



# Vibrant Places Matching Grant Program

## 2023 Program Guidelines



Urban Enterprise Association



City of South Bend  
Department of Community Investment

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# Vibrant Places Matching Grant Program

## 2023 Program Guidelines

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## Overview

The City of South Bend, in partnership with the Urban Enterprise Association (UEA), is pleased to offer matching grants for qualifying exterior improvements to commercial, mixed use, and industrial buildings throughout the City. This program can provide funding to support well-designed qualifying exterior enhancements that contain visual improvements and increase resiliency. Enhance your storefront, produce your own clean energy, upgrade signage and lighting, expand outdoor seating, activate your sidewalk, and more.

## Purpose

The intent of the Vibrant Places Matching Grant Program is to:

- Enhance the appearance, value, and character of properties in the City
- Encourage investment by business and property owners
- Generate additional sales for qualifying businesses
- Invest in sustainable, energy-efficient, low-carbon improvements and climate change mitigation
- Promote a walkable urban development pattern

## Grant Terms

The Vibrant Places Matching Grant Program is a citywide program with increased incentives based on the location of your business and the elements of your project. Note that businesses located in downtown South Bend may be referred to the [DTSB Exterior Enhancement Grant Program](#) administered by Downtown South Bend (DTSB).

### Standard Vibrant Places Grant Terms

Grant Share (of total standard project(s) cost)	up to 50%
Maximum Grant Amount: <i>Corridors</i> *	\$80,000 (50% of a \$160,000+ project)
Maximum Grant Amount: <i>Citywide</i>	\$30,000 (50% of a \$60,000+ project)
Minimum Grant Amount	\$1,500 (50% of a \$3,000 project)
Minimum Private Investment	\$1,500

The grant is structured as a reimbursement program; you must complete the project and contribute your private match before grant funds are issued to you. Actual grant amounts depend on the specific elements of a project and may not equal the maximum amounts outlined above. **The Vibrant Places Matching Grant Program is not intended to support deferred maintenance.**

\* Businesses located in one of the following corridors would be eligible for a maximum grant up to \$50,000 for standard exterior improvements and a second grant up to \$30,000 for additional exterior activation elements.

- Lincoln Way West: between LaSalle Avenue and west city limits (near Maplewood Ave.)
- Indiana Avenue: between Pulaski Street and Main Street

- Linden Avenue: between Walnut Street and Olive Street
- Miami Street: between Lincoln Way East and Altgeld Street
- Michigan Street: between Bronson Street and Donmoyer Avenue
- Mishawaka Avenue: between Eddy Street and Logan Street
- Portage Avenue: between Diamond Avenue/Angela Boulevard and Kinyon Street
- Elwood Avenue: between Portage Avenue to Wilber Street
- Western Avenue: between William Street and west city limits (near Mayflower Road)

## Sustainable Vibrant Places Bonus Grant Terms

In addition to providing support for exterior improvements through the Standard Grant, the City of South Bend can provide funding for a project that includes environmentally friendly elements. Projects that meet criteria for advanced sustainability benefits are eligible for an additional funding above and beyond the base funding of 50 percent.

When the sustainability bonus is added to an eligible item, the grant share for that item can increase to 70 percent. Below would be the maximum grants if all items in a project meet the advanced sustainability criteria:

Grant Share (of total sustainability project(s) cost)	up to 70%
Maximum Grant Amount: <i>Corridors</i>	\$112,000 (70% of a \$160,000+ project)
Maximum Grant Amount: <i>Citywide</i>	\$42,000 (70% of a \$60,000+ project)

Actual grant amounts depend on the specific elements of a project and may not equal the maximum amounts outlined above.

## SUNpowered Vibrant Places Grant Terms

The Vibrant Places Matching Grant Program includes additional incentives for businesses to install solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and battery storage systems. Solar PV panels generate electricity without burning fossil fuels or contributing to climate change. The SUNpowered matching grant is in addition to the standard grant and sustainability bonus, and a project could be eligible for all three.

