

# **CITY OF KEARNEY, NEBRASKA**

## **Downtown Rehabilitation Grant Program**

### **Guidelines and Application**

**2026**



City of Kearney, Nebraska  
18 East 22<sup>nd</sup> Street P.O. Box 1180  
Kearney, NE 68848-1180  
[www.cityofkearney.org](http://www.cityofkearney.org)

# Background

The City of Kearney (City) utilizes funding through the Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) and other local sources to administer the program. The following are guidelines for local business owners/tenants and property owners to access the funding for building rehabilitation, façade improvements, energy efficiency improvements, architectural barrier removal, and other improvements.

## Program Overview

### Statement of Purpose:

To prevent or eliminate slum or blight as well as to facilitate development in the Downtown Kearney District.

### Funding Mechanism:

A grant program administered by the City of Kearney from contributions from the Community Redevelopment Authority and other local sources.

### Basic Details:

- Available to property owners/tenants within the Downtown District (see map on page 6)
- A 50% property owner/tenant contribution is required (matching funds)
- Must meet approval of Grant Committee, which is comprised of City Staff members and Downtown Improvement Board representation
- **Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. on March 31, 2026**
- **Applications (in PDF format) should be emailed to [mdougherty@kearneygov.org](mailto:mdougherty@kearneygov.org).** A return email is provided to acknowledge the receipt of your application.

### Questions or Technical Assistance:

Please contact Melissa Dougherty-O'Hara, City Planner at [mdougherty@kearneygov.org](mailto:mdougherty@kearneygov.org) or 308-233-3254.

# General Guidelines

## Eligible Projects:

A property or business owner may apply for grant funding for one or more of the following improvements:

- Façade Renovation (includes windows, doors, brick tuck-pointing, restoration of architectural details, sidewalk repair, signage, etc.)
- Commercial Rehab (includes improvements to structure, roof, plumbing, electrical, and fire prevention systems)
- Energy Efficiency Improvements (includes HVAC, insulation, windows, etc.)
- Architectural Barrier Removal (ADA improvements)

## Ineligible Projects:

- Non-permanent fixtures (i.e. landscaping, potted plants, flower boxes, benches, etc.)
- Fencing (unless associated with sidewalk seating area)
- Single-Family homes
- Improvements made prior to grant approval

## Applications:

Applications will be accepted from property owners or business owners/tenants in the Downtown District (see map on page 6). Allocation is done until all monies are committed for this funding year.

The City of Kearney and the Grant Committee reserve the right to deny any application for any reason other than on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, handicap, or familial status.

No grant may be awarded if it is discovered that the property taxes are not up-to-date. **No work for which funding is sought should begin until authorized by the City of Kearney.** Projects must comply with all relevant regulations and permitting requirements.

A complete Grant Application consists of the following:

- Completed program Application Forms (attached to these guidelines),
- Photos of the building intended to rehab,
- Drawings of the work to be completed,
- Firm estimates from the contractor(s) for the costs of construction and labor, &
- A narrative answering questions from the application form.

# Grant Details

## Grant Funds:

The maximum potential grant award is capped at \$20,000. Only 50% of the total project cost (up to the awarded amount) may be granted to the property or business owner/tenant (applicant). The applicant is responsible for paying the remaining project costs. All or part of that other half may come from other sources of funding (see "Matching Funds" section below).

## Matching Funds:

The applicant (property or business owner/tenant) will be required to provide a 50% match of the total project cost. This match may be achieved through the applicant's cash contribution or through labor/supplies provided by the applicant, at an approved cost set by the Grant Committee. If the applicant is providing their own labor as a match for a portion of the project, the amount approved for the applicant's labor shall equal the cost as if the labor were performed by a qualified contractor. An estimate of that labor from a qualified contractor must accompany the application. Applicants who will be doing their own labor must be pre-approved by the Grant Committee, labor costs must be a lump-sum estimate (not hourly), and they will not be eligible for additional funding if the project requires more time than estimated.

## Grant Reimbursement

**All grant funds will be in the form of a reimbursement check following the successful completion and reporting for each project.** Before reimbursement, the applicant must provide documentation that all bills have been paid (e.g., cancelled checks). Invoices and source documentation will be required, including a current W-9 tax form.

## Application Evaluation:

Upon application acceptance, they are reviewed by the Grant Committee. The projects will be scored on the criteria below and evaluated by the Grant Committee for overall funding and needs within the Downtown District. Please note that the Grant Committee focuses on funding new projects; therefore, if you have received funding in the past, it will be reflected in the scoring criteria.

