



# Downtown Commercial Beautification Grant

**Program Guidelines**

City of Corona Office of Economic Development

# Contents

- Program Overview** ..... 3
  - Objectives ..... 3
- Program Requirements** ..... 4
  - Eligible Small Business Types ..... 4
  - Ineligible Business Types..... 4
  - Location..... 4
  - Permits..... 5
  - Improvements ..... 5
  - Property Ownership ..... 5
  - Property Condition..... 6
  - Terms..... 6
  - Grant Funding..... 6
  - Joint Participation..... 6
  - Eligible Program Costs ..... 6
  - Program Agreement..... 6
- Program Procedures**..... 8
  - Program Administration ..... 8
  - Implementation ..... 8
  - Applicant Intake and Eligibility Determination..... 9
    - Application..... 9
    - Verification and Eligibility Determination..... 9
    - Application Review..... 10
    - Rehabilitation Feasibility Determination..... 10
    - Approval and Notifications ..... 10
    - Reservation of Funds ..... 10
  - Procurement and Contractor Selection ..... 10
    - Program-Funded Improvements Procurement..... 10
    - Program-Funded Improvements Selection..... 10
    - Insurance and Licenses ..... 11

Award and Reimbursement.....11

Notification .....11

Inspection of Completed Work.....11

Reimbursement.....11

## 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.

### 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

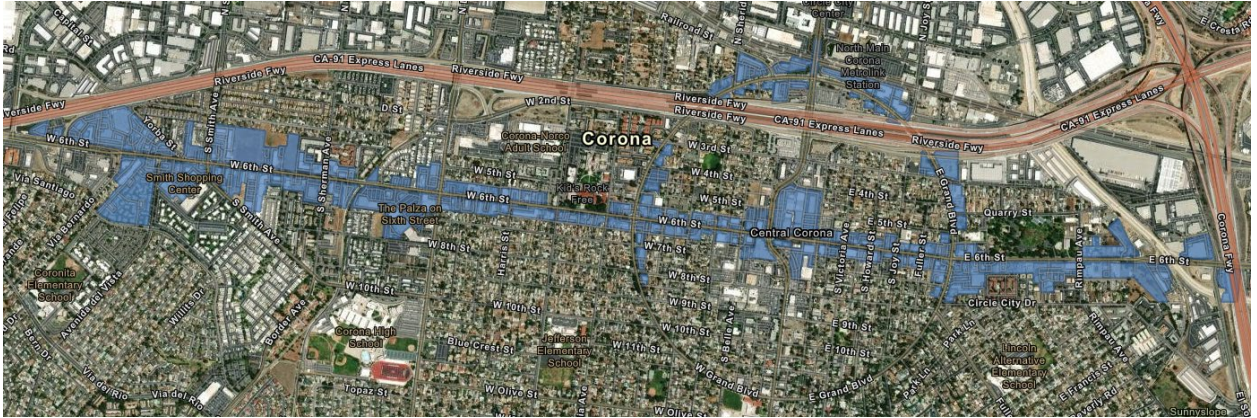
- Private, for-profit businesses with twenty-five (25) or fewer employees including sole proprietorships, independent contractors, and owners.
- Business must be located within the Specified Boundaries (see Location below).
- As of the date of the application, business must have obtained all licenses,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

## Ineligible Business Types

- Nonprofit or public entity
- Property owners on behalf of tenants
- 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 passive business, investment company or investor who is required to file a Schedule E on its federal tax returns
- A speculative business, meaning a business for the sole purpose of purchasing and holding an item until the market prices increases or other business principally engaged in risky activity for the chance of an unusually large profit
- 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.
- No work conducted prior to written approval of the scope of work by the City will be reimbursed to the applicant.

### Property Ownership

- Applicant must be either the current property owner or the business owner to be eligible for the Program
- If the Business owner does not own the property, the Business owner must obtain consent from 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.
- The City 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 January 31, 2024
- Program grant funds will be awarded by December 31, 2024
- Grantees will be required to complete all work by December 31, 2026

## Grant Funding

- Maximum grant amount of \$20,000
- Funds to be utilized for reimbursement of material costs only
- Grant funds cannot reimburse construction, installation, or other labor costs

## Joint Participation

City of Corona will fund up to 100% of the total approved material or supply costs for a grantee's project. 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 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
- Enhanced cleaning efforts
- 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 design, 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 on the City of Corona's webpage at \_\_\_\_\_
- The City of Corona website will be the centralized repository for all applications, agreements, and tracking database.
- The City of Corona landing page will describe the Program and provide online preliminary eligibility review.
- Grantees will be required to sign and upload a Program Agreement to ensure funding is being used appropriately and in accordance with all applicable laws.
- As part of reporting and tracking requirements, the City of Corona will track the number of grants provided along with the corresponding funding amount. A Final Report shall be prepared at the end of Program Guidelines terms.
- 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 a rapid deployment application process for the Program and a public link which will direct applicants to an online application on the City'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 City staff 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 be sent 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.
10. Provide all necessary reports and documentation, including progress reports and a Final Report at the end of the term. All Program documentation and tracking will be available by request of City staff.

## Applicant Intake and Eligibility Determination

### Application

Each application must be completed in its entirety, signed by the applicant or an authorized representative of the applicant, uploaded to the application portal, 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
- 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).
- If applicant is a tenant, a copy of the current lease (financial terms of lease may be redacted) and signed consent from the property owner(s).

### Verification and Eligibility Determination

The City will verify all information on the application as necessary. Applicants will be notified in writing regarding eligibility status.

## Application Review and Scoring

Priority for award of Program funds will be given to properties with frontage along Sixth Street within the Specified Boundaries.

## Rehabilitation Feasibility Determination

Once an applicant has been determined to meet eligibility requirements, an initial inspection of the property will be made by the Economic Development Department to determine if the property condition satisfies the eligibility criteria set forth in these Program Guidelines.

## 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. 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.

## Reservation of Funds

After the applicant has been approved for the Program, a reservation of funds letter will be issued for the grant amount approved. This letter will reserve the approved grant amount for 90 days. If the applicant has not submitted all required items for reimbursement within the 90 days, the reservation of funds may be cancelled. If unforeseen conditions are delaying the project, the applicant should contact the City immediately to discuss options to preserve the reservation of Program funds. One additional extension of time up to 90 days may be granted based upon a demonstrated hardship.

## Procurement and Contractor Selection

### Program-Funded Improvements Procurement

The applicant is required to obtain and submit to the Economic Development Department a minimum of three (3) proposals for each item approved as part of the applicant's scope of work for the Program-funded improvements. If the applicant is unable to obtain three proposals, the applicant shall provide a summary of the efforts made to obtain the minimum number of required proposals. Proposals shall clearly state a cost for materials, with any costs relating to construction, installation, or other labor listed separately.

### Program-Funded Improvements Selection

The City will review the proposals submitted by the applicant and verify the lowest-qualified proposal. Approval will be given for the amount specified in the lowest-qualified proposal within the grant limits of the Program. Should the applicant wish to enter into an

agreement with a vendor other than the approved lowest-qualified proposal, the applicant will be responsible for the cost difference between the lowest-qualified proposal and the selected proposal. 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 lowest-qualified proposal.

### Insurance and Licenses

The applicant is solely responsible for ensuring that the contractor has all necessary insurance and required licenses. In addition, the applicant shall ensure that the contractor obtains all necessary permits for the Program-funded improvements.

### 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. 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, the City will issue 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 file a Notice of Completion within ten (10) days of completion of work and provide a copy as part of the reimbursement request.