



Downtown Commercial Beautification Grant

Program Guidelines

City of Corona Office of Economic Development

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Program Overview

In response to the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19), the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) established the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) to provide state, local, and Tribal governments with the resources needed to respond to the pandemic and its economic effects and to build a stronger, more equitable economy during the recovery.

The City of Corona will utilize approximately \$300,000 of ARPA SLFRF funding to create the Downtown Commercial Beautification Grant Program (Program) to respond to the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 and reinvigorate local economic recovery. The City is partnering with Charitable Ventures, a 501c3 nonprofit, to administer this program.

Objectives

General Program objectives include, but are not limited to:

- The rehabilitation of commercial properties within the Specified Boundaries as defined herein
- Storefront and façade improvements
- Exterior safety improvements

See the Program Requirements section of this document for additional information on eligible expenses. The Program is a discretionary incentive program designed to improve approximately fifteen (15) disproportionately impacted small businesses within one of the city's most disadvantaged areas. Eligible small business owners can apply for a grant of up to \$20,000 to cover material costs relating to commercial beautification, enhancement, and/or safety improvements. Important note: The City can only reimburse the cost of materials and the business owner will be responsible for paying for costs relating to labor, construction, or installation. The City's obligation under this Program is contingent upon the availability of Program funds and subject to businesses level of interest in the Program.

Program Requirements

Eligible Business Types

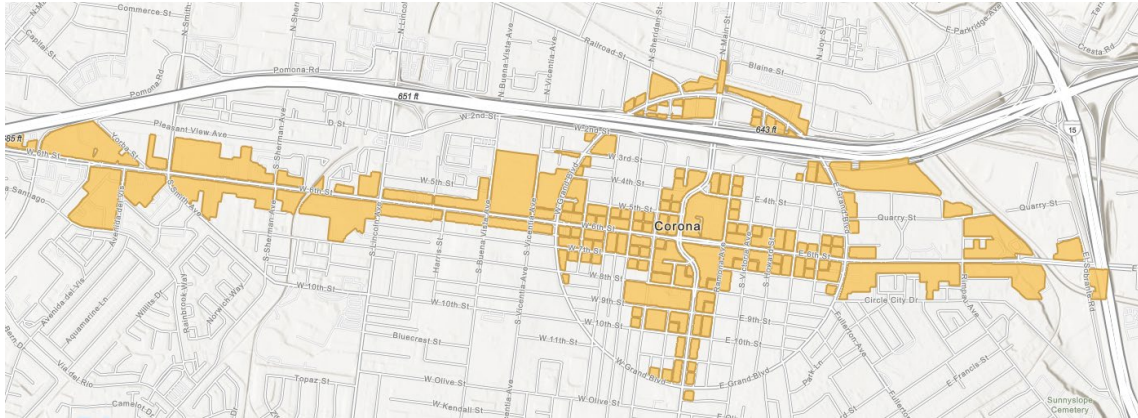
- Private, for-profit businesses with twenty-five (25) or fewer employees including sole proprietorships, independent contractors, and owners.
- Property must be located within the Specified Boundaries (see Location below).
- As of the date of the application, business must have obtained all licenses, permits, and appropriate land use entitlements required for the business to legally operate (except any permits or entitlements required for Program funded improvements).

Ineligible Business Types

- Nonprofit or public entity
- Startup business with less than one (1) year of operating history as of January 1, 2023
- A business engaged in any activity that is illegal under federal, state, or local law.
- A business that restricts patronage for any reason other than capacity, specifically any business that illegally discriminates against its customers.
- Residential projects or real estate investment projects including short-term rental operators.
- Casinos/gambling establishments
- Adult-entertainment related businesses
- Cannabis-related businesses

Location

- Only commercial properties located within the Downtown Corona boundaries, extending along Sixth Street between the 91-Freeway exit on Maple/Sixth Street to Interstate-15 (Specified Boundaries).
- Eligible properties within the Specified Boundaries can be retail, office, industrial, or mixed-use properties.
- An address lookup portal to verify property is within Specified Boundaries is available [here](#).



Permits for Program Funded Improvements

- Applicant must obtain plan approval and any applicable Planning and Building permits from the City for all Program funded improvements.
- All work performed under the provisions of this Program shall meet all applicable standards contained in the City's Municipal Code, and state and local building and safety codes.

