



Commercial Improvement and Veterans Grant Program Details

Grant Funds For The Purpose Of:

1. Physical and facade improvements to existing commercial buildings designed to encourage and assist Norwalk business to grow and value-added renovations to older commercial buildings in Norwalk. Interior improvements are eligible if exterior improvements are also being made at the same time, or the interior improvements increase the overall value or structure of the building. Funds can also be used to convert residential buildings into commercial-only use.
2. Existing local businesses that are expanding their operations or facilities (including building a new facility).
*See eligibility requirements regarding abatement program use.
3. Demolition of dilapidated properties in commercially zoned areas of Norwalk if a new commercial structure is built on the lot, or the lot is developed into a shovel ready/pad ready site for a developer/business owner to construct a commercial facility on.
4. Veterans or a veteran spouse opening or physically expanding a business in Norwalk.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Improvements** Any commercial building that is 10 years of age or older within Norwalk city limits, OR, an existing Norwalk business owner who is building a new commercial facility within Norwalk city limits, or expanding their existing facility. Eligible commercial buildings must be used only for business operations and classified/taxed as commercial. Residences, multi-residential/apartment buildings, home-based businesses and nonprofits are not eligible with the exception of the provisions below.
- Demolition** Grant funds may be used to demolish any dilapidated building (single family, multi-family/apartment, or commercial) as long as the building is located in a commercial zoned area, or in an area designated in the City's Future Land Use Plan as commercial. A new commercial facility with minimum 1,000 square feet must be constructed on the demolished site and be fully inspected/approved by the City in order to receive grant fund reimbursement.
- Conversion** Grant funds may be used on residential and multi-family structures for the sole purpose of converting the structure to a commercial-only use facility. The building must be located in a commercially zoned area, or identified in the City's Future Land Use Plan as commercial. Prior to any physical improvements to the building, full plans must be reviewed and approved by the Community Development Department before eligibility will be considered for the grant.
- Veterans** Veterans and veteran spouses are eligible, but must show proof of veteran or veteran spouse status with a copy of the DD214. Eligible applicants may receive up to \$5,000 to use towards opening a new business, or physically expanding an existing business in Norwalk. The business must be opened or located in a commercial building, in a commercially zoned area of Norwalk. A maximum of one grant per business, per veteran/spouse is allowed.

- Applicants must show proof of matching funds equaling the requested grant amount (dollar for dollar match).
- Applicants will be subject to all regular City requirements when building a facility, making exterior or structural changes, or building additions on existing structures. The Building Department at City Hall will provide necessary information to the applicant and their contractor regarding requirements and applicable fees. Call 515-981-9530.



- Eligible expenses must be used for improvements of the physical structure. Examples:
 - Exterior façade improvements and beautification (Lighting, shutters, doors, awnings, etc.)
 - Value added additions such as equipment that would be attached to and sold with the structure (ex. Commercial over/hood, grease trap, new ceiling, windows, etc.)
 - Attached signage, monument signs with other improvements
 - Paint, brick, stone, and other qualifying façade materials (per City zoning code chapter 17.60)
 - Physical expansions and additions, as well as building of a new facility due to expansion of existing Norwalk business
 - Interior improvements that are considered permanent or value-adding such as hard flooring, new windows, removal of drop/false ceiling with new permanent ceiling constructed, brick, stone or other high quality wall improvements, etc.
- Expenses that are **not** eligible are as follows but not limited to:
 - Carpet, drop ceilings
 - Landscaping, retaining walls, fencing
 - Any improvements related to parking lots, sidewalks, or driveways
 - Replacement or basic maintenance of HVAC systems, i.e. boilers, furnace, geothermal, water heater, electrical or plumbing
 - Roof, and structural improvements (may be eligible if included with larger projects) **Note: If these improvements are approved with your project, the associated grant amounts for these items will be reimbursed last.**
 - *Engineering, architectural or other contractor planning or design costs*

Application Process:

1. Complete application and submit all required documents to the Economic Development Department. *Application and instructions can be found @ www.norwalk.iowa.gov/EconDev or pick up at 1104 Sunset Dr. Economic Development Office M-F, 8-4:30.*
2. The Economic Development Department reviews the application to ensure all required information and documentation is completed. If the project meets eligibility requirements, it will be recommended for approval to Council, typically within one month of application date.
3. If grant funds are awarded, funds will be reimbursed to the applicant once copies of receipts or paid invoices are submitted to the Economic Development Department.

Funding:

1. Funding has an annual cap of \$150,000.
2. Maximum of \$50,000 per applicant/project. \$55,000 for qualified veteran-owned business projects. Veterans may apply for the \$5,000 business grant only, or both grants (Veteran and Commercial improvement).
3. The Economic Development Department reserves the right to award all, part or none of the applied-for funds based on eligibility and availability of funds.
4. Awarded applicants must begin their project within 60 days of approval or funds can no longer be guaranteed. Extensions may be considered on a case by case basis. **Example:** applicant's project is



delayed due to contractor's schedule changes, product on backorder, weather, etc.

5. Grants will be considered first come, first serve basis for the year's total pool. Applicants who are not granted any funds in the year they apply may roll their application over to the following year, at which time it will be reviewed for consideration in the order that it was originally received.
6. *Applicant is **not** eligible for the commercial tax abatement program **and** the commercial grant program for the same project improvements. To help determine which program would be more beneficial for the applicant's project, the Economic Development Department will provide applicants with more information on the tax abatement program if projects meet abatement eligibility.

Reimbursement Process:

1. Grant funds from the City will be paid to the applicant in reimbursement form upon proof of payment to contractor in one of the following two forms:
 - a) A document issued by the contractor stating that the applicant has paid for the improvement in full.
 - b) A cancelled check and a signed receipt for the improvement.
2. The City will reimburse **half** of all paid invoices (**of the eligible expenses**) that are submitted, up to the total approved grant amount. Each payment goes through the Council process and may take 2-4 weeks.

Program Emphasis Areas (*These aspects will also be taken into consideration in the event that two applications are received at the same time at the end of the funding pool. The applicant not chosen at that time may roll application over into the next year's funding cycle.*):

- Largest impact to visual appearance and/or value added to commercial structure
- Historical, dated, or dilapidated buildings
- Number of full time employees
- Growth plan and history of business growth/success
- Length of time business has been in community
- Use of local contractors and/or lenders
- Businesses that provide goods and services to Norwalk residents as well as a market outside of Norwalk
- Commercial structures in higher traffic areas with high visibility
- Existing business that are expanding or building new facility

**For questions contact Hollie Zajicek @ hzejicek@norwalk.iowa.gov, 515-314-5862, office: 1104 Sunset Dr.
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