

Brainerd Exterior Improvement Grant Program - 2024

What is the Brainerd Exterior Improvement Grant Program?

The Brainerd Exterior Improvement Grant Program was created by the Brainerd Economic Development Authority (EDA) to provide incentives to stimulate external and visible investment in Downtown and Corridor properties. Property owners and business owners are encouraged to consider improvements incorporating aesthetic, environmental, cultural, and historical elements that enhance the character and architecture of Brainerd. These improvements should create a cohesive, attractive environment. The program provides a 50% matching grant for actual construction costs up to \$5,000 per property on a pay-for-performance basis. Eligible projects include permanent exterior building and landscape improvements **visible** from a public right-of-way. The Brainerd EDA will allocate up to \$20,000 in 2024 to fund eligible projects on a first-come first-serve basis.

Who may apply for funding?

A business or property owner with a property located within the Brainerd city limits. The property must be of commercial use, mixed-use, or industrial use and must be permitted in the respective zoning district.

What are the eligibility requirements?

- Property must be commercial use, mixed-use, or industrial use and must be permitted in the respective zoning district.
- All work must be done on the property/building exterior and result in a publicly visible improvement.
- All work must be done in compliance with the Brainerd City Code and necessary permitting. Work must include the correction of any known exterior building code violations.
- Work must start after project approval to be eligible for funding.
- Funds may be used for construction of permanent exterior building improvements, awnings, signage, windows, doors (including front/back door accessibility), brick repair and/or site landscaping resulting in a publicly visible improvement.
- If applicant is not the owner of the building, a current lease agreement must be in place. Business owners under a lease submitting applications must include written consent of the property owner.
- Other uses may also be eligible if prior approval is granted by the Brainerd Economic Development Authority.
- Properties must be taxable existing structures occupied by commercial or mixed-use tenants in a commercial zoning district.

What is not eligible?

- Work already in progress or performed prior to project approval will not be eligible for funding.
- Design services
- Operational or ongoing maintenance expenses will not be considered (Ex. roof repair).

- Properties may not include properties with delinquent taxes or special assessments, in litigation, condemnation or receivership.

Is there a minimum or maximum amount I can apply for?

There is NO minimum, and the maximum grant amount that can be requested is \$5,000.

What does the 50% match up to \$5,000 per property mean?

Examples:

- Project of \$10,000 Total Cost - This project would be eligible to receive the maximum \$5,000 reimbursement of eligible expenses/costs associated with the approved project following the completion of the project and associated requirements.
- Project of \$25,000 Total Cost - This project would be eligible to receive the maximum \$5,000 reimbursement of eligible expenses/costs associated with the approved project following the completion of the project and associated requirements.
- Project of \$6,000 Total Cost - This project would be eligible to receive \$3,000 (50% of the total project cost) reimbursement of eligible expenses/costs associated with the approved project following the completion of the project and associated requirements.

What is considered a completed application for review?

The application is filled out in its entirety and required documentation is uploaded into the online application:

- Copy of written consent by property owner is required to be uploaded if you are leasing.
- Quotes for eligible exterior improvements, construction costs – for example awnings, signage, windows, doors, etc.
- Completed funding sources and uses form (form available at www.growbrainerdlakes.org)

If my grant application is approved, when will I receive the funding?

Awarded funds will be dispersed as a reimbursement to the applicant once each of the following requirements are met:

1. Completion of project results in permanent exterior building and landscape improvements visible from a public right-of-way.
2. Receipts and/or invoices for eligible supplies purchased are submitted for approval.
3. Inspection which certifies the work completed is in accordance with the EDA approval and other City ordinances.

Are there any other requirements associated with being awarded these grant funds?

Projects must be completed in a timely manner from the date of approval (within one year with a maximum extension of six months). As indicated by the pay for-performance model, funds will be distributed after the project's completion and reimbursement is requested. The business must operate for two years after the grant disbursement or repayment is required.

What happens if my proposed project is selected for funding?

You will receive an email from BLAEDC/City of Brainerd regarding the next steps. If there are city code and permit requirements, you agree to work cooperatively with the EDA and City by providing requested documents and attend various meetings, reviews, etc.

Who is involved with reviewing applications and deciding which applications to fund?

The Brainerd Lakes Area Economic Development Corporation (BLAEDC), a non-profit corporation located in Brainerd, MN is administering the grant program on behalf of the Brainerd Economic Development Authority (EDA). During the grant application process, BLAEDC is available to assist with any questions or technical assistance involving the online application. BLAEDC will review and submit completed applications to the Executive Director and President of the Brainerd Economic Development Authority (EDA), who are responsible for grant approval.

Who should I contact if I have questions regarding the Brainerd Exterior Improvement Grant Program?

BLAEDC is available to assist with any questions or technical assistance involving the grant process and online application. The online application, along with grant information can be found on the BLAEDC website at www.growbrainerdlakes.org. If you have any questions or need assistance, you can call BLAEDC at (218) 828-0096 or email tyler@growbrainerdlakes.org or alison@growbrainerdlakes.org.