
**City of North Richland Hills
Business Improvement and Growth (BIG)
Program Guidelines and Application**

I. INTRODUCTION

The City of North Richland Hills has established the Business Improvement and Growth (BIG) Program, which will provide technical and financial assistance to property owners or business tenants seeking to renovate or restore their exterior signage, lighting or commercial building façades. The BIG program is designed to impact properties in need of revitalization, resulting in the improved exterior, visibility and presentation of a business. The BIG program is not designed to subsidize corrections to building code violations that prolong the life of a commercial property. Any BIG project should strive toward increases in sales and/or revenue for the occupant or property owner.

BIG will provide a twenty-five percent (25%) matching grant of up to \$20,000 for the funding of well-designed improvements that will coordinate all the important features of the storefront into a more attractive image while creating, if necessary, an accessible entrance for the public. This may include the restoration of architectural details, better windows and doors, and well proportioned signage and lighting. An additional fifty percent (50%) matching grant up to \$5,000 may be available for construction of monument-type signage. City staff will be available to provide assistance to applicants through the conceptual stage at no cost to the applicants. Applicants, however, will be responsible to hire licensed architects and contractors to refine this conceptual design depending on the scope of work.

Improvements made prior to written approval of a proposed design by the city's Economic Development Committee will not be funded.

II. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following criteria must be met for participation in BIG:

1. Applicants must be commercial property owners or commercial tenants located in North Richland Hills south of Mid Cities Boulevard whose storefronts face onto Rufe Snow Drive, Davis Boulevard or Boulevard 26 and the streets of Glenview Drive and Bedford Euless Road. (see attached map);
2. Preference will be given to independent businesses not required by contractual arrangement to maintain standardized décor, architecture, signs or similar features;
3. Tenants must have written approval from property owners to participate in program;

4. Nonconforming signage on property, if applicable, must be permanently removed as part of the improvement (the city will remove such signage at city's cost);
5. Applicants must meet a minimum budget requirement of \$20,000 for all façade improvements, not including the cost of sign improvements;
6. Property owners must be up to date on all municipal taxes prior to participation in the program;
7. Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements.
8. Understanding that the overall objective of the BIG program is to improve the exterior, visibility and presentation of a property; the City has the discretion to decline an application while suggesting enhancements that would enable future acceptance.

III. DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

Improvements to be funded by the program must be compatible with the character and architecture of the individual building as well as meet city standards with regard to latest construction and design trends. Buildings with significant architectural qualities are strongly encouraged to restore and maintain these features. Improvements for buildings not having such architectural features should still be carefully considered and be seen as an opportunity to substantially enhance the appearance of the buildings and their streetscapes and conform to the City's targeted image for the area.

A. Eligible Façade/Signage Improvements

Storefronts should be oriented to the pedestrian and provide visual interest both day and night. Effort should be made to facilitate access into the store and to create a store identity unique to North Richland Hills and/or the respective neighborhood. The following improvements are encouraged:

1. Restoration of details in historically contributing or significant buildings, and removal of elements which cover architectural details;
2. Window display areas which are appropriately scaled and which facilitate night viewing;
3. Window replacement and window framing visible from the street which are appropriately scaled to the building.
4. Monument signage;
5. Additional signage that is attractively integrated into the architecture of the building, including the window area, awnings or canopies, and entryways;

6. Lighting that is visually appealing and appropriately illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of a building façade;
7. Awnings or canopies that can be both functional and visually appealing;
8. Curbing, irrigation, approved trees, landscaping beds (not including planting material) or other landscaping features attached to the building where appropriate, not to exceed twenty percent (20%) of the project budget;
9. Cleaning, repainting or residing of building;
10. Resurfacing and/or restriping of parking lots visible from street, not to exceed fifty percent (50%) of the project budget;
11. New storefront construction, appropriately scaled within an existing building; and
12. Removal of architectural barriers to public accessibility.

Other improvements can be made with written approval if they meet the objectives of the BIG Program.

B. Prior Improvements

Alterations and improvements made prior to receiving a “Notice to Proceed with Improvements” are not eligible for reimbursement.

C. Alterations

The applicant must agree not to change or alter the improved façade without prior written approval from the Economic Development Committee for three (3) years from the date of the rebate check issued under the BIG Program.

IV. PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

A. Financial Assistance

Funding offered is a matching grant in which the BIG Program reimburses the applicant twenty-five percent (25%) of total project costs, up to a \$20,000 maximum match for façade improvements and an additional fifty percent (50%) match, up to \$5,000 for monument sign improvements. Architectural design fees may not be included in the total cost of eligible improvements.

The applicant’s match may be in the form of other financial aid (grant or loan) received from other agencies and/or banks, but may not be “in-kind.” The BIG

Program will only reimburse applicants after the applicant has paid his/her architect, contractor and vendor(s) in full and after the project is determined to have been completed in accordance with the contract between the City and applicant.

B. Technical Assistance

City staff can provide guidance on façade improvements specific to individual storefronts. The applicant will have a choice of hiring his/her own licensed architect to work on the project from start to completion or requesting that city staff assist first with the conceptual design of the façade. If the latter option is chosen, the applicant will still be expected to hire his/her own licensed architect, if necessary, to carry forth this conceptual design to completion of construction. The BIG Program will also monitor the progress of the project to ensure compliance with the “Scope of Services” outlined in the contract between the City and applicant.