Grant Share: <i>Corridors</i>	up to 25%
Grant Share: <i>Citywide</i>	up to 15%
Maximum Grant Amount: <i>Corridors</i>	\$30,000 (25% of a \$120,000+ project)
Maximum Grant Amount: <i>Citywide</i>	\$20,000 (15% of a \$133,333+ project)

The grant amount will be calculated using the total cost for solar panels and battery backup (if applicable). For both solar panels and battery storage systems, you are encouraged to claim the federal Investment Tax Credit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The federal Investment Tax Credit provides a non-refundable credit you can count towards your federal tax burden worth a percentage of the total installation cost of your battery system. You can file for the tax credit when you file your taxes for the year the panels and/or battery was installed. Due to the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, the tax credit is 30 percent for 2022 and will remain at 30 percent until 2033.

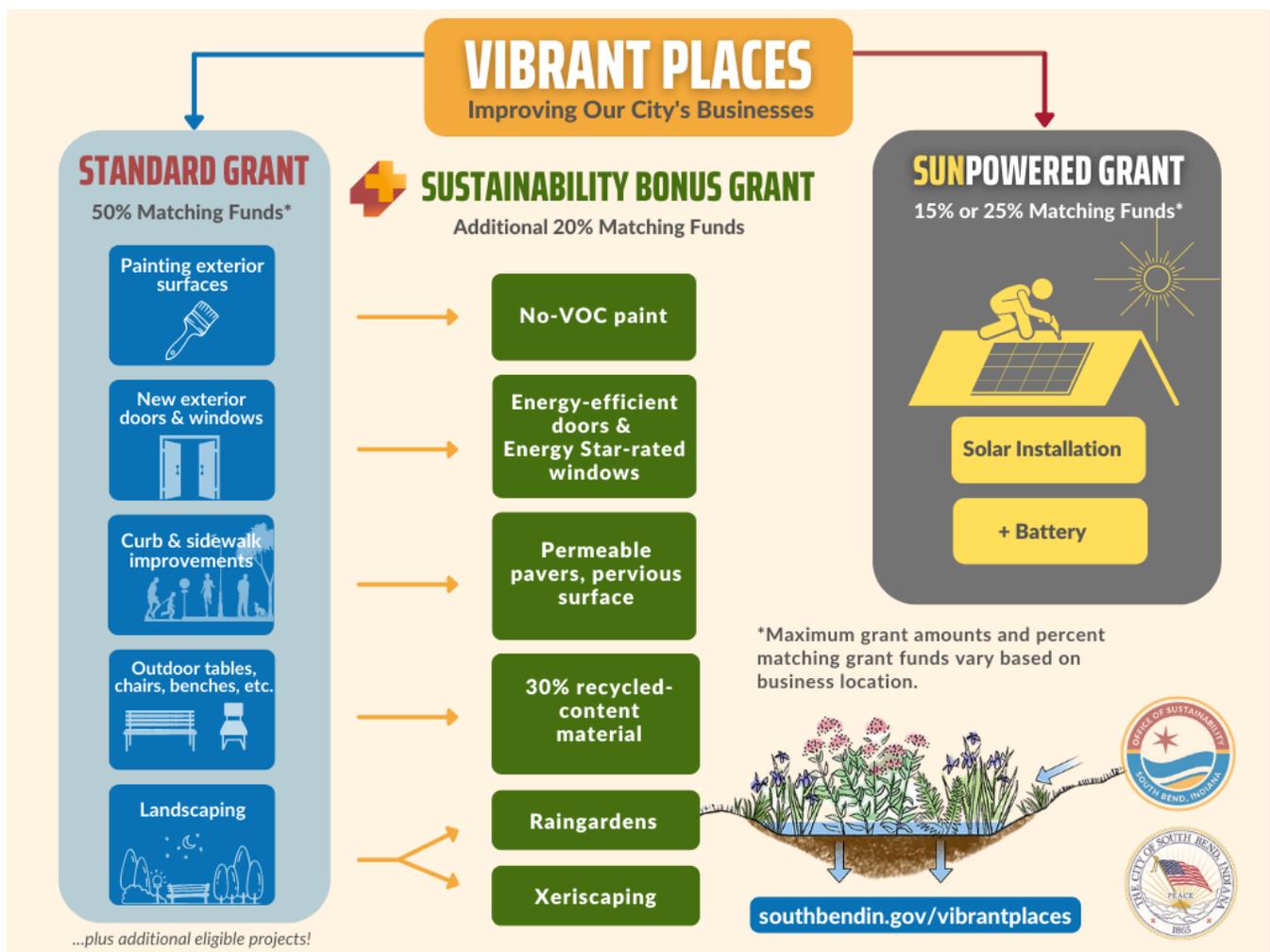
Note that if you are in a certain part of the downtown area, due to the design of the downtown electrical grid, your system will not be allowed to export excess energy to the grid (you can still use solar energy for your own property). Please see Appendix C for the geographic boundaries.