Applications will be scored on the following criteria:

Building Preservation & Historic Revitalization:	25 points
Project Readiness:	25 points
Visual Impact:	20 points
Scope of Work & Impact on the Downtown District:	15 points
Applicant Investment & Previous Grants Awarded:	15 points
<hr/>	
Total Points:	100 points

**Construction Time Frame:**

When the applicant receives notice from the City of Kearney that their application is complete and approved ("Notice to Proceed"), the project must be completed within twelve (12) months. From time-to-time, a City of Kearney building inspector or staff member may visit construction sites and review work as it progresses. A final inspection or photo verification will be required upon completion of the project.

**Additional Notes About Eligible Projects:***Architectural Barrier Removal:*

A business may apply for grant funding to remove or correct impediments to disabled persons, including: handicapped ramps/removal of step-down features, adapting doorways to improve accessibility, improving restrooms for handicap/wheelchair access, braille signage, handrails, accessible door handles, and/or buzzing flashing devices (for persons with visual/hearing impairment).

*Energy Efficiency Improvements:*

Any improvements must demonstrate lower energy consumption within the business. Generally, this entails replacing old technologies with newer ones. Examples of improvements include: insulation, high-efficiency heating and/or air conditioning, high-efficiency lighting, and energy-efficient windows. Note: cash incentives are available from the Nebraska Public Power District, which can be used to offset the business match obligation. Contact the Assistant City Manager for more information. In addition, the federal government offers tax credits for many energy efficiency upgrades. Visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) for more information.

**Estimates:**

If a project is completed at a lower cost than the estimate, reimbursement will be based on actual costs (the lower amount). Proof of a contractor's estimate should be submitted with the grant application.

