

Housing and Community Services

Neighborhood Improvement Grant Project Ideas 2024



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Project Types

A wide variety of projects are eligible for Neighborhood Improvement Grant funding. Below are examples of projects that could be funded along with tips on how to successfully submit a grant request.

Neighborhood Clean Ups

Whether you are hoping to clean up the yard or clean out the basement, or you are looking to reduce the extra volume of trash and debris in a neighborhood, clean ups are a great way to accomplish this.

A **neighborhood roll-off event** brings either trash trucks or several roll-off dumpsters to a convenient spot in the neighborhood where neighbors can bring their large items, branches, and other extra trash. Here are some helpful hints to think about:



- Location, location, location! Finding a space that will allow cars to move through, adequate space for waiting in line, and space for a few dumpsters can be a little tricky. In the past, many groups have reserved a neighborhood school parking lot. **You cannot use any city street or parking lanes.**
- It takes a lot of volunteer time to distribute flyers, stage the area, help to get things into the dumpsters, and move cars through the site. Think about who in your neighborhood can help with this and how to make it fun for volunteers.

- The school district or church or other location may require you to have your own insurance for the event, and you may need to find a policy that will meet their requirements and your needs just in case anyone gets hurt. Be sure to add this cost into your budget. It could cost a few hundred dollars or more.
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

A **neighborhood clean-up event** brings together neighbors who will break into groups and go throughout the community picking up trash, debris and potentially dumped items to help with the overall look of the neighborhood. Here are some helpful hints to think about:



- Where will you have people gather to start and to get their supplies? Will you break the neighborhood into a grid and assign locations to each team? Where will they gather in the end?
- Where will they dispose of their trash at the end of the event? Will they leave a full bag where they fill it and you will have someone driving around to pick up the debris? Or will you have a roll-off to get rid of the debris?
- Are there enough items dumped that you need to rent a truck and a roll-off dumpster to dispose of the items?
- How many volunteers will you have so that you have enough supplies? Will you have gloves, trash bags, grabbers, etc.
- Remember that food and drink are not an allowable item with this grant. Do you have some neighbors that cannot help with the clean-up, but they would be willing to bring some snacks to share after the event?

- This grant can be combined with other city grants such as the **Know Your Neighbor Grant** to fund the food or community celebration.
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

Community Message Boards

Community Message Boards help neighborhoods have a centralized location where residents can post items such as community resources, events, meeting notices, or other items of importance to the community.

- **Neighborhood Consent** - In HOAs there is a board that is typically charged with making decisions that affect the whole community which can lead to fewer challenges related to neighborhood agreement. In voluntary neighborhood groups, or neighborhoods with no active group, community message boards can cause controversy because neighbors may not agree with the design of the message board.
- **Property Ownership** – HOAs have an advantage because HOA boards are typically responsible for managing the common spaces of the HOA and therefore can install a message on common property. Voluntary neighborhood groups, or neighborhoods without an active neighborhood board, most often do not have common property to put the community message board so they are often installed in city of Aurora right of way, or on private property. If you are looking to install a community message board, you must have the property owner's permission. Often the property owner becomes the responsible party for the long-term maintenance of the community message board.
- **Maintenance** – Who will clean out the old announcements? Will this be protected from the elements? Will there be a policy about what can be put up on the board? What if it gets damaged? Who will have the responsibility to replace and/or fix it?
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?



Based on your individual plan there might be impacts to traffic, sidewalks, and right of ways. Check in with your Community Engagement Coordinator to see what impacts your project might have and which city departments you will need to check in with for permits, plan reviews, traffic control plans, and revocable licenses.

Community Benches

Neighborhood Benches can be a nice way to add a spot for people to rest along a path, in a park, or to enjoy the scenery in the area.



- **Neighborhood Consent** - In HOAs there is a board that is typically charged with making decisions that affect the whole community which can lead to fewer challenges related to neighborhood agreement. In voluntary neighborhood groups, or neighborhoods with no active group, it can be hard to find a location for the bench and get agreement on the design.
- **Property Ownership** – HOAs have an advantage because HOA boards are typically responsible for managing the common spaces of the HOA and therefore can install a community bench on common property. Voluntary neighborhood groups, or neighborhoods without an active neighborhood board, most often do not have common property to put the community bench on so they are often installed in city of Aurora right of way, or on private property or in a community park. If you are looking to install a community bench, you must have the property owner’s permission. Often the property owner becomes the responsible party for the long-term maintenance of the community bench.