The grant is structured as a reimbursement program; you must complete the project and contribute your private match before grant funds are issued to you. Actual grant amounts depend on the specific elements of a project and may not equal the maximum amounts outlined above.

As a condition of receiving this solar incentive funding, you agree to share 12 months of utility data with the City before solar panel installation and after installation. Additionally, you agree to help educate and advance solar energy in one or more of the following ways:

- Host a ribbon-cutting or dedication event to unveil installation
- Host an education session where other businesses can learn about your solar project and ask questions
- Create a case-study and educational materials that can be used to promote your project

### Grant Program at a Glance



## Eligibility

To be eligible for a matching grant and sustainability bonus, the property must have frontage on the street. Except for solar panels or green roof installation, the improvements should be visible from the street. A business use must be present on the property or be established within six months of final grant payment. Property taxes must be current. The property must not be listed for sale.

A business does not need frontage on the street in order to apply for and to be eligible for the solar grant.

## Projects Eligible for Standard Grant Funding

- Restoration of facade to original or comparable appearance
- Restoration of architectural features
- Brick or masonry, including cleaning and tuckpointing
- Painting or other appropriate facade treatments of exterior surfaces
- Double-paned windows using clear glass
- New exterior doors
- Awnings and canopies (fabric or metal)
- Signs (building or monument)
- Murals and public art
- Architectural lighting (LED, dark sky compliant) which enhances the building's facade, improves the pedestrian environment, lights window display areas, and/or highlights architectural details.
- Landscaping
- Decorative fencing (wrought iron or decorative aluminum with 4-foot maximum height)
- Curb and sidewalk improvements
- Bike racks and outdoor tables, chairs, benches, and areas for commercial purposes
- Green roof (extra materials required specifically for a green roof, excluding standard roof materials; see Appendix B for more information)
- Outdoor sound systems
- Open storefronts and active rooftops that encourage interaction between the street and business
- Enhancements that activate the sidewalk such as outdoor dining areas, merchandise displays, or planters
- Barriers or railings that have permanence

Projects may be comprised of one eligible item or any combination of eligible items. See Appendix D for examples of eligible projects.

## Projects Eligible for Bonus Sustainability Grant Funding

- Energy efficient windows
- New energy efficient doors
- Pervious surface, permeable pavers
- Thirty (30) percent recycled-content material
- Xeriscaping (drought tolerant landscaping)
- Rain garden
- No-VOC Paint

See Appendix A for detailed specification eligibility for select materials or products.

## Projects Eligible for SUNpowered Grant Funding

- Any size or type of Solar PV installation (roof mounted, roof ballasted, ground mounted, canopy mounted, solar awnings)
- Installation may be grid-tied or interconnected to the grid with a battery

To learn more about going solar in South Bend, please visit <https://southbendin.gov/gosolar/>.

