

# Housing and Community Services

## Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program Funding Guidebook 2024



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# Neighborhood Improvement Grant Overview



City Council has approved \$60,000 from the general fund for the Aurora Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program. The program was designed to improve the appearance of Aurora neighborhoods while strengthening the social fabric and organizational networks of community residents.

The goals of this program include:

1. Improving the physical condition of a neighborhood
2. Enhancing neighborhood pride and identity
3. Connecting neighbors and fostering a strong sense of community
4. Encouraging “place-making” by bringing assets into the neighborhood that encourage gathering and positive experiences

Community building involves working together with others for a common benefit or improvement. That means any improvement project must include the active involvement of at least three residents from three separate households in the neighborhood. Each of the three residents must register as “Program Coordinators”. The more residents that participate, however, the more success a project is likely to have. Business owners are encouraged to work together with residents to supplement and support neighborhood projects.

Neighborhood organizations and residents (where a neighborhood organization may not exist) may begin the application process. Community Engagement Coordinators will also communicate with Code Enforcement officers and city leaders to identify neighborhoods that could benefit from improvement efforts and encourage residents from those areas to apply for a Neighborhood Improvement Grant.

If a neighborhood is interested in applying for Neighborhood Improvement Grant they are encouraged to contact a Community Engagement Coordinators at (303)739-7280 or [engageCEC@auroragov.org](mailto:engageCEC@auroragov.org).

# Definitions



**Project Coordinators:** At least 2 other residents in addition to the primary project coordinator who are helping to lead the project. They must be residents of the neighborhood where the project is being done.

**Primary Project Coordinator:** This will be the person that the City will communicate with during the project, including award notification and any other grant-related notices. They must be residents of the neighborhood where the project is being done.

**HOA:** A neighborhood group with mandatory dues and a legal entity.

**Neighborhood Organization:** An organization of neighbors who voluntarily work together and may contribute funds for common purposes.

## Program Guidelines



### Grant Timeline

1. Attend a virtual Neighborhood Improvement Grant information meeting. Applicants are required to attend an informational meeting to learn more about the Neighborhood Improvement Grant program. These 3 virtual presentations will be offered on

- **January 24<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM** - <https://auroragov.webex.com/auroragov/j.php?MTID=m56390de419c10fcc58cc6752547905ea>

or visit [webex.com](https://webex.com), click "Join a Meeting" and use the following information:

- Meeting Number: 2499 957 2412|| Password: Grants!

- **February 1<sup>st</sup> at 12 PM** - <https://auroragov.webex.com/auroragov/j.php?MTID=md64ac8d729fd8dba01901269b41ebf4d>

or visit [webex.com](https://webex.com), click "Join a Meeting" and use the following information:

- Meeting Number: 2480 721 9558|| Password: Grants!

- **February 6<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM** - <https://auroragov.webex.com/auroragov/j.php?MTID=m7f0206cd6592f76b5971345d51068721>

or visit [webex.com](https://www.webex.com), click "Join a Meeting" and use the following information:

- Meeting Number: 2484 733 5497|| Password: Grants!

2. **On or Before March 22<sup>nd</sup>** - Meet with a Community Engagement Coordinator to discuss your grant project. Applicants who meet with their Coordinator often have better and more complete applications. The Community Engagement Coordinators will provide you with **mandatory** referrals to other departments for things like a revocable license, traffic management plans, or permission to do anything on City property or in a right of way.  
For this grant process, a Community Engagement Coordinator will be assigned to your group. To connect your Coordinator for this program, please contact [engageCEC@auroragov.org](mailto:engageCEC@auroragov.org).
3. **March and April** – Discuss your project with department referrals. Keep in mind they are working with many groups, so it's best to reach out as soon as possible.
4. **April 19<sup>th</sup>** – Deadline to submit your application is by 5:00 p.m. The application link will be found online at [www.auroragov.org/neighborhoodgrants](http://www.auroragov.org/neighborhoodgrants)
5. **Late April and Early May** - The selection committee will meet and review applications to determine which applications should be funded.
6. **Mid-May** - All groups will be notified via their Primary Project Coordinator, by mail or email, of the status of their application.
7. **May to October** – Applicants with approved funding will work with their Community Engagement Coordinator to proceed through related city processes with all funds to be spent.
8. **October 31<sup>st</sup>** – **All projects must be completed and final documentation, receipts, photos, etc. must be submitted to staff.**

## Grant Funding

Aurora's Neighborhood Improvement Grant is funded through the annual budget process for a total of \$60,000. Applicants may apply for up to \$5,000 per project for community-based improvements such as clean-up events, community message boards, community benches, community place making, little free libraries, etc.

