2026 BUILDING IMPROVEMENT GRANT (BIG)
Guidelines

Opelousas Downtown Development District (ODDD), with support from the City of Opelousas, and Opelousas Main Street (OMS), is excited to announce the seventh round of funding for the Building Improvement Grant (BIG) program. This grant program is designed to assist property and business owners in rehabilitating commercial buildings for the purpose of creating a positive visual impact, stimulating private investment and preserving the city's historic identity and cultural assets. The grant will give preferential consideration to existing businesses applying for improvements to their building.

ABOUT THE BUILDING IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

The BIG program is a reimbursement grant program that gives business/property owners an incentive to renovate and rehabilitate their building located within the designated ODDD (see map.) Preference will be given to applicants whose buildings are also located within the Main Street and Historic District. The program will offer a total of $100,000 in grant funds for selected projects with a focus on buildings housing existing businesses. The maximum amount that can be applied for is $10,000. Grant award amounts must be matched dollar for dollar by the recipient. An applicant is only allowed one grant per fiscal year.

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS:

Building Improvement Grants are awarded for tangible and permanent building improvements, inclusive of the following:

1. **Restoration/Renovation of building**
2. **Awnings (without signage)**
3. **Brick cleaning or re-pointing of brick and other masonry**
4. **Accent Lighting**
5. **Removal of deteriorating or inappropriate materials visible from the street**
6. **Window restoration**
7. **Door replacement**
8. **Restoration of original exterior/interior architectural features**
9. **Interior work related to ceiling repair, electrical, plumbing**
10. **Work on roofs, cornices, gutters and down spouts**
11. **Cleaning, preparation and painting of walls and trim**

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES:

1. Labor by the Applicant
2. Billboards/ Advertising/Signage
3. Parking Lots
4. Temporary, portable, or non-permanent improvements
5. Property acquisition
6. Improvements in progress /completed prior to approval

APPLICATION GUIDELINES:

- All Applicants must currently own or be leasing the property at the time of the application, and have permission from the owner (if Applicant is not owner).
- In-kind services or labor provided by the applicant cannot be charged against the grant.
- Applicant is responsible for contacting the city planning & zoning department for applicable permits and inspections. And such permits & inspections must be presented before funds are released to recipient.
- Grants must be matched dollar for dollar by the recipient.
- Applicant must adhere to all city codes and design standards.
- Grants will not be revised once approved due to changes in the scope of work or costs.
- ODDD retains discretionary authority to deny any application.
- If renovations are completed by two parties (business and property owner) funds will only be distributed to one applicant per business address per year.
- Property for which grants are being applied must be commercial and within the ODDD.
- Applicants for projects within the Opelousas Historic District must submit a signed Letter of Appropriateness from the Opelousas Historic District Commission before the project can begin. The commission meets on the first Thursday of the month. Letter of Appropriateness must be presented before funds are released to recipient.
- Grant will be awarded as a reimbursement after completion of project and all proper inspections, valid receipt for work done, pictures of completed work and all other required documents.
- All applicant's ad valorem tax assessments must be current.
- Grant recipients will be responsible for reporting grant funds for taxes purposes.
- Grant work must commence within 45 days after the grant agreement is signed by both parties or the grant will be voided.
- Grantee is required to commence business operations no later than six months following the completion of the project.

PROCESS:

- An applicant may apply for a grant from $500 to up to $10,000, but please note that the business/organization must spend an equal amount or more on the project.
- If approved, the Applicant will receive a Letter of Commitment specifying amount of grant and time frame in which work must be completed.

- Projects that began before the Letter of Commitment is issued will be disqualified from the grant program.
- The Applicant is responsible for contacting the program administrator once the work is completed.
- The applicant must provide proof of payment for all eligible expenses listed on the application. Proof of payment includes, processed checks, credit card transaction statements etc. If work is deemed in compliance, the Applicant will receive grant funds via a check within 21 days of completion.
- Along with proof of payment, 3-5 photographs related to the completed work must be submitted via email.
- Applications will be reviewed by BIG program review committee. Members will consist of representatives from the following: Opelousas Downtown Development District, Opelousas Main Street, Opelousas Historic District Commission, LA Dept of Historic Preservation, and Opelousas City Council.
- ODDD members are not eligible to apply.
- For technical assistance regarding grants, applicants should contact Melanie Lebouef with Opelousas Main Street at tourism@cityofopelousas.com
- **Grant applications are due by April 30, 2026 and can be submitted either in person or by mail at Opelousas Downtown Development District, 5367 I-49 Service Rd., Opelousas, LA. Applicants submitted by mail must be postmarked by April 30, 2026. Preferred method of submitting is by email to: Brittany Cretchain at brittanyc@stlandryed.com or Melanie Lebouef at tourism@cityofopelousas.com**

Timeline – 2026
March – Grant funding announcement
April 30, 2026 – Grant applications are due
May – Grant Review Committee Meets
May - Grant recipients announced
December 31, 2026 – All projects must be completed and invoices submitted.