## Projects Not Eligible for Grant Funding

- Interior improvements or improvements to single-use residential buildings
- Improvements not visible from the street, except for solar panel or green roof installation
- Regular and deferred maintenance items
- Removal or enclosure of architecturally important features
- Roof replacement or repairs, except when serving as an architectural element
- HVAC systems
- Freestanding signs, except monument signs
- Parking lot paving
- Chain link and other non-decorative fencing
- Security systems, window or door bars, security gates, and driveway gates
- Demolition of structures
- Environmental consulting, hazardous material testing services, or abatement costs
- Improvements in progress or completed prior to grant approval

## Architectural Services

Basic architectural services, such as conceptual drawings and recommendations on materials, are provided free of charge to applicants as part of this program. Architectural services will be provided following submission of the pre-application. If you require complete architectural services, such as full construction sets, you should hire your own architect. If you choose your own architect, the program architect will review your proposed project for consistency with these program guidelines.

## Grant Process for Standard and Sustainable Vibrant Places Grants

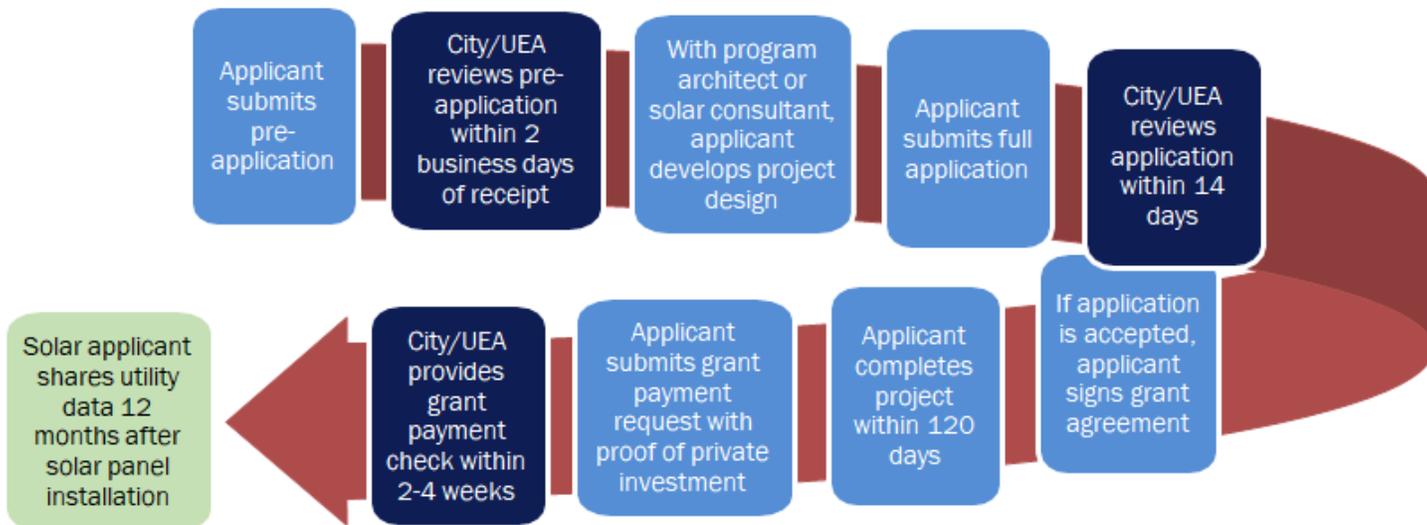
1. Review the Vibrant Places Matching Grant Program Guidelines.
2. Submit the matching grant [pre-application form](#). City/UEA representatives will review the pre-application and schedule an onsite meeting.
3. Meet with City/UEA representatives and the program architect at the project site to discuss the proposed improvements. The program architect will assist you with design concepts. A City/UEA representative will then provide you with an application form.
4. Using the design concepts, **contact at least two (2) licensed contractors** to obtain detailed written estimates for your project. You must call the Building Department at (574) 235-9554 to verify that your contractors are licensed. Estimates should be provided by local contractors when possible. **At least two itemized estimates for an identical scope of work for each project component are required with the application.** All labor, sales taxes, and permit fees should be included in the estimates. When appropriate, provide color and material samples with the application.
5. Submit the application. Applications will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. A completed application must include the following:
  - Completed application form;
  - At least two (2) estimates from licensed contractors detailing scope of work with itemized prices including all labor, sales taxes, and permit fees; and
  - Color and material samples for the work to be performed (when applicable).
6. City/UEA representatives will review applications for completeness and scope of work and determine whether the project is eligible for a matching grant. **Any grant award will be determined based on the cost of the lower of the two estimates.**
7. If your application is accepted and your project is eligible for a grant, you must sign the grant agreement. Grant payment will not be made if work begins prior to the grant agreement signing.
8. Provide the City/UEA with a copy of any required building or sign permits prior to beginning the project.
9. Complete your project as approved. Projects must be completed within 120 days of approval; extensions can be granted under special circumstances.
10. Notify the City/UEA representative when your project is completed. Provide your grant payment request with proof of private investment, such as paid invoices or receipts. Payment will not be distributed until proof of your private investment is submitted and the project is completed as determined and approved by the City of South Bend/UEA.

