

Sand Springs “White Box” Grant Program

The City of Sand Springs White Box program is designed to encourage the redevelopment of older commercial buildings as vibrant, retail commercial/office spaces within the historic downtown area. The City recognizes that many buildings may be non-compliant with modern building codes and that the cost of these improvements often fall to new entrepreneurs looking to establish small businesses.

The program will make available a new business development incentive to commercial building owners, developers, and investments. The incentive will offer reimbursable grant funds up to a maximum of \$10,000. The grant may not exceed 80% of the anticipated improvements projected cost, not to exceed a maximum of \$10,000. The grant may be paired with the City’s Spirit Grant Program, but there may be restrictions on using these programs in combination.

Eligibility Requirements

1. All work being done must be done on an existing, currently vacant, commercially-zoned building on property located within the program boundaries (see program map).
2. The program is available to business owners and property owners for work performed on the interior of currently vacant spaces.
3. Grant funds cannot be used to correct outstanding code violations, for property damage by collision, acts of nature or occurrences covered by insurance.
4. Only work begun after approval by the Sand Springs Development Authority (SSDA) will be eligible for grant funds.
5. All work must comply with the City of Sand Springs Building Department Code requirements and all relevant permits and inspections are required.
6. If a retail or commercial business is applying for the grant, only one white box grant will be awarded per business. If the property owner is applying for a grant, only one white box grant may be awarded within a calendar year.
7. Projects requesting funding for retail and restaurant commercial spaces is preferred over office uses and will be given preferential treatment in the event of funding shortages for awarding of grants.

Ineligible Properties:

1. Improvements for tax exempt properties
2. Work begun or materials purchased before grant approval
3. Properties in litigation, condemnation or receivership
4. Properties that have outstanding taxes, fees, penalties, or delinquencies with federal, state or local governments
5. Properties found to be in violation of alcohol licenses or any Sand Springs license
6. Properties not currently vacant or commercially-zoned

Eligible expenses include:

1. Interior plumbing in compliance with current building code
2. Electrical in compliance with current building code
3. HVAC in compliance with current building code

4. Fire Suppression measures including kitchens in compliance with current building code

Ineligible costs include purchase or installation of:

1. Personal property
2. Security systems
3. Windows, doors, or stairways
4. Signage, lighting, paint or wallpaper
5. Any improvement to correct outstanding code violations
6. Property damage due to collision, acts of nature or occurrences covered by insurance
7. Any work started before the approval of the grant or materials purchased prior to the grant
8. Any exterior improvements
9. Building permits, government approvals and taxes
10. Payment of fines, forfeitures or inspection fees

Grant will not reimburse for labor if self-contracted. Material cost and labor costs of employees are eligible, if the number of hours worked, rate of pay, and employee social security numbers are provided.

Application Review & Process

PRE-APPLICATION MEETING: We recommend that potential applicants contact the Neighborhood Services to schedule a meeting/walk through of the proposed business location with the Building Inspector/Fire Marshal to evaluate the extent of their repairs and work to be complete. Please note that applications must be received and reviewed by the Sand Springs Development Authority (SSDA) and approved before any work begins. Grants will not be awarded to projects that are completed.

The White Box Inspection is not intended to identify every detail or every code requirement. The intent is to identify significant deficiencies within the first floor commercial space (based on the applicant's proposed use) that will add a significant cost to their plan to occupy the space. It may still be necessary for the applicant to obtain the services of an architectural or engineering professional to prepare plans and specifications for their project.

APPLICATION REVIEW: The Sand Springs Planning Director will determine if the application package that is submitted is sufficiently complete to review, and will submit to the Sand Springs Development Authority (SSDA). The SSDA meets once a month. The application package must be submitted at least two weeks before an authority meeting to allow proper review and preparation for authority review.

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE: The application package will be reviewed by the SSDA to determine whether the project should receive an award and determine the amount of the award. In making the determination, the committee will consider the following factors and may give priority to projects that meet the following criteria:

- Is the first floor space vacant? Has the vacancy been a result of code compliance?
- Does the project contribute to the establishment of a new retail business, restaurant, or office space within an established business district in the City?
- Will the project positively contribute to the city's redevelopment effort of the downtown area?
- Will the project substantially leverage more investments than the required matching amount of the grant?
- Will the grant result in an improvement that, otherwise, would not be made?
- Does the project comply with the City of Sand Springs building code requirements?

SSDA APPROVAL: City of Sand Springs staff based upon the recommendation of the SSDA, will execute the White Box Program Grant Incentive Agreement, which is a contract between the City of Sand Springs and the applicant that stipulates the terms of the grant incentive agreement.

Required Materials for Applications

Application packages must include enough documentation to illustrate the visual impact of the project and its costs. Failure to provide a complete application package will delay the review process. The items submitted should include:

- a. Completed, signed, and dated application form.
- b. Specific details of proposed improvements (intended use of funds).
- c. Current photos of existing conditions of property interior.
- d. Scaled floor plans.
- e. Building permit applications, if required.
- f. Written consent from property owner giving permission to conduct building improvements, if applicant is not property owner (attached to application, copy of a lease will suffice).
- g. For improvements, three competitive proposals from state and city licensed and bonded contractors are required. These proposals should give detailed information about the work to be done, the costs, the projected completion schedule. Any contractor that has submitted a competitive and detailed estimate may be used. Contractors cannot be changed unless new proposals have been submitted and approved.
- h. Property owners or business owners may also perform work on their own buildings subject to being a licensed contractor in the applicable trade; however, they will not be reimbursed for labor costs when acting as a contractor and/or installing materials. However, material costs may be reimbursable.

Award Reimbursement

1. Reimbursement will be up to 80% of a total project budget not to exceed a total reimbursement of more than \$10,000. (Example would be an electrical upgrade that costs \$12,500. The reimbursable amount would be \$10,000 and the amount that is not reimbursable would be \$2,500.)
2. The City of Sand Springs reserves the right to refuse reimbursements in whole or in part for that which:
 - Does not conform to the program of guidelines.
 - Does not conform to the proposals submitted in the application and authorized by the SSDA.
 - Are not completed within 120 days from the date of award. The City will not reserve funds and any approval not completed or significantly progressing may be cancelled. Request for extensions will be considered only if made in writing with at least 50% completion of the approved project demonstrated.
 - If the finished project does not conform to the application as it was submitted and approved.
 - If the project takes longer than one year to complete, with granted extensions.
 - For work that is not commensurate with the workmanship and cost customary to the industry.

Required Materials for Reimbursement:

Reimbursement can be expected in approximately three (3) to six (6) weeks after all of the following documentation has been submitted:

- Copies of all paid invoices, canceled checks, and/or bank statements for all of the work covered by grant. These must equal at least the required matching amount. The invoices must be marked paid, signed, and dated by the contractors.
- Lien waivers from all contractors/subcontractors. Lien waivers cannot be substituted for canceled checks or bank statements.
- Color photographs of completed project.