Some projects may be required to go through a city of Aurora process which has a fee attached to it. As a part of the Neighborhood Improvement Grant, these fees are waived for applications that are awarded funding, however, any permit, license, or plan amendments are still required. *If you move forward without Neighborhood*

*Improvement funding these fees are not waived and the permit, license, or plan amendment is still required.*

## General Guidelines

- Projects must be located within the city of Aurora and have a community benefit.
- If your neighborhood is not yet registered with the city of Aurora's Neighborhood Registration Program, registration will be required upon application.
- Must have at least 3 residents who LIVE in the neighborhood to serve as project coordinators.
- All projects must include permission from the property owner, HOA board, or entity that is responsible for the maintenance of the project location.
- Projects must have high visibility to the surrounding streets, neighborhoods and adjacent owners.
- Proposed landscaping must have irrigation and each project must adhere to applicable City codes and ordinances.
- Before and after pictures of the site must be shown to verify the completion of the project.

## Prohibited Projects

The following things cannot be funded:

- Projects from Religious and/or Political Organizations
- Projects involving landscaping with no irrigation
- Projects that do not comply with city codes
- Projects that have occurred before the grant funding decisions have been made
- Projects seeking to install new neighborhood ID signage where none currently exists (vs. sign repairs or refurbishment)
- Projects not visible to the public or that do not have community impact
- No food or drink items will be funded as a part of any project.
- HOAs still controlled by the developer cannot apply for grant money intended for physical improvements of the association area

## Application Information

All applications must include a detailed description of the group applying, the neighborhood that the group represents, and the exact location of the improvement to be made. This includes information on an organizing committee with strong ties to the community and ready avenues for community outreach. A successful grant application will also include the following:

- A clear description of the project
- Any other forms related to the

- including address or specific location
- A complete sketch or aerial map of the project showing where improvements will be made
- Digital, color photos of the area to be improved
- Property ownership information for the site
- Documentation showing approval for the project from property/easement owner(s)
- completion of the project
- A detailed project timeline
- A well-researched budget
- Explanation of how the project will positively impact the neighborhood
- A thorough maintenance plan
- List of names and addresses of volunteers committing to work on your project

Grant projects will be reviewed by a committee of city staff who may not have seen the application prior to submittal. To be successful, your application should be as complete as possible, have answered all questions listed in the application, and include as much information and supporting material as possible.

### Application Scoring

A staff committee will review and score each application with the top scoring applications from across the city receiving funding.

#### Award Criteria

#### Point Value

1. Community Impact	<b>30</b>
2. Sweat Equity, Neighborhood Match, and Community Participation	<b>25</b>
3. Connecting neighbors and fostering a strong sense of community	<b>20</b>
4. Shows Broad Community Support	<b>15</b>
5. Project Details (maintenance plan/project sustainability, site information, timeline, budget, etc.)	<b>5</b>
6. Previous Improvement Grant Award	<b>5</b>
Total Possible Points	<b>100</b>

### Criteria Breakdown

1. **Community Impact** – A top scoring application will clearly demonstrate the positive impact the project will have on the neighborhood or community as a whole. It will show how the project specifically implements the goals of the program.

- 2. Sweat Equity, Neighborhood Match, and Community Participation** – To receive a top score, applications will maximize the use of community participation, sweat equity, and neighborhood & other funding matches. In these projects, at least 50% of the overall budget will be covered by these sources. The best applications will provide volunteer lists or commitments from the community and documentation related to other funding sources or commitments. In addition, these applications can show how these components factor into the overall project budget. For budgetary purposes, general volunteer assistance or sweat equity can be calculated at the current standard of \$25 per hour. Please note that this grant does not reimburse for volunteer hours; the provided rate is just for calculating sweat equity and in-kind donations.
- 3. Fostering Connections Between Neighbors** – A top scoring application will clearly explain how this project fosters strong, lasting social connections between neighbors. The highest scoring projects provide on-going engagement opportunities between neighbors and can clearly show sustainability to that end.
- 4. Shows Broad Community Support** – The highest scoring applications will readily show full support from any community stakeholders that may be impacted by or have a vested interest in the project or project area. This could include neighbors, local businesses, HOAs, neighborhood groups, or even other government entities. These applications will include letters, petitions, meeting minutes, volunteer commitments, etc. showing support for the project.
- 5. Project Details (maintenance plan/project sustainability, site information, timeline, budget, etc.)** – The best applications will provide a clear explanation of a thorough maintenance plan or how sustainability is built into the project. They will also provide all the requested documentation/attachments digitally per the application. The project timeline will show realistic, detailed deadlines and the project budget will include quotes, estimates, etc. from vendors or contractors. For grant requests that are part of a larger project, the portions that the Neighborhood Improvement Grant is expected to fund will be clearly identified.
- 6. Previous Improvement Grant Award** – In order to incentivize new groups to apply, up to 5 points may be provided if your group has NOT been awarded a Neighborhood Improvement Grant in recent years. That is, the more recently your group has been awarded one of these grants in previous years, the fewer points you'll receive in this category.

