



Meeting Date:	June 22, 2026
Submitter:	Daniel Ritter, Community Director
Department:	Community Development
Agenda Item:	Discuss Commercial Grant Program Revisions

Summary:

The Façade Improvement Grant Program has been funded and available for several years, dating back to at least 2018. However, the program was not utilized until 2025. The first grant approval, for a wall sign at The Feathered Fork (approved in October 2025), is not expected to be completed or reimbursed due to the business's closure. The second approval, for a wall sign at Soprano's (approved in February 2026), has since been completed. As awareness of the program has increased, staff has received additional inquiries and anticipates continued interest. Staff also intends to proactively promote the program to highly visible commercial properties that will benefit from exterior improvements.

The primary purpose of the Façade Improvement Grant Program is to encourage high-quality exterior improvements to existing commercial properties that enhance the community's appearance and support reinvestment in commercial corridors. The program provides reimbursement of up to 50 percent of eligible project costs, not to exceed \$10,000 per property, to property owners or tenants (with owner authorization).

The program was originally funded at \$25,000 annually. Due to limited utilization over several years, funding was reduced to \$12,750 for the last two Fiscal Years. Should interest in the program continue to grow, additional funding may be warranted and would be requested at that time. At the same time, staff believes grant programs should maintain a competitive component to ensure funding is directed toward projects that demonstrate the greatest need, provide lasting improvements, and have the most significant impact on the community.

Following the initial use of the program, several questions and concerns were raised by both staff and the City Council regarding the existing program guidelines and administration. Key issues identified included:

- The use of grant funds for wall signs and other tenant-specific improvements that do not necessarily align with the program's long-term property improvement objectives.
- Challenges associated with recapturing grant funds when improvements are not maintained or when tenant occupancy changes.
- Grant limitations that did not adequately account for differences in property size, tenant count, building type, or site characteristics.
- Existing application, documentation, and reimbursement requirements.

City Council Work Session - June 22, 2026
Façade Improvement and Commercial Grant Updates

- Competitive bidding requirements for various project types.
- Requests for reimbursement of improvements completed prior to grant approval.

During those discussions, staff indicated its intent to review and update the program guidelines and return to the City Council with recommended revisions.

Although the current program permits a wide range of eligible improvements, including signage, the original intent was to support substantial façade and public-facing site improvements rather than tenant-specific enhancements. The program was envisioned as a tool to encourage reinvestment along older commercial corridors, particularly Plainfield Road and Broadway Street, where many properties have experienced limited exterior investment over time.

The proposed amendments are intended to clarify program requirements, address concerns identified through recent applications and better align the program with its original objectives. The revisions more clearly define eligible applicants and eligible projects while emphasizing permanent improvements that provide lasting benefits to the property.

Under the proposed changes, signage remains eligible for funding, but is limited to permanent ground signs serving an entire site. Eligible signs are required to be monument-style signs featuring a solid masonry base and associated landscaping in compliance with the City's sign regulations. In addition, the proposed amendments expand eligibility to include a broader range of permanent site improvements, such as landscaping, hardscape features, trees and shrubs, entryway enhancements, site access improvements, lighting, curbing, parking lot end islands, cross-access improvements, new or expanded outdoor dining areas, public art installations, fountains, and similar projects that improve the long-term appearance, functionality, and economic viability of commercial properties.

Due to the significance of the changes by taking a fresh look at the entire grant, a redline version is not attached. However, the current Façade Improvement Grant program document can be found on the City's website here, if you wish to see the current program form: <https://www.cityofcresthill.com/183/Economic-Goals-Incentives>.

Attached is a clean version of the program's updated guidelines, reflecting staff's recommended revisions to the grant. The document includes several policy changes for City Council review and feedback. Staff recommends formal adoption of the updated program through a City Council resolution to establish clear policy direction and program standards moving forward.

Recommended Council Action:

Discuss the proposed staff changes to the city's Grant Program to be named the "Commercial Exterior Improvement Grant Program" and direct the attorney to draft a resolution formally adopting the program.

Attachments

- A. "Clean" Draft Commercial Property Improvement Grant (Dated 6/22/2026)
- B. Revised Commercial Property Improvement Grant Application (2026)