



WEST LA MESA COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

Update: At the July 13, 2021 Council meeting, the La Mesa City Council extended the West La Mesa Community Enhancement Grant Program through Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

1. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this policy to establish guidelines and criteria for allocating appropriations for the West La Mesa Community Enhancement Grant Program.

2. BACKGROUND

At the September 24, 2019 City Council meeting, the La Mesa City Council adopted the West La Mesa Community Enhancement Grant Program as a one-year pilot micro-grant program targeting commercial and legal non-conforming residential properties in the West La Mesa area. The program is being established in response to community interest in enhancement efforts that produce a positive, visible impact to properties along the University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard commercial corridors. The purpose of the micro-grant program is to provide funding and incentive to businesses, property owners, and non-profit organizations to conduct small-scale, community enhancement projects in the west La Mesa area. Projects that include property cleanup, pressure washing, landscape planting, painting, improved directional or commercial signage, and murals or public art are eligible for program funding. Funding for year one of the program will come from the General Fund.

The following Program Guidelines establish the terms and conditions, criteria, method, and process for determining an award of funding for the West La Mesa Community Enhancement Grant Program.

3. PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Terms & Conditions

The West La Mesa Community Enhancement Grant Program has been established to provide funding for businesses, property owners, and non-profit organizations to complete community enhancement projects to properties along the University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard commercial corridors. The micro-grant program is meant to be a catalyst for enhancing and improving the exterior appearance of properties. The main goal of the program is to incentivize community enhancement projects in the west La Mesa area that results in quality improvements to commercial and legal non-conforming residential properties. Projects must demonstrate a noticeable improvement to the aesthetic environment of a property to qualify for program

funding. A number of different types of activities can result in a positive, visible improvement to a property. Examples of activities that qualify as eligible improvements are as follows:

- Property cleanup resulting in a noticeable, visible improvement
- Pressure washing of buildings
- Installation of landscaping, trees, or green space
- Exterior painting
- Improved or updated signage, energy efficient exterior lighting, or awnings
- Installation of murals or public art
- Installation of bike racks

Other enhancements or improvements can be considered on a case-by-case basis providing a noticeable improvement is achieved that is easily visible from public view. The grant program is not intended to assist in funding the clearing or preparing of properties for new “ground up construction” but for improvement of existing buildings and the property around them in the University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard commercial corridors. Property or business ownership by the grant applicant must be maintained for a period of at least one year after the grant is received. Applicants shall not apply if the property will be sold or the business will be closed or moved in less than one year.

Properties having a building and/or buildings with multiple businesses or suites qualify for one grant for each business located on the property. Vacant properties and parcels of land either commercially zoned or of legal non-conforming status qualify for grant funding.

Examples of ineligible activities or expenses that do not qualify as community enhancement improvements on a property are as follows:

