



Storefront Improvement Grant Program

Guidelines and Application

November 14, 2024

Please return completed application with necessary attachments and signature to:

City of Rice
Economic Development Corporation
305 North Dallas Street
Rice, TX 75155

If you have any application questions, please contact the Economic Development Board President at (903) 326-7500 or email at edc.cityofrice@gmail.com

Rice Storefront Improvement Grant Program

Guidelines and Application

A. INTRODUCTION

The City of Rice has established the Storefront Improvement Grant Program (the “GRANT”), which will provide technical and financial assistance to property owners or business tenants seeking to renovate or restore existing commercial businesses, who have been operating for at least the last twelve (12) months, within the City of Rice (the “City”). The program is funded by the Rice Economic Development Corporation (REDC).

The following items are eligible for improvement funds:

- Structural or life/fire safety upgrades;
- Adding brick/masonry, repair, and/or cleaning of the same;
- Indoor/outdoor lighting;
- Facade repair/remodel/upgrades;
- Painting;
- Door/window replacement;
- Enhanced exterior signage;
- Landscaping enhancements;
- Parking improvements; and
- Monument Signage.

Grant funds are designated to impact properties in need of revitalization, resulting in an improved exterior, visibility, and presentation of a business. The funds are not designed to subsidize corrections to building code violations that prolong the life of a commercial property.

GRANT will provide a fifty percent (50%) matching grant of up to twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) for the funding of well-designed improvements which will coordinate all the important features of the storefront into a more attractive image while creating, if necessary, an accessible entrance for the public. This may include the restoration of architectural details, better windows and doors, and/or well- proportioned signage and lighting. REDC staff will be available to help applicants through the conceptual stage at no cost, including referrals to 3rd party resources. Applicants, however, will be responsible for hiring licensed architects and contractors to refine any conceptual design.

B. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply to the terms used in these guidelines:

Applicant: the property owner or business occupant signing the application for a Storefront Improvement Grant.

Construction Costs: the cost of permits, fees, construction materials, and

installation labor. All other associated costs are deemed excluded, including, but not limited to the following: design, construction document preparation, bidding, sweat equity, and construction financing expenses.

DRC: the City's Development Review Committee, which will consist of the REDC Board.

Eligible Enhancements: the improvements identified as eligible in Section C of these guidelines.

Well-designed improvements: Enhancements that are thoughtfully planned and executed to elevate both the functionality and aesthetic appeal of the storefront.

Sweat Equity: the non-monetary investment that individuals contribute to a project through their time, effort, and labor, rather than financial contributions.

Facade: the portion of the building parallel to the primary right-of-way as determined by City.

REDC: the Rice Economic Development Corporation.

Notice to Proceed: a written notice from City Staff authorizing the Applicant to begin construction as approved by the City.

Property: the physical lot and/or building to which improvements are being made.

Staff: the City Administrator or their designee(s).

C. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following criteria must be met for participation in GRANT:

- a. Applicant must be commercial property owners or commercial tenants located in the City for at least the last twelve (12) months;
- b. Tenants must have written approval from property owners to participate in program;
- c. Nonconforming signage on property, if applicable, must be permanently removed as part of the improvement;
- d. Applicant must be up to date on all municipal taxes prior to participation in the program;
- e. Applicant must not have any City liens or code violations filed against any property owned by Applicant, including but not limited to, weed liens, demolition liens, board-up/open structure liens and/or paying liens;
- f. Applicant must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code, and zoning requirements;

- g. Applicant must acknowledge that the overall objective of the GRANT is to improve the exterior, visibility, and presentation of a property; the REDC has the discretion to decline an application while suggesting enhancements that would enable future acceptance.
- h. The following businesses are ineligible for grant funds: non-profits, government offices, residences, home businesses, and sexually-oriented businesses.

D. DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

Improvements to be funded by the program must be compatible with the character and architecture of the individual building as well as meet City standards with regards to the latest construction and design trends. Buildings with significant architectural qualities are strongly encouraged to restore and maintain these features. Improvements for buildings without such architectural features should still be carefully considered and be seen as an opportunity to substantially enhance the appearance of the buildings and their streetscapes.

