

EXTERIOR HOME IMPROVEMENT MICROGRANT PROGRAM

Purpose

Cost is a significant barrier that prevents many from completing home improvement projects. This program provides financial assistance for exterior home improvement projects in the City. Funding for this program is provided by the City, and all activities therein are subject to City Council approval. Pursuant to state statute, all documentation associated with this program will be subject to the Kansas Open Records Act (KORA).

Program Eligibility

To qualify for an Exterior Home Improvement Microgrant, homeowners must meet the following conditions/criteria:

- Home must be in the Columbus City Limits.
- All real estate taxes in Cherokee County must be current.
- All homeowners must have property insurance.
- All improvements must meet City code. This grant may be used to correct code violations.
- The appraised value of the property should not exceed \$125,000.
- If property is rented, the landowner must submit authorization to complete proposed improvements in writing.

Individuals are only eligible to apply for funding for improvements to one property per grant period. Additional consideration will be given to homes that are owner-occupied, have low appraised values, and for projects that exceed \$500. Improvement projects must be for a domicile structure on the property. Improvements to garages, sheds, or other outbuildings do not qualify for this program.

Applicants who received a grant the previous year and successfully completed a project must wait one year before applying for the program again. Applicants who were approved for an award but did not complete a project in the allotted time span are ineligible to apply for two years.

Eligible Projects

- Additions
- Concrete work (sidewalk, porch, stoop, driveway, staircases)
- Exterior window or door/storm door replacement

- Exterior lighting
- Painting/siding
- Façade restoration
- Foundation repair
- Guttering
- Masonry
- Roofing
- Landscaping
- Shutters

Ineligible Projects

- Purchase/rental of tools or equipment
- Interior home improvements
- Tree trimming
- Construction or replacement of fences or gates

Policy

The City of Columbus will reimburse a homeowner for architectural, construction, and/or material costs as part of this program. Homeowners must present itemized receipts for qualifying expenses. Work must be completed prior to receiving funds. The program provides for a one-time reimbursement grant of 50% of project costs. The city's reimbursable amount shall not exceed \$500. There is no limit to total project costs. For example, if total project costs are \$500, the reimbursable amount will be \$250. If the project costs are \$2,000, the reimbursable amount will be \$500.

Applications will be reviewed by city staff and are subject to a visual inspection by the City's Code Enforcement Officer. Code Enforcement will determine whether there are code violations on the property. This program may be used to address code violations; however, funds cannot be used for other projects in the event a code violation is observed. If the homeowner uses grant funds to correct a code violation, an additional inspection will be conducted after work is completed.

Residents will have 90 days beyond the approval date to complete projects. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis by contact City Hall. Applications will be accepted starting on April 1, 2022. Applications will be accepted until April 29, 2022. Applications will undergo a panel review, and residents accepted into the program will be notified on or before May 5, 2022.

No grant awarded shall be transferred by an applicant to a third party without prior approval of the City of Columbus. Grant recipients agree to place a sign marketing the program at the site while improvements are underway and at a visible location within their yard for up to 90 days beyond project completion. The sign will be provided by the City. The city may use before/after photos of the project in various forms of media such as the City website, newsletter, or future program brochures or documents.

The City does not discriminate based on certain legally protected characteristics, including race, religion, color, sex, ability level, family status, national origin, ancestry, or creed.

Process

1. Applicants complete the Home Exterior Improvements Microgrant Program application. Copies are available on our website or at City Hall.
2. Applications will be accepted between April 1 – April 29, 2022.
3. Applications will undergo a panel review.
4. Applicants will be notified of acceptance or rejection by May 5, 2022.
5. Approved scope of work listed on the applications must be completed within 90 days (by Wednesday, August 3, 2022). Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis. A yard sign is placed on the property while work is underway.
 - a. Any changes from the original application must be approved by the City.
 - b. Any unapproved deviations from the original work specified in the application will disqualify the applicant.
6. Applicant submits “after” photos and receipts for qualifying expenses within 30 days of project completion.
7. Upon submission of “after” photos and proper receipts, the City issues a lump-sum check to the applicant.
8. City signage will be removed from the premises within 90 days of completion.