Improvements

- Program funds shall be used only for improvements to the exterior of the applicant's building.
- The scope of work for the improvements must be reviewed and approved by the City of Corona's Office of Economic Development and Planning and Development Department.
- Proposed work must be consistent with the [Downtown Corona Revitalization Specific Plan](#) or any other [Specific Plans](#) that may pertain to the applicant's property. If you are unsure whether your property falls within a Specific Plan, please contact Economic Development at (951) 817-5730 or EconDev@CoronaCA.gov.
- No work conducted prior to written approval of the scope of work by the City will be reimbursed to the applicant.

Property Ownership

- If the Business owner (applicant) does not own the property, the Business owner must obtain consent from the current property owner in order to apply for the Program.
- In case of multiple ownership, the signature of each titleholder is required on all appropriate documents.
- Charitable Ventures will verify property ownership and require all persons currently on title to give written consent to all work proposed to be performed on the property prior to initiating such work.

Property Condition

Property must be in visible need of rehabilitation including blight, dilapidated signage, property damage, faded paint, landscaping, and other poor conditions.

Terms

- Applications accepted beginning February 5, 2024
- Grantees will be required to complete all work by September 30, 2024
- Program grant funds will be awarded by or before December 31, 2024

Grant Funding

- Maximum grant amount of \$20,000
- Funds to be utilized for reimbursement of material costs only.
- Grant funds cannot reimburse permitting, construction, installation, or other labor costs. Permitting, construction, installation, and other labor costs must be paid for by the business or property owner.

Joint Participation

City of Corona will fund up to 100% of the total approved material or supply costs for a grantee's project, not to exceed \$20,000. The grantee will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the design and construction. The grantee will also be responsible for all costs associated with permitting, construction, installation, or other labor-related services, as well as any costs in excess of the grant award.

Eligible Program Costs

Eligible Program costs only include materials relating to:

- Storefront upgrades
- Awnings
- Exterior lighting
- Windows or doors
- Outdoor dining spaces
- Signage
- Property beautification
- Landscaping
- Safety-related improvements (e.g., security cameras, security lighting, etc.)
- Other capital improvements to be evaluated by City on a case-by-case basis

Program Agreement

Applicants are required to enter into a Program Agreement prior to the start of any formal design, permitting, construction, or material acquisition. The Agreement will outline requirements of the Program grantee, which will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Authorized improvements
- Authorized funding
- Term and schedule for completion
- Insurance and indemnification requirements
- Conflict of interest
- Compliance with all applicable laws, ordinances, and codes of the federal, state, and local governments

Program Procedures

Program Administration

- Centralized Application Process – an online application will be located at charitableventuresoc.org/city-of-corona-downtown-commercial-beautification-grant-program
- The City of Corona landing page will describe the Program and provide online preliminary eligibility review.
- Grantees will be required to sign a Program Agreement as part of the application process to ensure funding will be used appropriately.
- The City of Corona's Economic Development Director may modify the Program guidelines as necessary to achieve the objectives of the Program.

Implementation

To implement the Program, the City of Corona will:

1. Work with the Small Business Administration (SBA), SBA's Small Business Development Center, the Corona Chamber of Commerce, and other small business resource agencies throughout Corona to promote and market the Program so that as many small business owners as possible throughout the Specified Boundaries learn about the Program and can apply.
2. Launch an application process for the Program and a public link which will direct applicants to an online application on Charitable Venture's website. The landing page for the application will describe the Program and invite eligible applicants to apply. All application responses will be securely stored and will serve as a repository for all Program documents and available for City staff to view at any time.
3. Ensure that all Program materials and applications are available in English and Spanish.
4. Establish a process for review of applications by Charitable Ventures to determine the initial eligibility status of the business based on eligibility criteria set forth in these Program Guidelines.
5. Ensure all ineligible applications are notified of ineligible status by email.
6. Ensure that eligible businesses will have access to a full application, which will require uploading documentation sufficient to determine that all criteria are met by the business.
7. City will evaluate the documentation provided by the business and approve or deny the application based on information provided by the applicant and the eligibility criteria established for the Program by these Program Guidelines. Documentation is intended to substantiate eligibility for the Program, including validation of number

of employees, business and financial history, business license, and other key information necessary to mitigate risk and fraud, and verify adverse impacts caused directly by the pandemic.