The grant check will be made payable to you. You are responsible for providing full payment to your contractor(s). Payment processing may take 2-4 weeks following final project acceptance.

## Grant Process for SUNpowered Vibrant Places

1. Submit Vibrant Places [pre-application form](#) and indicate your interest in going solar.
2. City representatives will review the pre-application and if your business is eligible, the City will share the registration information for a Solar 101 information session.
3. Register for and attend a 75-minute Solar 101 Session (virtual and in-person sessions will be held twice a month January through May).
4. Share 12 months of utility data with the City and our program partner, Solar United Neighbors (SUN). SUN will analyze the solar potential of your property and create a feasibility report for a solar project on your property.
5. Schedule a 60-minute meeting with SUN to review the feasibility report.
6. Collect at least two (2) quotes from vendors listed on the program's qualified solar installer registry.
7. Submit the application. Applications will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, with a carve out of funding for businesses located in the corridors. A completed application must include the following:
  - Completed application form; and
  - At least two (2) estimates from installers on the qualified solar installer registry and an indication of which installer you will select.
8. If your application is accepted and your project is eligible for a grant, you must sign the grant agreement. Grant payment will not be made if work begins prior to the grant agreement signing.
9. Complete your project as approved. Projects must be completed within 120 days of approval; extensions can be granted under special circumstances.
10. Send utility data 12 months following project completion.

## Grant Process at a Glance



## Additional Information

- All work on approved projects is subject to City building and zoning codes and must follow all permit and inspection procedures as outlined by the City of South Bend Building Department.
- Grantee is responsible for all project costs until the project is completed as approved and the grant payment is made.
- A maximum of one grant may be received per address per year.
- The City/UEA reserves the right to reject any and all applications up to the time of the grant agreement signing. The specific program guidelines detailed herein are subject to revision or amendment by the City of South Bend/UEA and the Vibrant Places Matching Grant Program partners. Subject to the availability of funding, this program may be discontinued at any time.

## Appendix A: Specifications for Sustainable Vibrant Places Bonus Grant

To be eligible for the Sustainable Vibrant Places Bonus Grant, projects must meet certain performance specifications. Detailed specification eligibility for select materials or products is provided below. Other projects consistent with the goal of investing in sustainable, energy-efficient, low-carbon improvements and climate change mitigation will also be considered.

