



## **NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY WHITE BOX GRANT PROGRAM**

Application Open Date: April 6, 2026

Pre-Application Due Date: May 1, 2026

Contact Information: City of Toledo, Department of Economic Development

One Government Center, Suite 2250

Toledo, Ohio 43604

(419) 245-1230

[Vibrancy@toledo.oh.gov](mailto:Vibrancy@toledo.oh.gov)

Applications should be submitted online at:

<https://www.zoomgrants.com/zgf/wbg>

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**A. GENERAL OVERVIEW**

The City of Toledo’s Department of Economic Development announces the availability of **\$315,556** in funding for the White Box Grant Program. This program is part of the City’s Vibrancy Initiative, a coordinated suite of incentive programs designed to stimulate revitalization, reduce blight, preserve existing structures, and strengthen commercial corridors citywide.

The White Box Grant Program is intended to prepare vacant ground-floor commercial spaces for occupancy by a new business – particularly in historically significant legacy commercial corridors.

**How the Grant Works**

- Reimburses **50%** of eligible interior renovation and tenant build-out costs, or **75%** for projects located within a designated [Legacy Commercial Corridor](#)
- Maximum grant award is \$75,000 per building, per year
- Eligible improvements include interior code upgrades (building, fire, and accessibility), as well as basic tenant build-out work needed to make the ground-floor commercial space operational.
- Projects must obtain a [Certificate of Occupancy](#) or *Certificate of Completion* and be fully completed by December 4, 2026.

A building may not receive both a Facade Improvement Grant and a White Box Grant in the same program year.

**The City partners with the Business Empowerment Alliance of Toledo (BEAT) to provide application and project support to applicants at no-cost.** For more information, call (419) 245-1230 or email [Vibrancy@toledo.oh.gov](mailto:Vibrancy@toledo.oh.gov).

**B. SCHEDULE**

Milestones	Date
<p><b>Pre-Application Opens</b>            Notice of Funding Availability is released and the pre- application opens.</p>	<p>Monday, April 6, 2026            at 9:00am EST</p>
<p><b>Office Hours</b>            Virtual and in-person office hours are offered for questions about eligibility and the application process.</p>	<p><a href="#">Click HERE for schedule</a></p>

<p><b>Pre-Application Submission Deadline</b>          Pre-applications are due. No late applications will be accepted. <b>You must submit a pre-application to access the full application.</b></p>	<p>Friday, May 1, 2026          at 5:00PM EST</p>
<p><b>FINAL Application Submission Deadline</b>          Full applications are due. No late applications will be accepted.</p>	<p>Friday, May 8, 2026          at 5:00PM EST</p>
<p><b>Awarded Projects Announced</b>          Applicants will be informed of the decision on their application.</p>	<p>Friday, May 15, 2026</p>
<p><b>Grant Agreement Deadline</b>          The grant agreement and post award documents must be signed by the deadline or the award will be forfeited.</p>	<p>Friday, May 22, 2026</p>
<p><b>Project Construction Deadline</b>          Construction must commence by the deadline. Failure to begin work may result in termination of the grant agreement.</p>	<p>Friday, August 14, 2026</p>
<p><b>Project Completion Deadline</b>          All work must be completed, <i>Certificate of Completion</i> or <i>Certificate of Occupancy</i> issued, and reimbursement documentation submitted.</p>	<p>Friday, December 4, 2026</p>

**C. ELIGIBILITY**

**Eligible Applicants**

**Property Owners** of commercial buildings with a vacant ground-floor commercial space.

**Tenants / Small Businesses** proposing to occupy a vacant ground-floor commercial space and able to provide:

- A fully executed lease; or
- A letter of intent outlining proposed lease terms (*lease must be executed prior to grant agreement*)

Incoming tenants must be properly registered with the City of Toledo.

**Joint Applications** - A building owner and tenant may apply jointly.

### Compliance Requirements

To qualify for funding, all applicants must be in good standing with:

- [City of Toledo Division of Taxation](#): (419) 245-1662
- [City of Toledo Public Utilities](#): (419) 245-1800
- [City of Toledo Code Compliance](#): (419) 245-1400
- [Property taxes - Lucas County Auditor](#): (419) 213-4406

### **Eligible Buildings**

Properties must meet the following criteria:

- Located within the City of Toledo
- Must be zoned commercial, industrial, or otherwise appropriately zoned for the proposed use.
- Contain a **vacant** ground-floor commercial space. *For purposes of this program, 'vacant' means not currently occupied by an operating commercial business at the time of application submission.*