- If you are looking to install a bench in a city park, you will have to get permission from the city of Aurora's Parks Recreation and Open Space Department (PROS) to move forward.
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

Based on your individual plan there might be impacts to traffic, sidewalks, and right of ways or parks. Check in with your Community Engagement Coordinator to see what impacts your project might have and which city departments you will need to check in with for permits, plan reviews, traffic control plans, and revocable licenses.

Community Place Making

Community Place Making offers your neighborhood a chance to implement some unique elements that are representative of your neighborhood or that make something special such as a focal point. This might include a mural, an artistic wrapped utility box, something special at your entrance, or something at one of your neighborhood's community areas. This is where you can let your creativity shine!



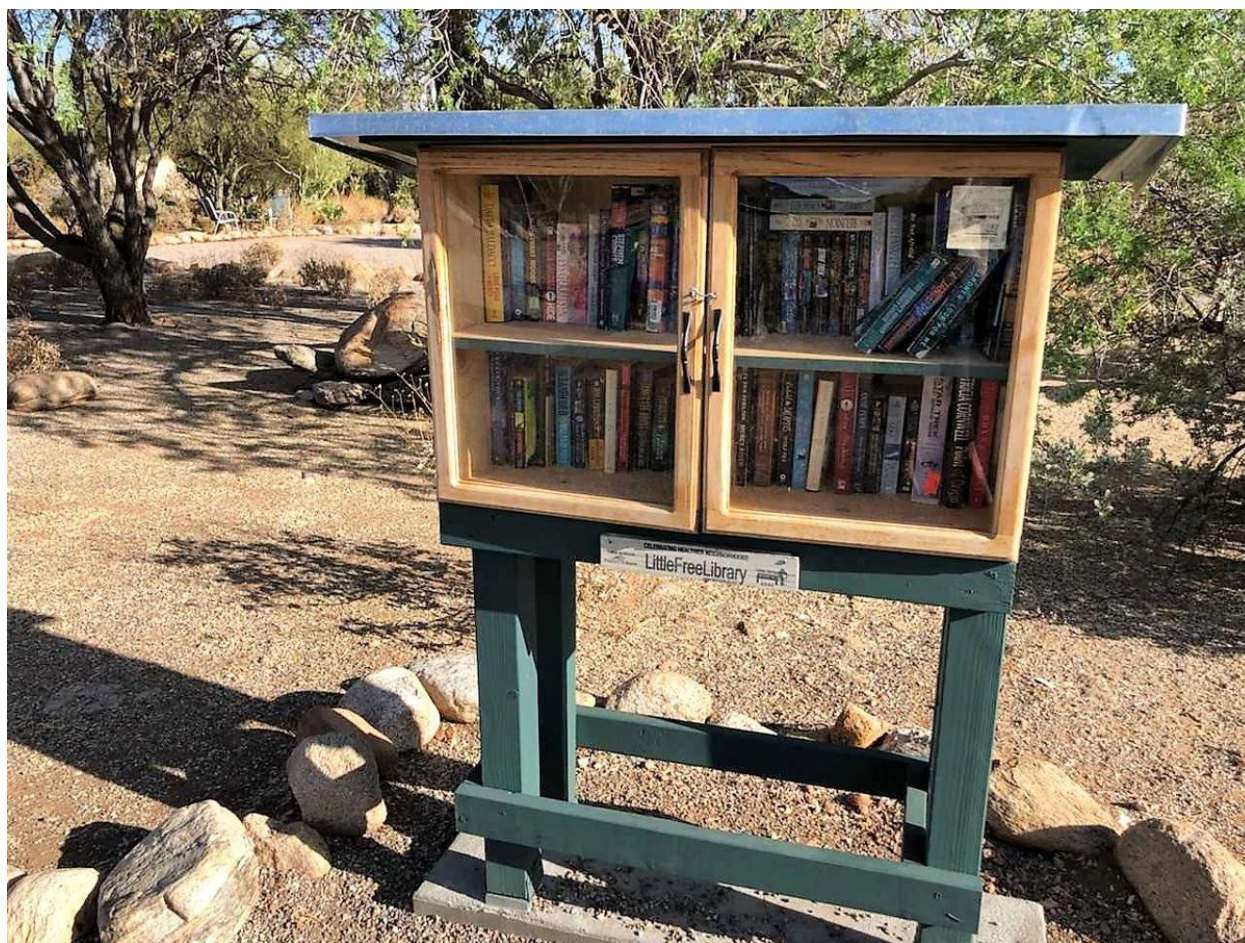


- **Neighborhood Consent** - In HOAs there is a board that is typically charged with making decisions that affect the whole community which can lead to fewer challenges related to neighborhood agreement. In voluntary neighborhood groups, or neighborhoods with no active group, community place making can cause controversy because neighbors may not agree with the design or the addition.
- **Property Ownership** – HOAs have an advantage because HOA boards are typically responsible for managing the common spaces of the HOA and therefore can install a message on common property. Voluntary neighborhood groups, or neighborhoods without an active neighborhood board, most often do not have common property to put the community place making feature so they are often installed in city of Aurora right of way, or on private property. If you are looking to install a community place making feature, you must have the property owner’s permission. Often the property owner becomes the responsible party for the long-term maintenance of the design or addition.
- **Maintenance** – Who will keep with the maintenance? What will happen if it is damaged? If it is faded or vandalized, who will be in charge of the upkeep or repairs?
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

Based on your individual plan there might be impacts to traffic, sidewalks, and right of ways. Check in with your Community Engagement Coordinator to see what impacts your project might have and which city departments you will need to check in with for permits, plan reviews, traffic control plans, and revocable licenses.

Little Free Libraries

Little Free Libraries are a great way to build community and share books or extra food with neighbors and those less fortunate in the neighborhood. Many groups have been able to install them around parks, on school routes, and throughout the community.



If installing a little free library, before you begin, visit the Little Free Library map at <https://littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap/> to see if there are registered little libraries in your neighborhood. In addition, there may already be some little libraries that are unregistered.

Some things in keep in mind:

- Property ownership is one of the biggest challenges related to Little Free Libraries. Ultimately the owner of the property will be responsible for maintaining the library. The application should include the property owner and written permission from the property owner. If it is in a park or at a school, be sure to get the permission from the group.
- Location: you cannot place little libraries in the right of way or too close to a sidewalk.