Project	Description and Benefits	Specifications	Estimated Cost**	Links to More Information
<b>New energy efficient windows</b>	Average energy savings when updating single pane glass is \$270 per year.	<b>Residential windows:</b> Must have Energy Star label. Energy Star is a government program that certifies minimum energy performance criteria are met. All Energy Star labeled windows have a U-factor of 0.30 or lower, and with SHGC = .40 or lower. <b>Commercial windows:</b> Must confirm with supplier that windows provided will have U-factor of 0.30 or below and certify that performance.	\$5-40 per sq ft ( <a href="#">Source 1</a> )	<a href="#">Link 1</a> <a href="#">Link 2</a>
<b>New energy efficient doors</b>	Doors are responsible for 11 percent of air leaks in most homes. More insulated doors can reduce heating and cooling costs.	For doors with glass, they must have U-factor of 0.27 or lower For solid doors (without glass), U-factor must be 0.17 or lower	\$750-2,500	<a href="#">Link 1</a>
<b>Pervious surface or permeable pavers</b>	When we replace natural ground with hard, impermeable surfaces, water is unable to absorb back into the earth. Instead, rainwater sheet flows to gutters, overwhelms our systems, and causes flooding. Installing permeable surfaces allows water to absorb into the ground, reducing risk of flooding, and recharging our natural water aquifers.	<b>Permeable Pavers</b> Must have a base layer of 6-8" of ¾" open aggregate below the pavers. Joints between pavers filled with 1-1½" of ¼" #10 aggregate. Permeable pavers may be solid or open 'turf stone' style. <b>Other Permeable Surfaces</b> Pervious concrete and other surfaces with open cavities in a minimum of 15%, to allow water to soak through	\$7-30 ( <a href="#">Source 1</a> )	<a href="#">Link 1</a> <a href="#">Link 2</a>
<b>30% recycled-content material</b>	A variety of products can be purchased with recycled content. Purchasing recycled content diverts waste from landfills, reduces the carbon footprint, and contributes to a circular economy.	Any product labeled or certified with a minimum of 30% recycled content qualifies.	Varies	<a href="#">Link 1</a> <a href="#">Link 2</a>
<b>Xeriscaping (drought-tolerant landscaping)</b>	Xeriscaping includes a combination of specific drought-tolerant plants, and natural groundcover like stones or mulch. Once established, it does not require irrigation, reducing water costs.	Removal of grassy areas and replacement with drought-tolerant plants and hardscaping, to reduce need for watering once established.	\$5-20 per sq ft ( <a href="#">Source 1</a> )	<a href="#">Link 1</a> <a href="#">Link 2</a>
<b>Rain garden</b>	Rain gardens help to capture rainwater and allow water to be absorbed into the ground. This recharges our aquifers and reduces street flooding.	Must contain native plants appropriate for rain garden applications.	\$5-15 per sq ft ( <a href="#">Source 1</a> )	<a href="#">Link 1</a>

<b>No-VOC paint</b>	Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are present in a number of manufactured products, like paint, upholstery, carpet, etc. VOCs are emitted into the air, negatively impacting air quality, and contributing to smog and climate change.	Any certified no-VOC paint qualifies	\$18-40 per gallon ( <a href="#">Source 1</a> )	<a href="#">Link 1</a>
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\*\* Please note that estimated costs are subject to change.

## Appendix B: Green Roofs

Installation of a green roof is a sustainability project that may be eligible for 50 percent matching grant funding. Below is a description of eligibility requirements.

**Benefits: A green roof adds insulation and extends the life of a roof. Plants absorb heat and lower energy costs.** Total summer energy savings may be between 10 and 12 percent.

- Description: Green roofs include specifically designed systems to grow plants on flat or low-slope roofs. There are many different types of green roofs, and retrofitting requires structural analysis. Appropriate types of plants also need to be selected.
- Specifications: Eligible projects must be installed by professional green roof system installers. Materials above the “waterproof membrane” will qualify for grant funding; standard roofing materials do not qualify.
- Estimated Cost: According to [HomeAdvisor.com](https://www.homeadvisor.com), average green roof costs “start at about \$10 per square foot for a simple extensive living roof” and can exceed \$30 per square foot for “intensive roofs.” Note that this cost estimate is subject to change. The [National Park Service](https://www.nps.gov) has more information on a green roof, and you can find more information on the benefits of a green roof from the [Environmental Protection Agency](https://www.epa.gov).