#### *Ineligible Buildings*

- Exclusively single-family, or multi-family residential buildings
- Buildings occupied, or intended to be occupied, by any of the following:
  - Payday loan businesses
  - Pawn shops
  - Firearm or other weapons dealers
  - Adult entertainment
  - Self-storage
  - Tobacco, vape, and marijuana stores
  - Internet cafes
  - Car washes

### **Eligible Expenses**

#### **White Box Improvement Expenses**

Base-level build-out work required to prepare a vacant commercial space for occupancy:

- Demolition and removal of outdated materials
- Framing, drywall, insulation (excluding finishes)
- Electrical, plumbing, and HVAC rough-in
- Life-safety and code-compliance upgrades
- Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility improvements
- Fire suppression or alarm improvements
- Base-level lighting
- Subfloor repair or installation of base flooring

## **Tenant Improvement Build-Out Expenses**

Improvements that customize the space for a specific business operation:

- Non-structural interior walls and partitions
- Drop ceilings or ceiling finishes
- Finish flooring
- Interior paint, finishes, and wall treatments
- Millwork and cabinetry
- Business-specific electrical or plumbing upgrades
- Lighting fixture installation
- HVAC adjustments related to tenant operations
- Restaurant-specific requirements (hood systems, grease traps, etc.)

*Ineligible expenses include:*

- Exterior improvements
- Furniture, equipment, or appliances
- Inventory
- Working capital or operating costs
- Property acquisition
- Design-only work

### Compliance Requirements

Costs incurred before the execution of the White Box Grant Agreement, or work performed without required permits, is ineligible for reimbursement.

If system upgrades (such as electrical, HVAC, or plumbing) serve the entire building, reimbursement will be limited to the proportionate share benefiting the approved commercial space, based on its percentage of the building's total square footage.


## **D. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Applications must be submitted online via the [Zoom Grants platform](#). No paper or emailed applications will be accepted.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply early to allow sufficient time for revisions and completion of all required materials.

### **Step 1: Pre-Application (Eligibility Screening)**

 **Opens: April 6, 2026 9:00am**

 **Closes: May 1, 2026 5:00pm**

Pre-applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Once approved, applicants will receive a link to proceed to the full application.

Required elements include:

- Property address
- Ownership status, or signed letter of permission from building owner
- Preliminary budget and funding sources
- Basic description of the intended use and improvements, and timeline
- Photos of existing interior conditions
- Certificate of Tax Compliance for the business entity. Certificates can be requested by email at [incometax@toledo.oh.gov](mailto:incometax@toledo.oh.gov) or by phone at 419-936-2020.  
*Allow up to 3 business days for response.*

### **Pre-Application Outcomes:**

- ✓ **Approved** - invited to submit Full Application
- ⚠ **Conditional** - minor corrections required
- ✗ **Not Eligible** - notified early and referred to partner organizations for support

### **Step 2: Full Application (Invitation-Only)**

**Closes: May 8, 2026 5:00pm**

Only applicants whose Pre-Applications are approved may submit a Full Application.

Required elements include:

- Detailed project budget and funding sources
- Architectural drawings or stamped plans (as required)
- Occupancy: Letter of intent, lease, self-occupancy statement, or marketing plan
- Contractor quote(s) with itemized eligible costs.
  - All work must be properly permitted in accordance with [TMC 1305](#) and comply with all applicable zoning, building and fire codes.
  - Any permitted work must be quoted by a contractor licensed by the City of Toledo per [TMC 1311](#). *To verify licensure, check [HERE](#)\**
  - Contractors and subcontractors must be registered with the Division of Taxation and possess a current Certificate of Tax Compliance per [TMC 798](#)
  - Any self-performed work will be reimbursed for materials only. All self-performed work should be clearly identified on quotes.

\* <https://toledo.oh.gov/business/how-to-build-in-the-city/registered-contractors>

Incomplete applications will not advance to scoring.

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**to provide application and project support to applicants at no-cost.** For more information, call (419) 245-1230 or email [Vibrancy@toledo.oh.gov](mailto:Vibrancy@toledo.oh.gov).

### E. SELECTION PROCESS & EVALUATION CRITERIA

Following the close of the application period, the Department of Economic Development will review applications to ensure that all submission requirements have been met. Applications deemed incomplete will not be scored.