Early meetings with city staff are necessary in order to help avoid misunderstanding as to the eligibility of proposals.

C. Alternative Financial Assistance

Depending on the overall size and scope of a project, city staff could entertain additional and/or alternative incentives that would require City Council approval.

D. Application and Information

If you wish to participate in the BIG Program, please contact the City of North Richland Hills Economic Development Department, (817) 427-6093 office or e-mail ecopeland@nrhtx.com.

V. PROCEDURES

All prospective applicants must follow the procedures in the order outlined below.

1. Applicant meets with Economic Development Director for initial project discussions and files an application.
2. Applicant meets with city staff to discuss building program and design alternatives.
3. If necessary, Applicant’s architect prepares final design drawings and submits them to city staff for review.
4. Upon approval of final designs by city’s Development Review Committee and BIG Review Committee, the Applicant has sixty (60) days to solicit three written bids from the contractors necessary to complete the improvement scope of work. **Bids from each contractor**

must be itemized so that a cost is associated with each task or material to be installed.

(Copy city staff on all solicitations for bids).

5. Upon approval of submitted bids by city staff, the Applicant will enter into a contract for reimbursement with the City of North Richland Hills. The maximum funding amount indicated on the contract will be based upon the lowest acceptable bid for proposed improvement project.
6. A pre-construction meeting takes place between the Applicant, city staff, selected contractors, and project architect.
7. City staff sends applicant a "Notice to Proceed with Improvements." **Any work completed prior to receiving the "Notice to Proceed with Improvements" will not be reimbursed.**
8. Applicant has sixty (60) days from the execution date of the contract to begin implementation of approved improvements. Applicant must provide city staff with copies of all building permits and certifications received from improvement project.
9. Contractor constructs project improvements as specified in the final design. Any changes previously agreed upon and contracted must have prior approval of city staff. It is up to the applicant to notify the staff of these changes in writing.
10. Applicant notifies the city staff once project is completed.
11. Architect and/or city staff certifies that the improvements comply with the final drawings and specifications.
12. The architect and/or contractors(s) must submit letters to the Program staff acknowledging full payment by the applicant. The applicant must submit to the Economic Development Committee copies of all paid invoices.
13. Program staff submits invoices for the City of North Richland Hills to issue rebate check.

The BIG Program reserves the right to make adjustments regarding conditions and parameters outlined in these guidelines.

VI. TERMINATION

The City of North Richland Hills has the right to terminate any agreement under the BIG Program if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines or if the project has been started prior to an executed agreement with the City of North Richland Hills.

**City of North Richland Hills
Business Improvement and Growth Program
Application**

DATE: _____

I. APPLICANT INFORMATION

1. Applicant's Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
Telephone Number (s): _____
Fax Number: _____
E-Mail: _____ Website: _____
2. Business Organization of Applicant:
 Corporation (d/b/a) or Partnership or Sole Proprietorship
Business Name: _____
3. Relationship of Applicant to the storefront to be renovated:
 Owner: Attach copy of latest tax bill and proof of payment.
 Tenant: a) Attach copy of NRH Certificate of Occupancy, and
b) Attach written permission from building owner to participate in BIG Program, including expiration date of present lease.

II. PROPOSED PROJECT INFORMATION

1. Description of Building to be rehabilitated:
Street Address: _____
Building Dimensions:
Frontage _____ feet Depth _____ feet Height _____ feet # of Floors ____
Does building contain residential units? Yes No (if yes, how many? _____)
2. Describe the scope of work you want for this proposed façade/signage improvement project. (Check all that apply and/or describe improvement ideas.)
 Exterior Signage Exterior Lighting Exterior Painting
 Restoration of Arch Details Storefront Windows Storefront Door
 Metal/Wood Storefront Exterior Paneling/Sliding Awning/Canopy System
 Sign Removal Add Architectural Details Other: _____

3. *If known*, please indicate the estimated project cost or the total amount budgeted for improvements. Total project cost for façade improvements must be at least \$20,000.

\$ _____ **Total Project Cost or Total Budget**

4. *If known*, please provide information on the architect responsible for your drawings, plans, and permits:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No. _____ Fax _____

E-mail: _____ Website: _____

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned hereby represents and certifies to the best of his/her knowledge and belief that the information contained on this statement and any exhibits or attachments hereto are true and complete and accurately describe the proposed project, and the undersigned agrees to promptly inform the City of North Richland Hills Economic Development Department of any changes in the proposed project which may occur.

Signature of Building Owner

Date

Print Name

Signature of Commercial Tenant (if Applicant)

Date

Print Name

Social Security #: _____

Tax ID#: _____

RETURN COMPLETED APPLICATION

Deliver, Mail, E-Mail or Fax Completed Application to:

Economic Development
City of North Richland Hills
4301 City Point Drive
North Richland Hills, Texas 76180
Telephone: (817) 427-6093
E-mail: ecopeland@nrhtx.com

BIG Program Eligible Area Map

