

# Critical Corridors Commercial Corridor Initiative

## 2025 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. The county worked with community partners to define Critical Corridors, as shown in green on the [eligibility map](#).

### Selection Priorities

Redevelopment projects that:

- Increase density 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](#) in Suburban Ramsey County.

- 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:
  - Special service district or business-association establishment.
  - Design and implementation of wayfinding, signage, street furniture or other public realm enhancements
  - Building facade improvements.

For other projects not mentioned but also support business districts, please reach out to staff to see if it meets program objectives.

### Ineligible Activities

- Activities located in the City of St. Paul.
- Administrative staff time.
- Parking lot improvements.
- Activities for sites without public frontage.
- Activities that only 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.
- Funds must be expended by June 30, 2026.
- 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:** Tuesday, March 4, 2025.

**Application closes:** Tuesday, April 1, 2025.

**Award decisions:** May 2025.

**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 4, 2025.

**Informational Webinar:** Applicants are encouraged to attend via Zoom at 10 a.m., Feb. 24, 2025, 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:**

- Project information spreadsheet.
- 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, racially and/or ethnically diverse communities decision making power.

### 4. Capacity & Readiness

- Feasibly be completed by the program deadline of June 30, 2026.
- 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](#).
- [Climate Equity Action 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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