The Vibrancy Incentive Committee (VIC) will review and score eligible applications based on the evaluation criteria outlined below. Upon completion of its review, the VIC will forward its scoring results and funding recommendations to the Mayor, who retains full discretion in determining final awards.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	SCORING	WEIGHT	MAX SCORE
<p><b>Project Impact</b>            The proposed improvements meaningfully enhance the building and surrounding area by activating the space, strengthening the commercial corridor, improving safety and accessibility, encouraging foot traffic, and supporting additional private investment.</p>	0-10	X4	40
<p><b>Legacy Commercial Corridor</b>            This criterion evaluates whether a project is located within a designated <a href="#">Legacy Commercial Corridor</a>. Projects located in a Legacy Commercial Corridor receive <b>(5) points</b>, reflecting their cultural and historical significance and their role in strengthening the economic vitality of the neighborhood.</p>	0/5	X4	20
<p><b>Historic &amp; Design Preservation</b>            Consideration is given to the age of the building in recognition of their historic value and the increased complexity and cost associated with preservation and reinvestment. <b>5 points:</b> constructed prior to 1900; <b>4 points:</b> constructed between 1900–1909; <b>3 points:</b> constructed between 1910–1929; <b>2 points:</b> constructed between 1930–1949; <b>1 point:</b> constructed between 1950–1969; <b>0 points:</b> constructed in 1970 or later.</p>	0-5	X3	15
<p><b>Neighborhood Revitalization Strategic Areas</b>            This criterion evaluates whether a project is located within a designated <a href="#">Neighborhood Revitalization Strategic Area</a> (NRSA). Projects located in a NRSA receive <b>(5) points</b>, reflecting a coordinated effort to prioritize place-based revitalization and maximize impact in strategic neighborhoods.</p>	0/5	X2	10
<p><b>Project Readiness &amp; Feasibility</b>            The project is realistic, well-planned, and ready to move forward. Costs are reasonable for the proposed work, bids reflect typical local pricing, matching funds are secured, and the applicant demonstrates the ability to manage and complete the project without significant related obstacles.</p>	0-5	X2	10

<p><b>Walkability Score</b>          This criterion evaluates whether a project is located within a designated <a href="#">Walkable Oriented Development</a> (WOD) cluster. These clusters, identified in the <a href="#">Forward Toledo Plan</a>, are locations where walkable, mixed-use activity is intentionally concentrated. Projects in WOD clusters receive <b>(5) points</b>, reflecting the project’s potential to contribute to and build upon existing clustered activity.</p>	0/5	X1	5
<b>MAXIMUM POSSIBLE SCORE:</b>			<b>100</b>
<p><b>Prior Planning Grant Recipient – Bonus Points</b>          Applicants that previously received a White Box Planning Grant will receive <b>(10) bonus points</b>, and the potential of a maximum possible score of <b>110</b>.</p>			

## F. POST AWARD PROCESS

### Award Requirements

**Documentation:** Awardees will be asked to provide the following documents-

- W-9
- Vendor Registration Form
- Copy of Commercial Building Insurance Policy
- Entity Operating Agreement (if applicable)
- Proof of funds for the project
  - 2025 income statement and balance sheet
  - Business bank statement dated within 45 days
  - Bank commitment letter (if applicable)
- **Grant Agreement:** Awardees must execute a White Box Grant Agreement with the City of Toledo. All required documents must be provided by Friday, May 22, 2026. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of the award.
- **Pre-Development Meeting:** Upon request, awardees must participate in a [pre-development meeting](#), to review project details.
- **Project Timeline:** Construction must begin by August 14, 2026. Projects that fail to meet required timelines may be terminated.
- **Restrictive Covenant:** Awardees must execute a restrictive covenant recorded with the Lucas County Recorder’s Office. The property may not be sold without City approval until December 1, 2028.

## G. PROJECT COMPLETION AND REIMBURSEMENT

All required reimbursement documentation must be submitted no later than **December 4, 2026**. Once approved, the reimbursement will be processed and issued by check.

To initiate reimbursement, the awardee must submit the following documentation:

- Itemized invoices for all eligible expenses
- Proof of payment (canceled checks or bank statements)
- Photographs of all completed work
- A copy of the [\*Certificate of Occupancy\*](#) or *Certificate of Completion*

Applicants and their contractors are solely responsible for requesting and completing all required inspections at the appropriate stages of construction. Inspections are scheduled based on availability, and the Division of Building Inspection cannot guarantee expedited review due to late requests. Failure to comply may impact project timelines, reimbursement eligibility, and the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy or Certificate of Completion.

### **Recognition of City Support**

Awardees are encouraged to recognize the City of Toledo’s support through signage, decals, or other agreed-upon acknowledgements, highlighting the partnership in supporting local businesses and neighborhood corridor investment.

The City of Toledo may also publicly recognize awarded projects through press releases, social media, website features, or other public communications to celebrate project milestones and promote continued investment in Toledo’s commercial corridors.

### **DISCLAIMER**

The Department of Economic Development, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to modify the above dates; suspend, amend, or modify the provisions of this Notice of Funding Availability, to waive selected requirements or limitations herein, to reject all proposals, to negotiate modifications of proposals, or to award less than the full amount of the funding available; all in its sole and absolute discretion.