

Love Your Block



Community Development

1401 Main Street 4th Floor
Columbia, SC 29201
Ph# (803) 545-3373

Love Your Block

Program Handbook

Program Information

The Love Your Block (LYB) program is for neighborhoods who are interested in making a difference in their community. The program is designed to develop and build neighborhood capacity. Neighborhoods can apply for a grant up to \$1,800 to implement a sustainable project in their community. The City of Columbia Community Development Department administers this program with support by the Mayor's Office.

Grant Criteria

Grant Eligible Neighborhood Associations

To qualify:

- ◆ Neighborhood Association located within the City limits.
- ◆ Have a Tax Identification Number (TIN) by using an IRS W-9 Form.
- ◆ Not be in default of any City grant monies that have previously been awarded. Default includes non-submission of all required supporting documentation from previous city or federal grants.
- ◆ Copy of most recent neighborhood association bank statement
- ◆ Official vendor quote/estimate for every proposed project expense. All quotes must include vendor letterhead. Quotes must be no more than 30 days old upon application submittal.
- ◆ Neighborhood Association by-laws

Individuals, businesses, citywide associations, social service agencies, fraternal and religious organizations, universities, political groups and public agencies are not eligible. However, eligible neighborhood associations may form partnerships with these groups for the planning and implementation of projects. The neighborhood-based association must be the lead applicant with primary responsibility for project implementation.

In order to be eligible, proposed neighborhood projects must possess the following criteria:

- ◆ Provide a public benefit to the applicant neighborhood;
- ◆ Must have a designated neighborhood resident serve as the project leader;
- ◆ Demonstrate neighborhood resident involvement;
- ◆ Have goals which can be accomplished in 12 months or less, and;
- ◆ Not use grant funds for the association's operating expenses.

Project Categories and Examples

1. Eligible Projects

- ◆ Vacant Lot Clean-Up

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- ◆ Litter Removal
- ◆ Beautification of Neighborhood
- ◆ Neighborhood Signs
- ◆ Neighborhood Meeting Signs
- ◆ Neighborhood Merchandise (T-shirts, coffee mug, neighborhood flags or table cover (logo included)
- ◆ Neighborhood Website
- ◆ Graffiti Removal
- ◆ Tree Planting
- ◆ Community Garden Development
- ◆ Irrigation systems
- ◆ Neighborhood Park Improvements (with the approval of the Parks & Recreation Department)

The following project categories are not available through the LYB Grant, but are available by applying through the City of Columbia Community Development Block Grant Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) process for Neighborhood Improvement Grant program.

Ineligible Grant Expenses and Projects

Grant funds cannot be used for the following items:

1. Any expenses incurred outside of the grant award period of **September 25, 2025 through June 30, 2026**.
2. Contributions to a contingency or reserve fund.
3. Contributions, donations and/or lobbying for political campaigns.
4. Any costs related to uncollectible accounts or late fees.
5. Salaries or expenses payable to any City of Columbia employee, or member of the City's Citizens Advisory Committee.
6. Operating Expenses; i.e. salary, fringe benefits, rent, supplies, utilities, maintenance, etc.
7. Construction, rehabilitation, or other improvements to private property.
8. Food items not solely dedicated to a specific grant funded event. Food for monthly neighborhood meetings is an ineligible expense.
9. Projects benefiting a for-profit business.
10. Cash incentives, gift cards, stipends, or scholarships to workers or volunteers.
11. Replacement neighborhood signs funded with LYB, ACTION or Mini-Grant funds in last 4 years.
12. Community relations, outreach and development projects.

Grant Award Requirements

- ◆ An eligible neighborhood association.
- ◆ An eligible project.

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- ◆ Before any grant funds can be issued, evidence must be provided if the project was endorsed by the neighborhood. The minutes reflecting this endorsement must include the name and description of the project and the number of for/against votes.
- ◆ Document all sources of funds used for the proposed project, the amount of funds and how the funds will be used, including bid and cost proposals to support expenses up to **\$1,800**.
- ◆ Any item(s) for purchase over \$500.00 must have two (2) written quotes provided.
- ◆ Submit a project update with every request for funds.
- ◆ Submit a final report-using format provided at end of grant period. (Report forms included in 'forms' section of this handbook).
- ◆ Submit before and after photos.