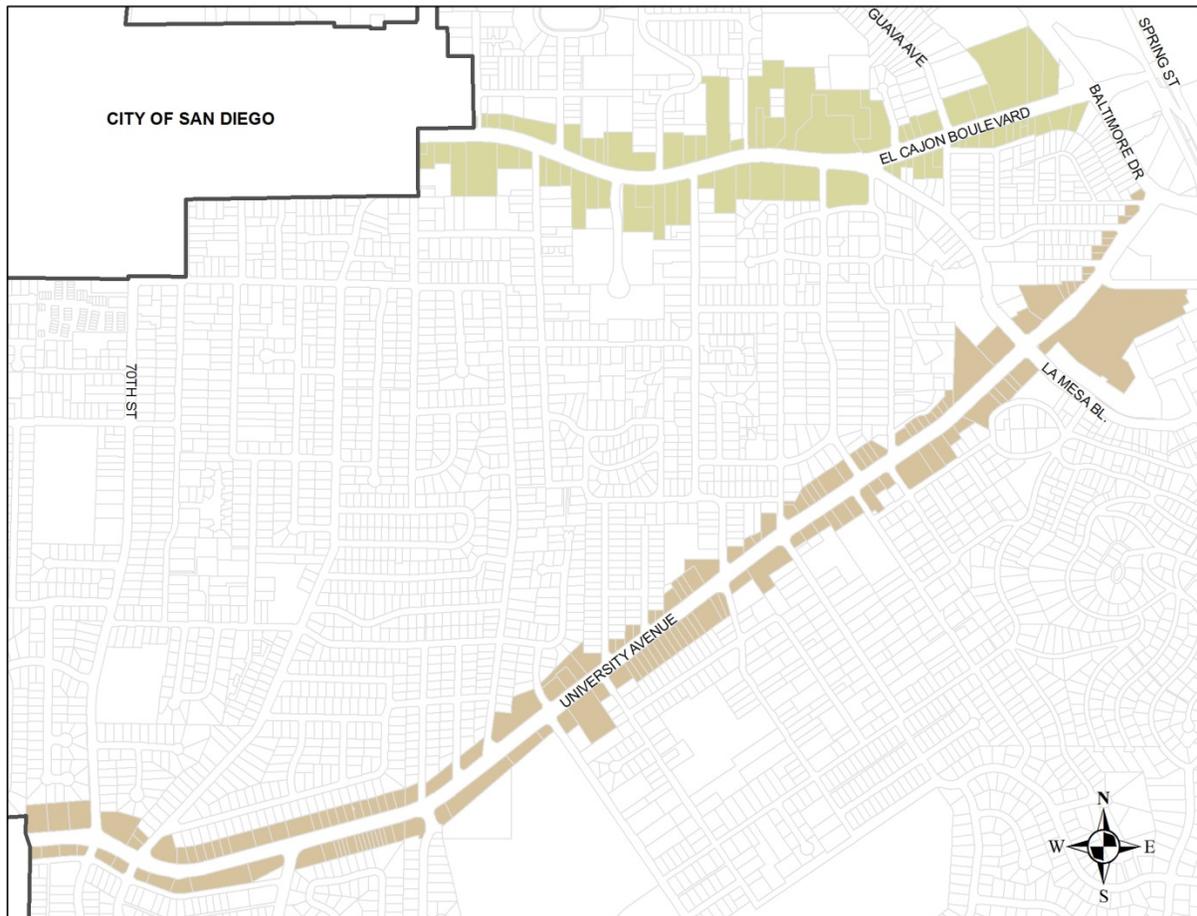
- Performing general or deferred maintenance on buildings or properties
- Any necessary City permits or processing fees
- Payment of code enforcement violations
- Parking area paving repair or striping
- Upgrades to mechanical, plumbing, or electrical equipment, or roof repairs
- Interior building renovation
- Installation of chain link fencing with or without slats

Projects must make an exterior improvement visible from public view to qualify for grant funding. Grants will be given only for improvements completed according to the scope of work outlined in the grant application. A final inspection will be conducted to confirm the work has been completed and in accordance with all applicable City development codes and standards. Certain projects may require review by the Community Development Department, Building Division and Engineering Department and issuance of City permits may be required. No commitment of funds will be made for projects requiring Community Development or Engineering review until the appropriate City department(s) has evaluated the grant application for code compliance.

The City Manager’s Office will administer the La Mesa Property Revitalization Grant Program.

Pilot Program Area

The map below shows the University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard commercial corridors that serve as the pilot program area for the West La Mesa Community Enhancement Grant Program.



The program area consists of all commercially zoned and legal non-conforming use properties in the City of La Mesa that front University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard from Baltimore Drive west to the City's jurisdictional boundary. To maximize available grant funding for community enhancement, eligible properties must front either University Avenue or El Cajon Boulevard to qualify for funding. Business use properties, vacant properties, and legal non-conforming structures situated on multiple parcels qualify for funding providing any portion of the site fronts either commercial corridor. On a case by case basis and subject to funding availability, properties without street frontage on either commercial corridor may receive funding if it can be demonstrated that enhancements result in a noticeable and visible improvement to the property.