8. Ensure that all applicants (both approved and denied) that submitted complete and eligible applications are notified within 10 business days of the City's decision.
9. Approve applications and have them remotely closed. Documentation will include signed copies of the Program application, agreement, grant deed, etc.

Applicant Intake and Eligibility Determination

Application

The application must be completed in its entirety, signed electronically by the applicant or an authorized representative of the applicant, and submitted with all required documents as listed on the application, including signed proof of ownership of the building/property or proof of consent of owner if the applicant is renting the building or unit. The following documentation must be submitted at time of application:

- A completed and signed application form
- Signed W-9 form
- Valid and current City of Corona business license
- Payroll register (to prove employee count, unless you have no employees)
- 2022 full Federal tax returns
- 2-3 current photos of building exterior, with particular attention to specific areas that Program funds would be used to improve (e.g., pictures of windows, if requesting funds for window repair or replacement).
- Grant deed information if the applicant is the property or owner or a copy of the current lease (financial terms of lease may be redacted).
- Letter from property owner(s), if tenant applying, with consent for improvements.

Verification and Eligibility Determination

Each application will be processed in the order received. Charitable Ventures will review applications for completeness, verify the applicant's eligibility, and provide the applications for City staff's review. Applicants will be notified in writing regarding eligibility status.

Application Review and Scoring

Upon completion of a pre-qualification review, City staff will review and score the application based on the below categories and criteria.

Scoring Categories and Maximum Points

Category	Maximum Points
High visibility along Sixth Street or Main Street	20
Higher value of estimated improvements	15
Within Downtown Corona Specific Plan area	15
Type of proposed improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Façade remodel (up to 10) • Awnings (up to 10) • Lighting (up to 5) • Windows/doors (up to 10) • Outdoor dining space (up to 10) • Safety-related improvements (up to 5) • Signage (up to 10) • Landscaping (up to 5) • Paint (up to 5) • Other (up to 5) 	30
Feasibility of proposed improvements (e.g., Does proposed improvement comply with Specific Plan requirements?)	10
Adjacency to another eligible applicant	10
TOTAL	100

Grant Award and Notifications

Once the application, scope of work, and property condition have been verified as eligible, the City and the applicant will enter into a Program Agreement that contains the terms and conditions required by the Program. After execution of the Program Agreement, the City will issue a Notice to Proceed with work via an email. No work shall be initiated, contracted for, or performed until after the Notice to Proceed has been issued. The City will not approve reimbursement for work completed prior to the issuance of the Notice to Proceed.

Procurement and Contractor Selection

Program-Funded Improvements Procurement

The applicant is required to obtain and submit to the Economic Development Department a detailed proposal for each item approved as part of the applicant's scope of work for the Program-funded improvements. Proposals shall clearly state a cost for materials, with any costs relating to permitting, construction, installation, or other labor listed separately. The City will only reimburse the applicant for material costs.

Program-Funded Improvements Selection

The City will review the proposals submitted by the applicant and verify the proposal is qualified. Approval will be given for the amount specified in the qualified proposal within the grant limits of the Program. The material supplier and/or the applicant will be responsible for obtaining all necessary permits for the Program-funded improvements. The amount of Program funds available for reimbursement is limited to the approved, qualified proposal.

Insurance and Licenses

The applicant is solely responsible for ensuring that the contractor has all necessary insurance and required licenses.

Permits and Approvals

Upon application approval and following an executed Program Agreement, the applicant shall ensure that the contractor obtains all necessary permits for the Program-funded improvements. This includes submitting project plans and related materials to the City's Building Division. No work shall commence unless the permit application has been approved.

Inspection and Reimbursement

Notification

Once the applicant has submitted all required procurement documents for the Program-funded improvements, the City will issue a final Notice to Proceed in an email. No reimbursement shall be issued for work completed or contracted prior to the issuance of the Notice to Proceed.

Inspection of Completed Work

After the applicant notifies the City that all work has been completed, an inspection of the work will be conducted. This inspection will include a review of the permits issued and inspections of permitted work.

Reimbursement

Based upon the results of the inspection and verification of receipts, the City will issue approval for reimbursement from Program funds to the applicant for the completion of the improvements up to the maximum amount of the grant award. In order for reimbursement to be processed, the applicant shall submit receipts evidencing payment in full on all vendor contracts for the Program-funded work. Additionally, the applicant must notify the City in an email within ten (10) days of completion of work as part of the reimbursement request.