

# Critical Corridors Commercial Corridor Initiative

## 2024 Program Guidelines



Ramsey County’s Commercial Corridor Initiative program, funded through the [Housing Redevelopment Authority levy](#), strengthens suburban small business districts by supporting thriving main streets and investing in pathways to entrepreneurship for racially and ethnically diverse communities.

### Selection Priorities

Redevelopment projects that:

- Intensify land use along key corridors, especially those that reduce space used for parking and improve access to transit.
- Facilitate the development of multifamily housing, such as zoning changes.
- Promote development activity in disinvested areas.
- Improve pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure.
- Propel nearby development without displacing current residents or small businesses.

### Eligible Activities

Initiatives need to be located in a Critical Corridor. Refer to the [Critical Corridors Map](#) for definitions and information on transit and activity centers.

- Business recruitment activities.
- Establishment of small-business incubators.
- District-wide planning and design.
- District-wide marketing, branding, and promotion initiatives.
- Design and implementation of wayfinding, signage, street furniture or other public realm enhancements.
- Technical assistance related to business activities, including:
  - o Special service district or business-association establishment.
  - o Design and implementation of wayfinding, signage, street furniture or other public realm enhancements
  - o Building facade improvements.

For other projects that support business districts, please reach out to staff to see if it meets program objectives.

### Ineligible Activities

- Organization staff time.
- Parking lot improvements.
- Activities for sites without public frontage.
- Activities that benefit a single business.
- Administration, overhead, and business operations support.
- Events.

### Eligible Applicants

Suburban Ramsey County entities including cities, associated development authorities, business coalitions, chambers of commerce and nonprofits.

### Funding

- Total funding available: approximately \$100,000.
- Maximum anticipated award: \$50,000 per project.
- Activities funded by this program must be completed by June 30, 2025.
- Funds are available on a reimbursement basis.
- Activities completed prior to award are not eligible for reimbursement.
- Match is not required but may be considered.

## Application Details

**Application opens:** Wednesday, March 6, 2024.

**Application closes:** Wednesday, April 3, 2024.

**Award decisions:** June 2024

### Program webpage:

[ramseycounty.us/CriticalCorridors](https://ramseycounty.us/CriticalCorridors)

**Pre-application:** A pre-application meeting with staff is optional, but highly recommended, to ensure project eligibility and program fit. Please email staff to schedule a call prior to March 6, 2024.

**Webinar:** Applicants are encouraged to attend via Zoom March 4, 2024 at 10:30 a.m. to learn more about funding availability and program application requirements. The Zoom link is available on the program webpage. A video recording will be posted to the program webpage following the webinar.

**Applications will be accepted via ZoomGrants.**

### Application attachments include:

- Application form.
- Map of proposed project area.
- Letters of support from city and affected business owners.

## Scoring and Evaluation

### 1. Project Outcomes & Opportunity

- Helps existing and future businesses in the corridor.
- Improves conditions for permanent job creation and entrepreneurship in racially and ethnically diverse communities.
- Improves coordination among businesses.

### 2. Placemaking & Public Realm

- Helps people access businesses by transit, biking, or walking.
- Increases pedestrian or bicycle safety and accessibility.
- Increases the public realm and increase sense of place.

### 3. Community Engagement & Racial Equity

- Community-led or driven.
- Includes community engagement and outreach.
- Provides low-income and racially and ethnically diverse communities decision making power.

### 4. Capacity & Readiness

- Feasibly be completed by the program deadline of June 30, 2025.
- Financially feasible and has reasonable costs.
- Demonstrates need for Ramsey County funding.

### 5. Overall Application

Projects will be evaluated based on overall alignment with Critical Corridors program goals and priorities, as well as alignment with relevant Ramsey County plans:

- [Economic Competitiveness & Inclusion Plan](#).
- [Equitable Development Framework](#).
- [Ramsey County Strategic Plan](#).
- [Ramsey County Bike and Pedestrian Plan and All Abilities 2050 Transportation Plan](#).

Parity in overall Housing Redevelopment Authority levy funding between Saint Paul and suburban cities is also considered.

## Application review

Applications will be reviewed by a review panel consisting of Ramsey County staff and outside reviewers as deemed necessary.

## Contracting and Reporting

Ramsey County will contract directly with grantees for the portion of work covered by the program award. All grantees are required to submit a final report summarizing the project process, outcomes and impacts of completed work. Award of funds through this program does not guarantee future funding.

## Staff Contacts

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