Eligibility Requirements

Individual businesses, non-profit organizations, and property owners in the City of La Mesa located in the pilot program area qualify to apply for funding. Business owners applying for funding that do not own the building or land on which the business is located must provide proof that the owner or landlord approves of the proposed enhancement or improvement activities. A

letter from the owner or landlord submitted with the grant application stating that approval has been given for said improvements is sufficient. All ownership information and approvals will be verified for applications submitted for funding. Businesses applying for funding must possess a valid business license to operate in the City of La Mesa.

If the grant program is continued in future years beyond year one, properties that have received grant funding within the past two (2) years from the date of completion of the improvements are not eligible to apply until such time has lapsed. Grant funding will not be given for enhancements or improvements that modify previous improvements that occurred within the past three (3) years for which a grant was received. Priority will be given to properties that have not previously processed and completed grant funded projects.

Funding Guidelines

The maximum grant award is two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per applicant. The West La Mesa Community Enhancement Grant Program is a 100% reimbursable grant program. Approved funding is awarded to the applicant with a Letter of Commitment detailing the terms and conditions for acceptance of the funds and the timeframe the funds are committed for. Funding is then provided to the applicant once the community enhancement project is completed and any applicable City codes and standards are met. Applicants are responsible for providing all receipts of expenditures to the City, including proof of payment for expenses. Reimbursement will only be made for community enhancement activities outlined in the grant application that are accompanied with receipts. Labor performed by an applicant is not an eligible expense under the terms and conditions of the program. All submittals through the grant program are subject to funding availability.

Applicants will be required to submit “before” photos of the property with the initial grant application and “after” photos once the community enhancement project is completed. The purpose of before and after photos is to demonstrate a noticeable and visible improvement to the property. Projects that do not follow the approved scope of work outlined in the grant application are subject to denial of funds.

4. ANNUAL APPLICATION PROCESS & TIMELINE

At the beginning of each fiscal year, available grant funding will be announced on the City’s website at <https://www.cityoflamesa.us/1645/La-Mesa-Property-Revitalization-Grants>. Individual businesses, non-profit organizations, landlords, and property owners can apply by filling out an online application form made available on the City’s website. Applications will be accepted throughout each funding cycle (fiscal year) on a first come, first serve basis subject to the availability of funds.

When an application is received, staff will review the application and determine if an application meeting is required. If it is determined that an application meeting is required, a meeting is scheduled with the applicant and staff from the Community Development Department and City Manager’s Office within fifteen (15) business days of the submittal date. The purpose of the meeting with the applicant is to review the application to clarify scope of work, verify that the scope of work meets program requirements, determine if City departmental review or City permits are required, and to answer any questions applicants may have. Following the applicant meeting, staff will perform a final review of the application and determine whether it is approved for grant funding. Applications that are approved for funding will receive a Letter of Commitment from the City as outlined in the Funding Guidelines. The timeline for the application

process from the time of the application submittal to final review and determination of an award of funding shall not exceed thirty (30) business days. If an application meeting is not required, a determination of an award of funding may be made earlier. Community enhancement projects that require Engineering and Community Development Department review for issuance of necessary permits may not start construction until such review and permit issuance has been made.

Once an applicant has received the Letter of Commitment and all necessary City review and issuance of permits (if required) is finalized, work may begin on the property. If it is determined in the application meeting that any applicable City permits are necessary to perform the community enhancement activity, staff will work with the applicant to obtain the necessary permit(s). After the project is completed, the applicant submits "after" photos of the property. Staff may visit the property to confirm completion of the work. If the work is satisfactory and completed according to the approved scope of work, proof of expenses are submitted by the applicant. After verification of proof of expenses, the applicant receives a check for the grant in the appropriate amount within four (4) weeks from the date the City received the proof of expenses.

5. PROGRAM CONTACT

For information about the West La Mesa Community Enhancement Grant Program, contact Lyn Dedmon, Senior Management Analyst, at (619) 667-1339 or ldedmon@cityoflamesa.us.