



GROUND FLOOR TENANT BUILD-OUT MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

Sponsored By:

Downtown Development District

Application Period: **July 13, 2026 – October 15, 2026**
Grant Recipients Notified: **November 2, 2026**

Submit completed applications to stronger@downtownnola.com.

Ground Floor Tenant Build-Out Matching Grant Program

The Downtown Development District (DDD) has developed a Ground Floor Tenant Build-Out Matching Grant Program (“Program”) designed to reduce barriers to development in Downtown New Orleans, activate and revitalize commercial areas, and support small business stability and growth. Further, the Program is designed to support the vitality of corridors throughout Downtown by encouraging active, well-maintained storefronts that promote natural surveillance, deter crime through increased foot traffic and occupancy, and make it easier to ensure a clean, safe, and welcoming environment for residents, businesses and visitors.

The Program will provide a matching grant of 50% of eligible project costs, up to a maximum of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000). A property owner or business tenant is eligible to apply for a Ground Floor Tenant Build-Out Matching Grant if the purpose of the grant is to complete interior or exterior improvements necessary to support active commercial or retail occupancy.

Program Priorities:

- Activate long-vacant ground-floor storefronts.
- Generate new occupancy, new retail activity, or a meaningful expansion of an existing business location.
- Support locally-owned, independent, or small businesses.
- Fill visible public-facing spaces that contribute to street life, pedestrian activity, and natural surveillance.
- Provide public assistance to fill a project financing gap.

Eligible Improvement Expenses include:

- Interior build-out of retail or commercial spaces (no FFE)
- Interior demolition and shell reconstruction
- ADA accessibility improvements
- Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and lighting upgrades necessary for tenant occupancy
- Installation or improvement of storefront entryways, doors, and display windows
- Signage (new, repair, or replacement)
- Exterior storefront lighting (no flood lighting)
- Security improvements (lighting [subject to design approval by DDD], alarms, security cameras, security glazing)
- Permits
- Materials
- Contracted labor

Improvements must be directly tied to new (after July 13, 2026) tenant buildout and occupancy, and/or ground floor activation. Improvements must materially advance the use of a ground-floor commercial space as an active, public-facing business location.

Note: proposed use must be permitted by-right or by fully approved Conditional Use Permit at time of application.

Eligibility

Applications for grants shall meet the criteria outlined below:

1. Properties must be located within the Downtown Development District boundary (See exhibit A)
2. Only ground-floor tenant spaces with direct frontage on, and direct pedestrian access from, public rights-of-way are eligible.
3. Only ground floor spaces that have been vacant for a minimum of 1 year are eligible to apply. Applicant must submit documentation demonstrating vacancy, including utility records, leasing records, tax records, affidavits, or other evidence acceptable to DDD.
4. National credit tenants and franchise concepts are **not** eligible to apply – this includes any business that is publicly traded, possesses an investment-grade credit rating, operates more than 10 locations in multiple states, or is a subsidiary or affiliate of a company meeting any of the above criteria.
5. Tenants shall occupy no more than 10,000 square feet of ground floor area at the project site.
6. All proposed improvements must meet the requirements of the City of New Orleans and the Historic District Landmark Commission (HDLC), as applicable.
7. Applications must meet all City and State regulatory/code requirements that affect leases and servitudes, air rights and sidewalk, fire and building safety, and all ADA requirements.
8. Relocations from one DDD location to another are **not** eligible unless:
 - a. The applicant's prior Downtown location has been closed for at least 1 year. Applicant must submit documentation demonstrating closure, including utility records, leasing records, tax records, affidavits, or other evidence acceptable to DDD.
 - b. The move represents a documented expansion into an additional location, with all existing locations subject to a 24-month remaining lease minimum.
 - c. The business is moving from a coworking, shared, or temporary location into a public-facing ground-floor location. Applicant must submit documentation, including utility records, leasing records, tax records, affidavits, or other evidence acceptable to DDD.
 - d. DDD determines that the relocation creates at least a 50% increase in square footage from the prior location.
9. Applicants must demonstrate site control through one of the following:
 - a. Proposed lease
 - b. Fully executed letter of intent signed by tenant and property owner
 - c. Purchase agreement
 - d. Act of sale or proof of ownership
 - e. Option agreement
 - f. Other documentation acceptable to DDD demonstrating the applicant's legal ability to occupy or improve the space.
10. Applicants must be able to document total project costs that the matching grant amount will apply to, and the construction bid or contract and related documents must clearly delineate the costs associated with the Ground Floor Tenant Build-Out project, separate and apart from any other construction or renovation costs. The DDD may request up to three bids for the planned work.

11. The construction contractor may not be an immediate family member of, or owned in whole or in part by, the applicant.
12. All permits for construction to be completed as part of the program must be submitted to, and issued by, the City of New Orleans after July 13, 2026.
13. Successful applicants must enter into a Funding/Grant Agreement with the DDD.
14. Applicant must be prepared to submit a fully executed lease for a minimum time period of 24 months prior to execution of a grant agreement. Leases active prior to July 13, 2026 are not eligible. Existing leases may not be terminated, amended, restructured, replaced, or otherwise modified for the purposes of participating in the program.
15. Tenant must remain open and operating for at least 12 continuous months following project completion. Failure to remain open and operating for the required period may result in repayment of all or a portion of grant funds, as determined by DDD.

Ineligible Expenses Include

- Furniture, fixtures, and equipment not permanently affixed to the space
- Inventory or business operations costs
- Interior improvements unrelated to tenant occupancy
- Property acquisition
- Working capital
- A/E or other professional fees
- Any other expenses determined to be ineligible by DDD staff

Ineligible Build-Out Project Uses Include

- Tattoo parlors
- Check cashing
- Bail bonds
- Sexually oriented businesses
- Churches
- Convenience stores
- Erotic dance
- Locksmiths
- Massage therapists
- Pawnbroker & auto pawn
- Smoke shop
- Wedding chapels
- Businesses with more than three existing locations, including affiliated or commonly controlled locations, are not eligible without DDD approval
- Escort bureau
- Psychic arts
- Massage establishment
- Shooting ranges or gun shops
- Reflexology
- Auctions & Auctioneers
- Interior-facing spaces within enclosed malls, food courts, arcades, office towers, hotels, or multi-tenant commercial complexes
- Self-storage
- Private clubs
- Membership-driven enterprises
- Any other uses determined to be ineligible by DDD staff

Disbursements

Documentation of total costs incurred and proof of payment must be provided before the matching grant amount is reimbursed. The matching grant will not be fully paid until all applicable permits are closed out and an occupational license has been issued.

Funds will be disbursed by check payable to the grantee upon: (1) certification of completion of the Allowable Improvements; (2) verification by DDD that the work was completed as proposed ; (3) provision of receipts for payment for such Allowable Improvements; and (4) unconditional lien waivers from all contractors of record.

Funds will not be disbursed on projects that are not completed in accordance with the approved plans. All grant funds shall be issued to the grantee on a reimbursement basis only.

Disclaimer

The DDD expressly reserves the right to reject any and all applications or to request additional information from any and all applicants and grantees. The DDD reserves the right to deviate from the program guidelines, or amend the program guidelines, agreements, and application procedures. The DDD also retains the right to display and advertise properties that receive matching funds under this Grant.

Application Process

1. Voluntary meeting with DDD staff regarding the Program and eligibility. (STRONGLY RECOMMENDED)
2. Submit application by the prescribed deadline.
3. DDD will review applications to determine eligibility, score in accordance with prescribed criteria, and make award decisions based on funding availability and number of applications received.
4. Awarded applicants will be notified and enter into a Grant Agreement with DDD for use of Program funds.
5. Project must be completed within 180 days unless DDD approves a grant extension within that period.
6. Once project has been completed and all necessary final City and HDLC approvals are obtained and documentation, including Certificate of Occupancy, copies of cancelled checks, and/or relevant documents, as determined by DDD, showing the applicant's share of cost has been provided, the DDD will process a check for payment of the approved grant amount payable to the applicant.

SCORING CRITERIA FOR GROUND FLOOR TENANT BUILD-OUT GRANTS

A project application will be scored on how well it meets each of the program criteria. A total point score will be based on the sum of the ratings. The criteria are as follows:

CANAL CORRIDOR (0 or 3 POINTS)

- Building is located on Canal Street and the tenant space has Canal Street frontage and a Canal Street municipal address (3 POINTS)

VACANCY ACTIVATION (UP TO 6 POINTS)

- Project brings a 1st generation space into commerce (space has been vacant for a minimum of 12 months and never been previously occupied by a tenant) (1 POINT)
- Project brings a 2nd generation space into commerce (space has been vacant for a minimum of 12 months and was previously occupied by a tenant) (2 POINTS)
- Tenant space has been vacant for more than 12-18 months (2 POINTS)
- Tenant space has been vacant for more than 18-24 months (3 POINTS)
- Tenant space has been vacant for more than 24 months (4 POINTS)

Note: DDD may require documentation demonstrating vacancy, including utility records, leasing records, tax records, affidavits, or other evidence acceptable to DDD.

SAFETY IMPACT (UP TO 2 POINTS)

- Project includes features that will provide additional safety and crime prevention impact (new exterior lighting, security improvements, backlit storefront windows, etc.) (1 POINT)
- Project is part of a larger building that has been 100% vacant for more than one year (1 POINT)

PROJECT READINESS (UP TO 3 POINTS)

- Permits already in progress or approved (1 POINT)
- Letter of Intent signed by both parties or owner-occupied and operated (2 POINTS)

SMALL BUSINESS IMPACT (0 OR 2 POINTS)

- Prospective tenant is a small business owner (1st brick and mortar location) (2 POINTS)

Scoring is intended to assist DDD in evaluating applications. Final award decisions may also consider geographic distribution, funding availability, project readiness, and other program objectives, as determined by DDD.

Exhibit A



Exhibit B- **REQUIRED ONLY IF APPLICANT IS A TENANT**

**Landlord Authorization for
DDD Grant Program**

This Landlord Authorization for DDD Grant Program (this "**Authorization**"), is executed by _____ ("**Landlord**") in connection with the application of _____ ("**Tenant**") for the Ground Floor Tenant Improvement grant ("**DDD Grant**") offered by the Downtown Development District of the City of New Orleans ("**DDD**"), with respect to the premises located at _____ ("**Premises**").

In further consideration of the Lease (as defined below), and the benefit to be derived by the Landlord as a result of the DDD Grant, the Landlord hereby agrees as follows:

1. The Landlord authorizes the Tenant to apply for the DDD Grant and to engage licensed contractors to complete the work contemplated by the DDD Grant (the "Work") at the Premises. The Landlord acknowledges that execution of this Authorization satisfies any requirements of consent of the Landlord for performance of the Work under the lease of the Premises, whether written or oral, between the Landlord, as lessor, and the Tenant, as lessee (the "Lease").
2. The Landlord consents to the Work as described in the grant application and acknowledges that any additional approvals required under the Lease are hereby granted. To the extent any other provisions of the Lease would prevent the Work from being completed, the Landlord waives those provisions.
3. This Authorization shall be effective as of the date written below.
4. The Landlord waives any claims against the DDD that result from or arise out of the DDD Grant and the Work, including but not limited to any claims for injury to persons or damage to the Premises or any other property resulting from actions or omissions of the Tenant and any contractors performing the Work.

LANDLORD:

Sign: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____



201 St. Charles Ave, Suite 3912, New Orleans, Louisiana 70170
Phone (504) 561-8927 Fax (504) 581-1765

**Application For
Ground Floor Tenant Build-Out Matching Grant Program**

The DDD Gound Floor Tenant Build-Out Matching Grant Program Funding is based on availability and scoring in accordance with prescribed criteria. A completed application does not guarantee funding. Furthermore, no grants will be awarded retroactively, which means that funding will not be awarded for otherwise eligible spaces that were leased or projects that otherwise commenced prior to the application date.

Contact:

Applicant Name: _____

Title/ Affiliation to Property: _____

Contact email address: _____

Office address: _____

Office phone number: _____ Office fax: _____

Property Information:

Address of project/property: _____

Tax I.D. or SSN: _____

Amount Requested: _____

Status of applicant/property-ownership (check one):

- _____ Sole Ownership
- _____ Corporation, Partnership or Trust (provide the names, addresses and phone numbers of all officers or trustees and include articles of incorporation, by-laws and/or partnership agreement)
- _____ Tenant (provide a signed copy of the Tenant Authorization Contract- Exhibit B)

Attach the following documents to your completed application:

1. Introductory letter providing the scope of work of the project including items, cost, and location for eligible improvement(s)
2. Two current exterior photographs of the building, one from the front and one showing the building in context to area and around it. If the building is on a corner, please include a third photo of the side-street facade. Photos in digital format are acceptable.
3. Two or more current interior photographs of the tenant space to be improved. Photos in digital format are acceptable.
4. Written consent from the property-owner if applicant is a tenant. (Exhibit B)
5. Plans that provide adequate detail of existing conditions as well as the work to be done. Drawings must be digital and to scale and list all proposed changes.
6. Project budget, construction bid or contract, and/or other related documents clearly delineating the tenant improvement costs separate and apart from any other renovation costs. The DDD may request up to three bids for the planned work.

An authorized corporate officer or partner(s) of the applicant's business must sign the application, in addition to the property owner(s), if the applicant is a tenant:

I, _____, certify that the information presented in this application and in all attachments is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

I authorize the Downtown Development District or its agent to check with City and regulatory agencies to determine compliance with city codes and status of tax collections.

I understand that the proceeds from any grant funds may be used only for tenant improvement build-out projects. All projects must meet the design criteria established by the Central Business District Historic District Landmarks Commission, where applicable.

I understand that, in addition to this application, I must also seek and receive approval of my project from the Central Business District Historic District Landmarks Commission, where applicable, and all related approvals from the City of New Orleans. I understand that all approved applicants shall agree to have DDD signage on the property while the project is under construction. All signage is designed by the DDD and is required if the project is approved.

I understand that no construction activity may begin until the Downtown Development District provides authorization to proceed.

I further understand and agree that the final decision on project cost or eligibility lies with the DDD in its sole discretion.

Signature: _____ Date: _____