximum award amount of \$40,000).
- Creation of new exterior doors for access into new leasable commercial spaces.
- Demising walls for the purposes of creating individual leasable commercial spaces.
- Energy conservation improvements.
- Electrical work, including service upgrades.
- Fire alarm systems.
- Fire sprinkler system installation or upgrade, including any needed water service improvements.
- Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning.
- Lighting.
- Plumbing.
- Restoration of historic interior architectural features, including ceilings, light fixtures, floors, and architectural detailing.
- Exterior improvements to add or improve outdoor dining space, such as patio surfaces or permanent decorative structures and coverings.
- Structural additions for the purpose of expanding usable business space.
- Utility service upgrades, including water and sewer.
- Façade improvements
- Window replacement or restoration
- Installation of an elevator or lift
- Improvements not specifically listed as eligible or ineligible are subject to review on a case-by-case basis.

3. INELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

The following items are **NOT** eligible for awards under the Business Improvement Grant:

- Acquisition of land or buildings.
- Product inventory.
- Interior signage or exterior signage.
- Lighting fixtures.
- Hard surface materials for non-retail exterior space (parking lots, sidewalks, etc.).
- Display window enhancements (hanging grid system, lighting, display shelf, etc.).
- Media marketing and advertising.
- Ongoing business expenses such as rent, payroll, consulting work, moving expenses, etc.



- Day-to-day operational costs (e.g. utilities, taxes, maintenance, refuse).
- Exterminator services.
- Landscaping.
- Paint, tile, or other design elements.
- Furniture, cabinetry, carpets, office equipment, or similar interior finishes.
- Building permit fees and related costs.
- Sweat equity.
- Signs.

Eligibility for additional funding:

Businesses are eligible for an additional \$25,000 provided the property/business meets one of the following criteria (Total grant amount for any business shall not exceed \$40,000.):

- The additional awards are used to update building code or fire code deficiencies required by change of use such as but not limited to: ADA accessibility improvements, fire sprinkler installation, fire alarms installation, repair, or updates, accessibility ramps/elevators.
- The building or leasable space has been vacant for more than 6 months.
- The proposed business is located in the Downtown Retail Overlay District.
- Large retail spaces that need to be demised to make leasing the space more feasible.
- Extraordinary costs based on a unique physical condition or alterations of the building can be considered on a case by case basis.

4. APPROVAL OF A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT AWARD PROCEDURE:

The Economic Development Department shall receive and process all applications for Business Improvement Grants. Applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis following City Council approval of the City's annual budget.

- All applicants must request a BASE (Building Assessment & Safety Evaluation) visit by the Building & Code Enforcement Division and Fire Department to determine any necessary code upgrades required due to change in use or life safety issues.
- Awards of **\$15,000** or less are approved administratively by the Deputy City Administrator or designee.
- Awards in **excess of \$15,000 up to \$40,000** are required to receive City Council approval.

5. COMMENCEMENT OF WORK:

Only after the Business Improvement Grant is approved by the City can work commence. DO NOT START BEFORE -- YOU WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED FOR WORK DONE PRIOR TO CITY APPROVAL OF THE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT AGREEMENT.

6. COMPLETION OF WORK:

All improvements must be completed within 270 calendar days of Business Improvement Grant Agreement approval, unless otherwise authorized by City staff for a maximum of a one (270) day extension. If the work is not complete by the end of the extension the City's remaining obligation to reimburse the owner or tenant for the project terminates.

7. REIMBURSEMENT PAYMENTS:

Upon completion of the work, the owner or tenant must submit copies of all design invoices, contractor's statements, other invoices, proof of payment and notarized final lien waivers to the Director of Economic Development as evidence that the owner or tenant has paid the architect and contractor(s). You should use the attached forms for the contractor's statement and final lien waivers. Payment will be authorized upon completion of all work items as originally approved and receipt of all of the required documents.

The Applicant will only be reimbursed for the amount of the award once all approved work has been completed and a Certificate of Occupancy is issued by the Building & Code Enforcement Division.

The Deputy City Administrator may authorize reimbursement to be made in two payments if all of the following conditions are present: 1) The first partial payment may be made upon completion of work representing at least forty percent (40%) of the amount specified in the Business Improvement Grant Agreement; 2) The architect's invoices, contractor's statements, invoices, notarized final lien waivers and proof of payment for the completed work have been submitted; 3) The remaining work is expected to be delayed for thirty days or more following completion of the initial work due to weather, availability of materials, or other circumstances beyond the control of the owner or tenant.

In the case that the award covers multiple leasable spaces in one building, partial award funding can be disbursed as each individual leasable space is issued a Certificate of Occupancy. The amount of the partial disbursement shall be based on the proportion of square footage.

All Improvements shall be installed in accordance with the approved plan. Minor revisions may be approved by a representative of the City Staff due to field conditions not known at the time of design and similar circumstances beyond the Applicant's control. THIS IS A REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM -- YOU MUST PAY YOUR ARCHITECT, CONTRACTORS AND SUPPLIERS BEFORE YOU RECEIVE PAYMENT FROM THE CITY.

Reimbursement awards are subject to Federal and State taxes and are reported to the Internal Revenue Service on Form 1099. You are required to provide your taxpayer ID number or social security number as part of the Business Improvement Grant Agreement. Property owners and tenants should consult their tax advisor for tax liability information.

8. MAINTENANCE PERIOD:

The property owner and tenant shall be responsible for maintaining the improvements without alteration for five (5) years. A restrictive covenant limiting alterations may be required by the City Council at the time of approval of the Business Improvement Grant Agreement. A waiver from this requirement may be awarded by the City Council following a recommendation by the Deputy City Administrator upon submittal of evidence of hardship or unusual circumstances.