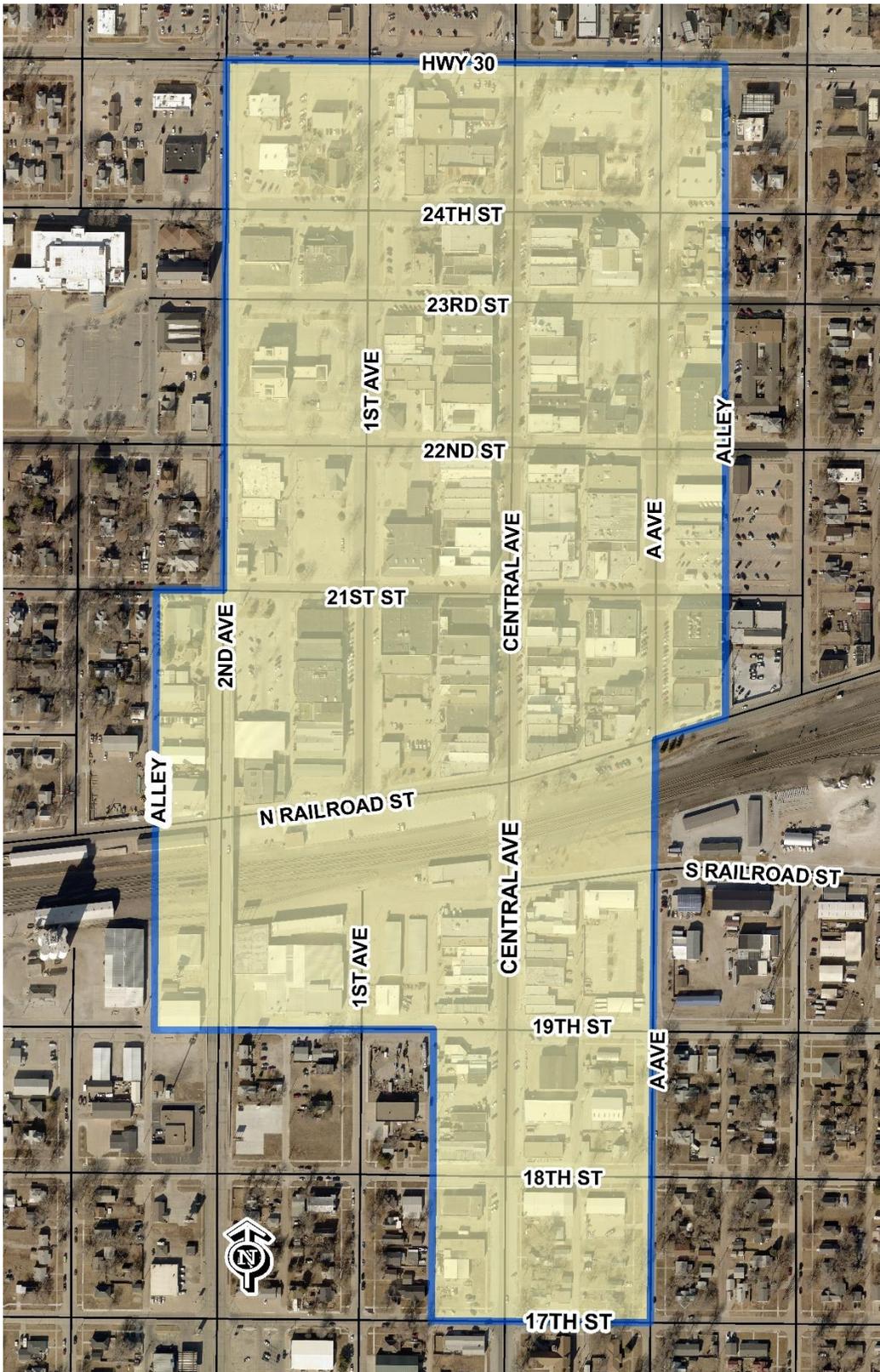
**Changes:**

While a project is in progress, the applicant may submit written modification requests to the City of Kearney. All changes are subject to review and require approval by the Grant Committee. Modification requests are not guaranteed.

## **Application and Project Approval Flow Chart**

1. For any questions or if you would like to discuss your project and eligibility, please contact the City of Kearney to discuss the project and items of qualifications.
2. Application, along with supporting documentation, is filled out and submitted to the City of Kearney by the grant deadline.
3. All applications are reviewed and scored (grant application cycles are typically competitive). Grants are awarded based on funding availability.
4. Applicants are notified of funding decisions. If awarded, contracts are sent to applicants for review and signature.
5. Submit signed contracts to the City of Kearney. Once submitted, you may begin your project.
6. At project/phase completion, applicant will pay contractor for work. Proof of payment, invoices, and final on-site inspection (pictures may be requested instead) should be submitted to the City of Kearney.
7. City of Kearney processes project close-out documents and disburses grant proceeds to the applicant.

# Downtown Rehabilitation Grant Program 2026: Kearney, NE



## **City of Kearney Downtown Commercial Rehabilitation Grant Program Application Form**

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Legal Description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Type of Commercial Rehabilitation Project Planned:

Roof Repair     Energy Efficiency Updates     Plumbing     Sidewalk Repair  
 Interior Improvements     Lighting or Electrical     ADA Improvements     Signage  
 Exterior Paint/Siding/Brick Tuck-Pointing     Windows and/or Doors     Façade Improvements

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Total cost of project: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount requested (up to 50% of project cost - not to exceed \$20,000): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please complete all information on this page, submit a written narrative answering the questions on the following page, and provide the information requested on the following page.**

Please Attach:

1. A detailed description of the project, including materials, size, and colors, with a before picture and drawing that includes the proposed changes.
2. Narratives that explain:
  - a. How you believe this project will improve the aesthetics and/or efficiency of the property?
  - b. How will this project improve your business?
  - c. The effect your project will have on neighboring businesses and the Downtown District.
  - d. Has the property been awarded funds in the past? If so, when and for what type of project?
  - e. The estimated project costs and timeframe for the project.
  - f. Copies of contractor's estimates.
3. A completed Release and Hold Harmless Agreement.

I hereby submit the attached plans, specifications, and color samples for the proposed project, and understand that these must be approved by the City of Kearney. No work may begin until I have signed the Grant Program Contract and received confirmation of approval from the City of Kearney. I further understand that I must cooperate with City Staff to ensure grant guidelines are followed. **Grant funds will not be paid until the project is completed.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Property Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Business Owner (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name & Title of Property Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name & Title of Business Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Release and Hold Harmless Agreement

Release executed on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, by (Property Owner)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and (Business owner if applicable)  
\_\_\_\_\_, of (Street Address) \_\_\_\_\_, City of  
Kearney, County of Buffalo, State of Nebraska, referred to as Releaser(s).

In consideration of being granted monies for restoration, modifications, signage, or other physical changes to the property located at the above address, the Releaser(s), understands that they are solely responsible for providing their own contractors, and to assure that those contractors are fully insured and licensed and have obtained all necessary permits in accordance with all pertinent regulations. The Releaser(s) waives, releases, discharges, and covenants not to sue or interplead and agrees to indemnify the City of Kearney (or entities under the City's umbrella), for loss or damage, and claims or damages therefore, on account of any work that has been performed in accordance with City or State guidelines.

Releaser(s) agrees that this release, waiver, and indemnity agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of Nebraska and that if any portion of the agreement is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall; notwithstanding, continue in full legal force and effect.

Releaser's obligation and duties hereunder shall in no manner be limited or restricted by the maintaining of any insurance coverage related to the above referenced event.

This release contains the entire agreement between the parties to this agreement and the terms of this release are contractual and not a mere recital.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Property Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Business Owner (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name & Title of Property Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name & Title of Business Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: