



Neighborhood Partnering Program

Frequently Asked Questions and Application Instructions

What is the Neighborhood Partnering Program?

The Neighborhood Partnering Program (NPP) allows citizens to partner with the City to propose small to medium scale projects on City-owned property to improve the places in which they live, work and play.

Examples of projects that qualify:

- Beautification/landscaping, including adopting a City median
- Pedestrian and bicycling enhancements
- Community gardens
- Pocket parks
- Trails, trailheads, and gateways
- Curb, gutter, and green streets.
- Street furniture
- Park improvements

I have an idea, can I apply?

All proposed projects must be on City-owned property , have a community benefit and be publicly accessible. They must also come from a community group such as a:

- Neighborhood Association registered with the City of Austin
- Neighborhood Plan Contact Team
- Community service associations
- Educational, ethnic, cultural, or religious organizations

What services does the Neighborhood Partnering Program provide?

- **Neighborhood Cost-Share** is when you apply to the City to have your project funded.
- **Grant Assistance** is when you apply to the City for funding to meet a cash portion of a grant you have received or for which you are applying.
- **Parking Benefit Project Proposal** is when you apply to the City to develop a project proposal to expend public improvement funds earned by a Parking Benefit District.
- **Adopt-A-Median** is when you apply to the City to enter into an agreement to beautify and maintain a median or other rights of way.

Is there a deadline?

Yes! For **cost-sharing** programs, completed applications are due **June 1st** and **October 1st** of each year; or the first business day thereafter. You can submit your application early, however, all applications will be considered for funding at the same time. **Grant Assistance** applications can be accepted at any time in order to meet grant deadlines, however, only 1-2 of these are awarded per year. **Adopt-A-Median, Neighborhood Watch Signs** and **Parking Benefit District** project proposals are processed on a rolling basis.

What do I need to apply?

First, you need:

- A great idea!
- A simple sketch of your idea, with the location identified
- An idea of the project budget
- A plan to meet your cost-share through fundraisers, in-kind labor, cash donations, etc.

Second, talk to your neighbors: show them the sketch, tell them about the cost-share, earn their support! The City requires:

- The endorsement of the commonly recognized neighborhood association or the homeowner's association for your area (City staff can help you to identify this).
- The endorsement of at least 60% of the area bounding the project. (City staff can assist in identifying the affected residents).
- An agreement to maintaining the project for the life of the project.

Third, send an email to PWDNeighborhoodPartnering@austintexas.gov. Please include in your email:

- Your name, phone number, and organization you are representing.
- A project location, a simple sketch, and a brief description of your idea.

Projects that are determined to be eligible for the Neighborhood Partnering Program will be sent a formal application.

Fourth, work with the Neighborhood Partnering Program staff to submit the full Neighborhood Partnering Program application and requested back-up materials. Please note that prior to receiving Neighborhood Partnering Program funding, [community garden proposals](#) must receive [City endorsement from the Parks and Recreation Department](#).

What maintenance is required?

Your organization will be responsible for maintaining the project for the life of the project. This means that you must be prepared to replace or repair certain aspects of the project if need-be, and must be able to do ongoing maintenance. For landscaping projects, you should be prepared to do maintenance on regular intervals as determined by a **project agreement**, which is developed with each awarded project.

How is cost-share calculated?

Cost-share is calculated as a combination of any of the following:

- **Cash** is directly applied to the project cost-share.
 - Grants can also be used as a cash match under the cost-share program as long as the granting organization authorizes that use.
 - Parking revenue earned by a Parking Benefit District may be used for up to one-half of a neighborhood's cost share proposal.
- **In-kind labor** is credited at the same rate non-profits utilize to calculate the value of volunteer hours. That rate is set each year by Independent Sector, and the rate is approved by the Government Accounting Standards Board. The rate is typically around **\$21/hour**.
- **Professional and other in-kind services** are credited at fair market value. To receive this credit, the service provider must provide an invoice for services, which will be credited to the project.
- **Donations** of materials and equipment are credited at fair market value.
- **Maintenance** such as paying water bills estimated for credit over a 2-year period. Projects are required to be maintained for the life of the project by the successful applicant, and credit for maintenance is given for a 3-year period.

Ready to apply?

Application Tips

Want to submit a strong application? Below, you can find some pointers.

- Have a **complete** project description in mind. This part, called the "scope," is the most important part of your application. In order to evaluate the projects, staff must understand the full breadth of the request. You should be able to describe each item requested with respect to location and size, but you do not have to provide overly detailed specifications. Here are some examples:
 - For landscaping, a location and general size is fine. Landscaping type can be described as "native plants and xeriscape," or an installation pattern can be described.
 - For parks improvements, describe the location and the type of improvement. For example, a map might be marked with the notation, "install play equipment in areas marked with a red dot."
 - When describing your project, it is helpful to list some of your goals so that staff can better assist with technical issues related to the scope. Examples are:
 - Create a safer place for people to walk
 - Add play elements to the park that are attractive and fun
 - Make our street look more residential and attractive
- Estimate a budget. This will help you with developing the cost-share.
- Know your cost-share! In order to be fair to all projects, City staff must calculate the in-kind contributions as accurately as possible. Talk to your neighbors and develop a solid plan so that staff can approve the cost-share.

What happens after I apply?

Staff will review your application to ensure that all the minimum requirements are met, as well as:

- Ensuring the requested land/area is available for use
- Ensuring the requested amenity is suitable for the area
- Reviewing the appropriateness of the scope, budget, cost-share and demonstration of support

If the above criteria cannot be met, the application will not be allowed to proceed. If minor corrections can be made that will allow the application to move forward, staff will give the applicant one week to resubmit.

Applications that do proceed will go through a technical review committee, if needed, to understand everything that is required to install the project. That committee will determine whether or not the project is feasible from both technical and cost perspectives. If the project is not feasible owing to technical, budgetary, or logistical issues, your organization will be notified.

Requests that make it through the feasibility assessment will be reviewed, scored, and ranked with awards being made based on available funding.

How are funding requests evaluated?

There are six main evaluation criteria for the Neighborhood Partnering Cost Share Proposals:

- **Community Participation** (20 points) – Points are awarded based upon the active participation of the responsible entity in the project.
- **Cost Share Proposal** (20 points) – Points are awarded to projects that assume a greater percentage of the project cost.
- **Quality of Life Enhancement** (20 points) - Points are awarded to projects based upon the degree that they contribute to physical environment improvement, neighborhood quality of life and neighborhood identity.
- **Incorporates or Meets City Initiatives** (20 points) -Points are awarded for projects that address an existing but under-funded requirement, implement adopted neighborhood plans or incorporate City sustainability initiatives.
- **Geographic Equity** (15 points) - Additional points will be awarded to neighborhoods from underrepresented areas based upon previous NPP project awards.
- **Reconsidering Qualifying Applications** (5 points)- Qualifying applications that have been previously presented but were unfunded, are eligible for 10 extra points when funding is available at staff discretion.