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New Exterior Improvement Grant Program

The City is pleased to announce the ***Exterior Improvement Grant Program***, an expansion of the Small Business Façade Program. The Small Business Façade Grant Program was established in 2002 to provide both assistance and incentive to commercial property owners and sales-tax-generating local businesses citywide to improve the look and functionality of their properties and businesses. As of January 1, 2024, the Program title changed from the Small Business Façade Grant Program to the ***Exterior Improvement Grant Program***. The following are key changes:

- The grant maximum increased from \$5,000 to \$20,000 for eligible improvements, although it still requires a 50% cost-share from the applicant.
- Applicants may apply for a maximum Grant of \$20,000 toward eligible improvements annually for up to five consecutive years up to a maximum of \$100,000; grant funding for the same type of eligible expense will not be considered within the same 5-year period.
- The Program will expand from small businesses to allow eligible businesses of all sizes.
- The eligible improvements will expand from only frontage along the right-of-way to eligible improvements visible from the right-of-way.
- The eligible improvements will expand to include purchasing outdoor dining furniture and décor, landscaping, and installing parklets for outdoor dining.
- The annual Program Budget will increase from \$15,000 to \$100,000 to accommodate the Program expansion.

The ***Exterior Improvement Grant Program*** is an excellent opportunity to reinvest in your business and property and enhance its appearance and the City's business districts. If your business or property needs a refresh, please visit [Exterior Improvement Grant](#) to learn more about the ***Program*** and download the ***Application***.

If you have questions about the Program, please contact Business Development Manager Carolyn Hersch at 847.926.1027 or via e-mail at chersch@cityhpil.com.

Private Activity Bond Volume Cap

Private Activity Bonds (PAB) are tax-exempt bonds issued on behalf of businesses engaged in manufacturing or producing tangible personal property. PAB's can be used to finance the acquisition of fixed assets such as land, buildings, or equipment. They may also be used for renovation, new construction, and construction or renovation of residential units that meet income guidelines.

Under Section 146 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, the City is allocated an annual amount for private activity bond use. This allocation is commonly referred to as a volume cap and represents an ability to borrow funds. The City is seeking offers from any organizations that may be interested in purchasing this allocation from the City.

A wide variety of businesses can qualify under the Private Activity Bond guidelines, including nontraditional manufacturing operations such as food processing or printing firms. Because the bonds are exempt from federal income tax, they typically command competitive interest rates and may be combined with other tax credit programs to stimulate projects.

The Illinois Private Activity Bond Allocation Act provides that a government may transfer its allocation to any other unit of government, the State of Illinois or any agency of the State. Interested parties may contact Julie Logan, Finance Director, at jlogan@cityhpil.com or 847.432.0800 by Tuesday, February 27, 2024.

[Learn more about Private Activity Bonds.](#)

Metra Ticketing Change Effective February 1



Starting in February 2024 Metra will be ending sales of tickets at the remaining operating ticket agent offices. Customers will be directed to the Ventra app and Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) that are currently being installed at Metra stations.

Small Business Development Center: Low and No-Cost Business Services



[Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDC) are located throughout the state and provide information, confidential business guidance, training, and other free resources for start-ups and existing small businesses. If you need help with a business plan, marketing, financial bookkeeping, finding grants, starting and growing a business, click [HERE](#). To find a Center near you, click [HERE](#). Please note that many SBDCs do provide Spanish assistance. If you need help finding an SBDC that provides Spanish assistance, please contact Diana Alfaro at diana.alfaro@illinois.gov.

Community Navigator Business Support Program

[Community Navigators](#) is a support program to assist small businesses, particularly minority, women, rural, and veteran-owned businesses. They

provide outreach to raise awareness on federal and state programs, and provide 1:1 technical assistance, etc. For more information, please click [HERE](#).

Hello Alice Small Business Grant Program



Discover small business grants for every stage of your small business adventure. Grant opportunities are recommended based on your unique profile and delivered to your inbox weekly. The search for free money doesn't get any easier! In partnership with the Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) and with funding from Etsy and Progressive, [Hello Alice](#) is a free online platform that helps businesses launch and grow through every step of their entrepreneurial journey. The Small Business Growth Fund provides small business owners with knowledge, funding, networking opportunities, and peer-to-peer connections with more than one million small business owners.

[Learn about Hello Alice funding opportunities.](#)

SCORE Mentoring at the Highland Park Public Library & Free Webinars

SCORE offers in-person or virtual sessions using phone, email, or video

All sessions are free and confidential. SCORE mentors are successful business professionals, some retired, some working, from all industries and experiences.



SCORE recently added a new [YouTube channel](#) where all previously recorded webinars can be accessed.

To schedule an in-person or virtual session, visit score.org/northchicago and register to "Find a Mentor". You will be asked to provide the nature of your business interest. Please include whether you prefer in-person or virtual mentoring (phone, email, video) and note the **Highland Park Public Library** even if you prefer a virtual session.

"Take Care Packages" To Support Newly-arrived Migrants

"TAKE CARE"

PACKAGES

Highland Park student volunteers with SaLT (Service and Learning Together) are working to collect donations for ["Take Care" packages](#) for newly-arrived migrants while they await transfer to the Chicago Processing Center. SaLT volunteers are partnering with the City of Highland Park and the Rotary Club of Highland Park/Highwood to collect donations that will be used to create these thoughtful "Take Care" packages.

Donations may be dropped off at City Hall (1707 St. Johns Ave.) and [other convenient locations](#) throughout Highland Park, including First Bank of Highland Park and Highland Park Bank & Trust.

Contacting the Office of Business Development

This newsletter is produced by the City of Highland Park's Office of Business Development. The City encourages business owners and managers to share information regarding upcoming events, promotions or news for possible inclusion in the City's marketing modalities, including [The Weekender](#), [Enjoy Highland Park](#), and [social media](#). Please send these items to the City via email to: businessdevelopment@cityhpil.com. The City reserves the right to edit and/or filter submissions.

For general business inquiries and assistance, contact Business Development Manager Carolyn Hersch at chersch@cityhpil.com or 847.926.1027.

Additional Resources

[Available Commercial Space](#)

[Business Directory](#)

[City of Highland Park Business Development Strategic Plan](#)

[Chamber Of Commerce](#)

[U.S. Small Business Administration](#)

[Job Center of Lake County - Business Services](#)

[Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity:](#)

- [Small Business](#)

[College of Lake County Small Business Development Center](#)

[Hello Alice](#)

[SCORE](#)

[SCORE YouTube Channel](#)

[Development Centers of Illinois](#)

- [Community Navigator Business Support Program](#)
- [Grant Opportunities](#)

[Visit Lake County](#)

[Women-in-Business Resources](#)

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City of Highland Park | 1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035

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