- Any library needs books, so think about how you will supply your Little Free Library with books.
- How will you let the neighborhood know about your library? What kind of outreach will you do?
- Be sure to account for installation costs and process in your application.
- Be sure to call for utility locates for this project.
- You can customize them and let your creativity shine.
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

Community Building Event

Community Building Events are a great way to bring your neighbors together and all work together towards something that enhances your community and lets you get to know your neighbors in a more intentional way.

- An example could be buying enough flowerpots, potting soil, flowers and



paint
to
have
the

neighborhood gather to decorate the flowerpots and give one to each of the residents in your area.

- Another idea might be making wind chimes for each of your neighbors.
- This is where you get to let your creativity shine.
- The focus is on the community coming together to create something while getting to know your neighbors.
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

Neighborhood Improvement Days

Neighborhood Improvement Days are a great way to gather with your neighbors and make small changes that bring great curb appeal. Some activities might include power washing, laying new mulch, trimming low-hanging tree branches or bushes, fixing a plank on a fence, touch up painting, painting house numbers on a curb, replacing house numbers, raking up leaves, etc.



Some things to keep in mind are:

- Ensure the ability to do quality work that is up to code.
- Do you have the homeowner's permission to do these activities?
- This might take a lot of planning and coordination with your neighbors to see which items they want to be improved. This will ultimately affect the detail in your budget.

- Will you need to rent equipment?
- We will not fund purchases for motorized equipment but you can rent them.
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

Refurbishing Neighborhood ID Signs

Neighborhood ID signs help provide a sense of community, identity, and pride. They create clear visual boundaries in the neighborhood and offer a chance for communities to express their unique character. **Please note, this grant will only fund repairs to, or replacement of, existing signage.**



- **Neighborhood Consent** - In HOAs there is a board that is typically charged with making decisions that affect the whole community which can lead to fewer challenges related to neighborhood agreement. In voluntary neighborhood groups, or neighborhoods with no active group, neighborhood ID signs can cause controversy because neighbors may not agree with the design of the sign.
- **Property Ownership** – HOAs have an advantage because HOA boards are typically responsible for managing the common spaces of the HOA and therefore can install a sign on common property. Voluntary neighborhood groups, or neighborhoods without an active neighborhood board, most often do not have common property to put the sign so they are often installed in city of Aurora right of way, or on private property such as a fence. If you are looking to install signs on a fence, you must have the property owner’s permission. Often the property owner becomes the responsible party for the long-term maintenance of the sign.
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

Based on your individual plan there might be impacts to traffic, sidewalks, and right of ways. Check in with your Community Engagement Coordinator to see what

impacts your project might have and which city departments you will need to check in with for permits, plan reviews, traffic control plans, and revocable licenses.