## Award Notices

Following the review process, applicants will receive written notice of the final determination of their application. This will be sent via email to the PRIMARY



PROJECT COORDINATOR. Applicants must apply, and receive an award notification, *before* any improvements related to the project can be made.

### Payment of Grant Funds

Grant funds may be paid directly to service or material providers or may be reimbursed to the group if paid out of pocket. Proof of payment (cancelled checks, money order receipts, bank check receipts, credit card statements/receipts, etc.) will be required for all purchases. For reimbursement purposes, we are unable to accept invoices paid in cash.

If your group chooses to pay for costs upfront and receive reimbursement from the city, we will not be able to reimburse any sales tax that you have paid. If the city pays the service or material provider directly, as a tax-exempt organization, there is no sales tax paid. Please note that if you are seeking reimbursement from the city, **we will need to collect a completed W-9 for any individual or group requesting reimbursement.**

## Staff Assistance

Staff will not assist in brainstorming project ideas. Please schedule time to meet with them only after you have solidified your project ideas & goals, and gathered current, relevant documentation.

### Land Development Review

Land Development Review works with residents to review the site for any easements or relevant property information. If the project is in a right of way or easement, staff will work with the applicant to process a revocable license application if the project receives funding.

### Traffic

- When planning for your project costs you may be required to provide a traffic control plan for safety purposes and/or loading that may be near a roadway for instance:
  - The closure of an adjacent lane of traffic
  - Sidewalk closure
  - Bike lane closure
  - Parking lane closure
- In these cases, a traffic control plan, with the vendor suggestions on your handout, will be required. This plan will show what facilities will be temporarily closed and the devices that are needed to close them. You may find the appropriate permits to submit here:  
[https://www.auroragov.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_1881137/File/Business](https://www.auroragov.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_1881137/File/Business)

[%20Services/Development%20Center/Permits/Public%20Improvement%20Permits/008358.pdf](#)

- Operational hours of traffic control do have restrictions depending on the classification of the roadway. For instance:
  - Arterial and collector roadways, which are the main routes within the city, allow lane closures from the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays to avoid peak time traffic. Weekend work hours for arterial/collectors are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
  - Local/residential roadways allow lane closures from the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. 7 days a week.
- When planning for your project you will also want to look at sight distance requirements near intersections.
- If your project is located within 30' of an intersection or driveway the height restriction for objects or plant materials is generally 36" in height.
- Boulders or other permanent objects such as walls or signs may have additional safety requirements and are site specific and evaluated separately.
- If you are planning to use volunteers for your project that may be working near the roadway we ask that they wear reflective safety vests. We also ask that volunteers please not enter a closed lane of traffic with or without traffic control and that all minors under the age of 18 must have a responsible adult with them.

## Water Conservation

Aurora Water Conservation has several resources to assist those interested in converting high water-use turf grass to a water-wise landscape.

- Water Conservation Classes
- Rebates
- Aurora Water-wise Garden
- Free Design Consultations
- Library of Books

## Planning

The city of Aurora Planning staff can assist you in determining if your proposed project will require any amendments to site plans and meet city planning guidelines.

## Permitting

The city of Aurora Permitting staff can assist you in determining what permits may be required for your project.

This is only a list of common departments for projects to be referred to. Please meet with a Community Engagement Coordinator to determine what specific referrals you will need to work with.

# Staff/Referral Contacts



**Johnathan Harris**, Community Engagement Coordinator – [jmharris@auroragov.org](mailto:jmharris@auroragov.org) or (303) 739-7923

**Scott Campbell**, Community Engagement Coordinator – [scampbel@auroragov.org](mailto:scampbel@auroragov.org) or (303) 739-7441

**Rachel Whipple**, Community Engagement Coordinator – [rwhipple@auroragov.org](mailto:rwhipple@auroragov.org) or (303) 739-7258

**Tim York**, Water Conservation Supervisor - [tyork@auroragov.org](mailto:tyork@auroragov.org) or (303) 326-8819

**Steven Gomez**, Traffic Engineering – [segomez@auroragov.org](mailto:segomez@auroragov.org) or (303) 739-7336

**Su Wever**, Real Property Specialist – [swever@auroragov.org](mailto:swever@auroragov.org) or (303) 739-7361

**Rian French**, Project Manager, PROS – [rfrench@auroragov.org](mailto:rfrench@auroragov.org) or (303) 739-7196

**Liz Fuselier**, Planner II – [efuselie@auroragov.org](mailto:efuselie@auroragov.org) or (303) 739-7450

**Dora Shols**, Permit Technician Supervisor – [dshols@auroragov.org](mailto:dshols@auroragov.org) or (303)739-7442