Award Notification

All approved grant applications will be notified by **Friday, October 3, 2025**.

Application submission date is **Thursday, September 25, 2025**.

Award Amount and Match Requirements

Your 2025 maximum amount of the LYB GRANT cannot exceed \$1,800 and there is no cash match. Neighborhood associations are required to have a minimum of 10% residential participation.

Budget Line Items

1. Supplies, Materials and Services

Include consumable supplies, materials to be used in the project (i.e. art, crafts, soil, gardening tools etc.), **items of expendable equipment, (i.e. office supplies, paper, pens, ink cartridges, etc.)**, and the cost of duplication and printing and other services related to project objectives.

2. Purchased and Contractual Services/Equipment

Include any contract services related to your project, equipment purchases per unit. Attach any necessary written bids and/or proposals.

Guidelines for Neighborhood Signs

Complete sign application form should accompany your application, request for funds, or at the latest be submitted before the LYB grant approval/disapproval.

Guidelines for Beautification Projects

The neighborhood association is responsible for maintaining their project site. The beautification location should accompany your application, request for funds, or at the latest be submitted before the LYB grant approval/disapproval.

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Frequently Asked Neighborhood Association Questions

(1) What are LYB grant recipient responsibilities? Each neighborhood association have the financial and programmatic responsibility. Your neighborhood association will receive funding on behalf of its project/program. The funded neighborhood association will have to make sure that items are purchased, signs are installed, programs are taking place, projects are completed, final reports are submitted, etc. The neighborhood association point of contact must notify the LYB Community Liaison of work dates for monitoring of projects.

(2) When can project begin?

Do not obligate any funds prior to **September 25, 2025 or grant approval.**

(3) How to submit first request for funds?

Submit a letter of request on neighborhood association letterhead detailing the amount of request and address where check is to be mailed (please note that address must match the address provided on the W-9). Only an authorized neighborhood point of contact (as indicated on LYB Grant application) may sign request. You may request up to half of the grant award in advance.

(4) How many bids (quotes) are required?

Any item(s) for purchase over \$500.00 must have two (2) written quotes provided. All items purchased must be listed in your contract. Neighborhood association must buy from the lowest bidder.

(5) Can requested funds be used for another project?

Budgeted line items cannot exceed an individual line item amount by more than 10% without prior staff approval. Requested funds cannot be used for another project.

(6) What if neighborhood association want to change a project after funds are received?

No changes to the scope of your project allowed.

(7) A final report is due no later than Friday, May 8, 2026. What is required for submission?

A final report must be submitted for all grant awards and must include:

- ✓ Narrative detailing your activities including number of participants, people/students served, total materials disbursed, photos, event/program attendees.
- ✓ Outcomes/Impact on your community
- ✓ Success stories/Testimonials
- ✓ Lessons learned/How to improve your program

The following financial information must also be included:

- ✓ Original copies of all receipts, invoices, etc.
- ✓ Copies of canceled checks corresponding with receipts

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PLEASE NOTE:

Neighborhood associations that are non-compliant in any way will not be eligible to apply for future funding for up to a two (2) year period.

Completion Checklist

- Completed LYB Grant application with appropriate signatures
- Detailed Project Budgets with attached bid & quotes
- Signed IRS W-9 Form
- Neighborhood Association by-laws
- Neighborhood Association bank statements
- Project Plan and Timeline
- Minutes reflecting neighborhood approval of the LYB application
- One (1) original and (2) copies of your grant application

Forms Section

Final Report

A final report must be submitted for all LYB grant awards using the format provided. The Final Report form provides a format to collect information about your activities including number of participants, people/students served, total materials disbursed, event/program attendees that will help document the success of your program/projects. The report form also includes a narrative section for:

- ✓ Outcomes/Impact on your community
- ✓ Success stories/Testimonials
- ✓ Lessons learned/How to improve your program

Attachments such as event invitations & programs, brochures, agendas, artwork samples, labeled scrapbooks, pictures (digital preferred) should be attach to your final report.

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Check out projects that helped transform neighborhoods.

The Sherwood Forest Neighborhood signs.



Greenview Neighborhood Garden Experience