- a. Eligible Facade/Signage Improvements:
 - i. Restoration of details in historically contributing or significant buildings and removal of elements which cover architectural details;
 - ii. Window replacement and window framing visible from the street, to be appropriately scaled to the building;
 - iii. Visually appealing and appropriate City-approved signage, including monument signage, electronic message boards, and other signage as specified in the City's codes;
 - iv. Lighting which is visually appealing and appropriately illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of a Facade;
 - v. Awnings or canopies that are both functional and/or visually appealing;
 - vi. Curbing, irrigation, approved trees, landscaping beds, or other landscaping features where appropriate;
 - vii. Cleaning, repainting, or residing of building;
 - viii. Resurfacing of parking lots visible from street;
 - ix. New storefront construction, provided that said construction is appropriately scaled within an existing building;
 - x. Removal of architectural barriers to public accessibility;
 - xi. Replacement or repair of the portions of a roof that are visible from an adjacent public street;
 - xii. Replacement or repair of existing gutters and/or downspouts.
 - xiii. Installation of new sidewalks and/or the replacement or repair of existing sidewalks;

- xiv. New patios with outdoor dining/seating; and
- xv. Other improvements (approved on a case-by-case basis if they meet the objectives of the Program).

b. Ineligible Improvements/Expenses:

- i. Interior improvements;
- ii. The addition of playground or recreational equipment;
- iii. Structural changes;
- iv. Burglar bars;
- v. Security/alarm system;
- vi. "Sweat equity";
- vii. New commercial construction;
- viii. Benches/porch swings;
- ix. Umbrellas;
- x. Gazebos;
- xi. Trellises;
- xii. Architectural, survey or other professional fees;
- xiii. Asbestos testing, removal, abatement, or remediation;
- xiv. Improvements for which insurance monies are received; and
- xv. Outline lighting.

c. Prior Improvements

Any permits, alterations, or improvements pertaining to or relating to the GRANT application made prior to receiving a "Notice to Proceed" are not eligible for reimbursement.

d. Alterations

Applicant must agree not to change or alter the improved Facade without prior written approval from the City for three (3) years from the date of grant payment.

E. PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

a. Financial Assistance

GRANT reimburses Applicant fifty percent (50%) of total project costs, up to a \$25,000 maximum match for Storefront improvements.

Applicant's match may be in the form of other financial aid (grant or loan) received from other agencies. The GRANT will only provide reimbursement after the Applicant has paid their architect, contractor, and vendor(s) in full and after the project is determined to have been completed in accordance with the contract between the REDC and Applicant.

F. PROCEDURES

All prospective applicants must follow the procedures in the order outlined below.

- a. Applicant meets with Economic Development Board President for initial project discussions and files an application.
- b. Applicant meets with Staff to discuss building program and design alternatives.
- c. Applicant's architect prepares final design drawings and submits them to Staff for review and approval.
- d. The proposed project will be presented to the **DRC** for review followed by review by the City Administrator.
- e. Staff issues applicant a "Notice to Proceed" and fully executed Storefront Improvement Grant Program Agreement. **Any work completed prior to receiving the "Notice to Proceed" will not be reimbursed.**
- f. Applicant has ninety (90) days from the date the Notice to Proceed is sent to begin implementation of approved improvements. Applicant must provide Staff with copies of all building permits and certifications received from improvement project.
- g. Applicant must complete improvements within six (6) months of receiving a Notice to Proceed. If additional time is required to complete the project, the Applicant must request an extension and provide Staff with a reason as to why more time is needed. The extension may not exceed six (6) months.
- h. Contractor constructs project improvements as specified in the final design. Any changes to the approved design must be approved by Staff.
- i. Applicant notifies Staff once project is completed.
- j. Staff certifies the improvements comply with the final drawings and specifications.
- k. Applicant must submit copies of all paid invoices to the Economic Development Board President, who then submits a request for reimbursement check.
- l. If the application is denied, the Applicant will not be allowed to reapply to the Program for one hundred and eighty (180) days from the original application date.

The City and/or REDC reserve the right to adjust conditions and parameters outlined in these guidelines if the need arises.

G. TERMINATION

The REDC and/or City of Rice may terminate an agreement under the GRANT if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines or if the project has been started prior to the execution of a Storefront Improvement Program Agreement with the REDC and the receipt of a Notice to Proceed from the City.

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Storefront Improvement Grant Program Application

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Applicant Name:	Date
Business Name:	
Mailing Address:	
Contact Phone:	
Email Address:	
Building Owner (if different than applicant):	
Historical/Current Building Name:	
Project Site/Address:	

Type of Work: (check all that apply)

Facade Landscaping Signage Awnings
Parking & Driveways Pedestrian Amenities

Details of Planned Improvements relating Grant Request (attach additional information if necessary)

How will this project benefit the community?

Project Expenditures	Estimated Costs	Grant Requested
Facade / Building Rehab		
Signage / Lighting		
Landscaping		
Parking / Driveways		
Awnings		
Pedestrian Amenities		
Total		

TOTAL COST OF PROPOSED PROJECT \$ _____

TOTAL GRANT REQUEST
(May not exceed 50% of TOTAL COST up to \$25,000) \$ _____

Attach with final design drawings and photographs of building's exterior Facade.

Applicant Signature *Date*

Property Owner Signature *Date*