

# Valparaiso Neighborhood Improvement Grant 2024 Program Guidelines



The [Neighborhood Improvement Grant](#) program is intended to give residents an opportunity to have direct input and influence into the improvement of Valparaiso's neighborhoods. The funds provide for small neighborhood-based projects with community-wide benefit. The goal is to bring neighborhoods together and to increase partnerships between neighborhoods and the city through positive improvement projects.

Improvement projects may include:

- Tree Plantings
- Landscaping
- Public Art
- Playground or Park Equipment
- Signage
- Special Features (benches, shelters, little library)
- *Other Creative Ideas!*

**In 2024, grants of up to \$15,000 are available to neighborhood groups.** Eligible projects must improve or enhance public spaces in neighborhoods and offer a benefit to the community. Projects must not conflict with existing city plans or policy and must be discussed with city staff prior to approval. If you wish to improve private, HOA-owned common spaces, a 51% match is required. The grant program no longer accepts sidewalk maintenance or other homeowners association maintenance-related projects. If your neighborhood has a specific sidewalk concern, please report it at [valpo.us](http://valpo.us) under "Voice a Concern" on the homepage. If two or more neighborhoods work together on an application and project planning efforts, they can apply for up to \$30,000. [View a catalog](#) of all grant projects awarded to date.

Neighborhood-based groups are encouraged to apply. Eligible neighborhood groups must [sign-up](#) to be included in the City's Neighborhood Directory prior to applying. To learn more about organizing your neighborhood, [view our Neighborhood Toolkit](#).

Applications will be reviewed by a committee of city staff. The following criteria highlight what the review committee will be prioritizing when evaluating applications. Additionally, neighborhoods who have not received a grant in the past may be given priority over those that have received multiple neighborhood grants. View our [Review Checklist](#) before submitting your application.

## Grant Criteria:

- **Neighborhood Involvement:** How did the applicant involve neighborhood residents in the planning and implementation of the project? What efforts did the neighborhood group take to engage neighbors and get input on the project? (neighborhood meetings regarding the project, seeking feedback through surveys, promoting the project in newsletters, flyers, etc.)
- **Feasibility and Longevity:** How does the project align with current city projects and standards? Is this a seasonal improvement or one that will last several years with little maintenance?
- **Neighborhood Investment:** Is the neighborhood group leveraging additional funds or volunteer labor and/or time towards the project?
- **Community Benefit:** Do residents beyond the neighborhood boundaries benefit from this project? Does the project improve health, safety or the sense of community for residents?

The application form asks 8 questions to gain a better understanding of your project in terms of the evaluating criteria. **It is required to schedule a planning meeting with the Community Engagement Department prior to applying.** The Community Engagement Department will help connect you with necessary city departments, provide information for your budget and provide guidance on your application materials.

For questions or comments about the Neighborhood Improvement Grant program and guidelines contact Maggie Clifton, Community Engagement Director, at [mclifton@valpo.us](mailto:mclifton@valpo.us) or 219-462-1161.

## Neighborhood Improvement Grant Timeline 2024

Notice to Public	No later than August 14, 2023.
Neighborhood Improvement Grant Information Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wednesday, September 6 at 5:30 pm</li> <li>• Webinar Recording Available by September 8</li> </ul>
Planning Meeting with Community Engagement Department <b>*Required!</b>	August - March scheduled individually
2024 Applications Due	March 1, 2024
Funding Recommendations Presented to the Redevelopment Commission	March 14, 2024
Notice of Grant Awards	No later than March 18, 2024
Grant Projects Completed	No later than January 1, 2025

## Neighborhood Improvement Grant Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Where should I begin if I want to organize and mobilize my neighborhood to submit a grant application this year?** Start out by reviewing our [Neighborhood Toolkit](#) that offers tips for neighborhood groups looking to form. The Community Engagement Department can also be a great resource to you! We can support you by printing materials to promote a neighborhood meeting, facilitating a conversation with your neighbors to determine the best improvement project and more!
2. **Can one neighborhood apply for multiple projects?** Neighborhoods that apply can only request up to \$15,000 total. Neighborhood groups are highly encouraged to reach consensus on a single project. If you apply for multiple projects, note that the review committee may choose to fund one project while denying funding to another, so prioritizing them in your application is very important.
3. **If two or more neighborhoods apply for a project together, does the cap remain \$15,000?** Grants could be awarded up to \$30,000 if multiple neighborhoods are working together on the application and its planning efforts.
4. **If the neighborhood contributes funds toward the project, will those dollars be considered part of the \$15,000 cap or would it be able to expand the project beyond \$15,000?** Donated dollars would allow the total project cost to go beyond \$15,000. Proof of your donations or pledges should be submitted with your application.
5. **If we received funding previously through this program, can we apply again?** Yes, all neighborhoods are eligible to apply again in 2024. However, priority will be given to neighborhoods that have not yet received a grant. Neighborhoods that received funding in the past are encouraged to propose a project that is different than the project previously funded. For example, if you did a park project in 2023, we would encourage you to apply for something other than a park improvement.

6. **Will the funds go towards completing full projects only or could partial funding be awarded?** The review committee will determine this based on the demand and size of projects that are submitted. If there is a need to do partial funding, the review committee will contact the applicant(s) before the final recommendation is submitted to the Redevelopment Commission for approval. We want as many high-quality applications to succeed as the budget allows.
  
7. **Can projects be done on HOA owned, private or vacant spaces within the city?** A goal of the program is to fund neighborhood-based projects that provide community-wide benefit. While we prefer to see projects completed in public, city-owned spaces, we are open to exploring projects on HOA-owned or private property on a case-by-case basis. Any project completed on HOA-owned or private property may require the neighborhood to pay 51% of the total project costs. The match may be waived if the project is adjacent to a public amenity or feature or is accessible to the public. Additionally, a detailed maintenance plan will need to be submitted with your application to ensure that the neighborhood can manage any upkeep successfully.
  
8. **Where can we find plans and/or codes to make sure we are staying compliant with the city?** Helpful resources may include [Unified Development Ordinance](#), [Building Codes](#), [City Ordinances](#), [Valpo Parks Plans](#) or simply give us a call to discuss at 462-1161!