Landscape Enhancements

Landscape enhancements allow neighbors to spruce up the landscaping around their community which gives a more visually appealing view of their neighborhood. It also can help with other neighbors' pride in the neighborhood and others' ideas of the neighborhood. Projects might include mulch, flowers, plant material, tree trimming, landscaping around a neighborhood ID sign, landscaping around a detention pond, rock, and boulders.



Some points to consider include:

- Property ownership plays a large role in landscaping improvements. Please remember that grant funds cannot be used for enhancement of private property. In HOAs any commonly owned property is eligible. Property ownership is important because it helps determine the long-term maintenance.

- Applicants do not have to serve on the HOA board but should include a letter of support from the HOA or minutes from the meeting in which a vote was held to support the application.
- Easements and rights-of-way exist across the city of Aurora, if your plan puts something in either an easement or a right of way you will need permission. The city of Aurora's Real Property Division can help you determine if there are easements, or right of ways around your project and guide you through the process of getting permission. If you are awarded funding the fee for getting a revocable license is waived, however it is still REQUIRED. If your project is not funded but you move forward in the future with other funds you are still required to have a revocable license.
- Any new landscaping must be irrigated by an automatic sprinkler as required by code. While neighbors taking turns to water new landscaping might seem like a viable path to ensure adequate watering, the routine often doesn't prove to be a lasting solution (City of Aurora Unified Development Ordinance, Sec. 146-4.7.3.C)
- Plant selection is important as you might be trying to match existing landscaping, lowering water use, or starting over. The Water Conservation Division of Aurora Water has a number of great resources as you think about your goals. Visit <https://www.auroragov.org/residents/water/landscaping> for resources that help you find classes for do it yourself design, plant selection, and examples of water wise gardens.
- Major changes to landscaping or community amenities may require an update to the HOA's site plan that is on file with the city.
- Projects at or near corners must not infringe on the sight triangle which allows drivers and pedestrians to move safely through the intersection.
- Additionally, items such as large boulders and plants with spikes or needles (cactus, yucca) may not be placed along sidewalks so that pedestrians and cyclists do not become injured.
- Based on your individual plan there might be impacts to traffic, sidewalks, and right of ways. Check in with your Community Engagement Coordinator to see what impacts your project might have and which city departments you will need to check in with for permits, plan reviews, traffic control plans, and revocable licenses.
- Depending on what the different departments advise for your application, you will also be responsible for securing the necessary barricades and traffic control plan and that cost can be included in your grant application.
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

Community Gardens

A community garden is a shared green space created and cared for by volunteers to grow vegetables, fruits and herbs. It is also a great way to build community, get to know your neighbors, share fruits of your labor, recipes, and tips for growing a

strong garden. Community gardens improve the quality of life for those involved by encouraging self-reliance and responsibility, building skills, reducing food insecurity, creating income opportunities, providing exercise, promoting relaxation and offering a chance to connect with nature.



Community gardens are a great amenity for neighborhoods, but there are some challenges that you should think about before applying for funds with a community garden.

- Depending on the site size and design complexity, the cost of building a community garden can range anywhere from \$500 to \$50,000, which does not include yearly maintenance costs. Community gardens have been awarded before and are usually the recipients of other grants in addition to the Improvement Grant.
- Property ownership can be a challenge as community gardens can be in a variety of places. Many community gardens are on school property, HOA property, or Parks and Open Space land.
- To identify the ideal spot for a community garden, select a site that has good visibility, is centrally located, is near the garden's users (which helps to ensure its sustainability and discourages vandalism and theft), gets at least six hours of direct sunlight, has contaminant-free soil, and accessible water.

- Community gardens require a lot of ongoing work, and it is important to establish who will be responsible for maintenance both immediately and in the future.
- Community gardens require a lot of water which can cost quite a bit. How will those costs be paid for? If you don't already have the water source at the location, getting a tap can be an expensive and complicated endeavor.
- How are you fostering connections with neighbors on this project?

Additional Informational Resources

Denver Urban Gardens - <https://dug.org/>

Community Garden Information, Handbook, & Tips From Water Conservation -

https://www.auroragov.org/residents/neighborhood_resources/community_gardens