## Appendix C: Downtown Underground Electrical Network Footprint



## Appendix D: Sample Eligible Projects

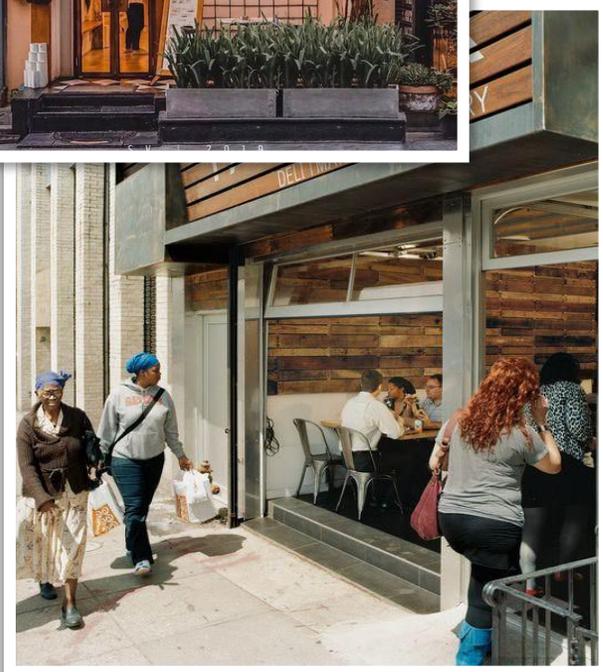
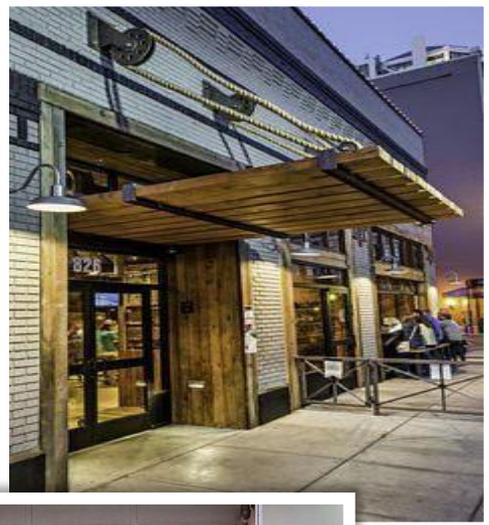
The following pages show the types of projects that might be eligible for a Vibrant Places Matching Grant. The images provided are for information only and are not an endorsement of any project.

As described in these guidelines, the City of South Bend/UEA will provide basic architectural services free of charge. This service will assist you in developing conceptual drawings for your project.

# Lighting



# Unique Design Elements



# Sustainability Bonus-Eligible Items (20 Percent Bonus)

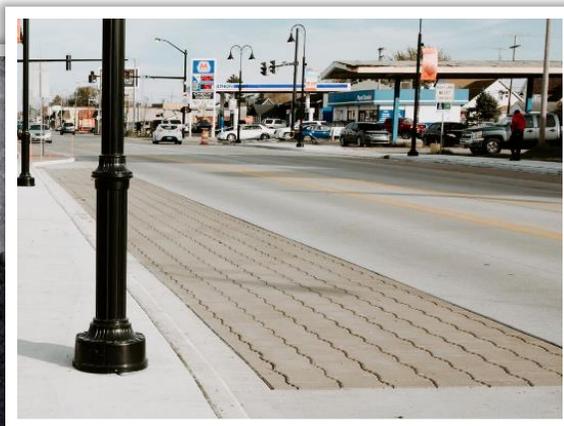
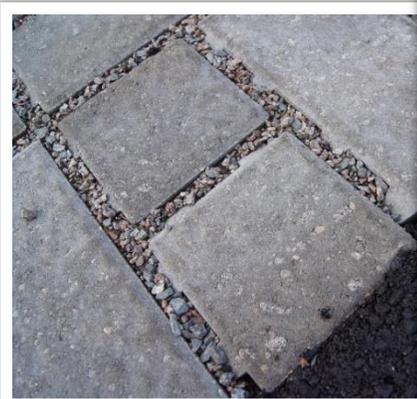
Rain Gardens



Xeriscaping



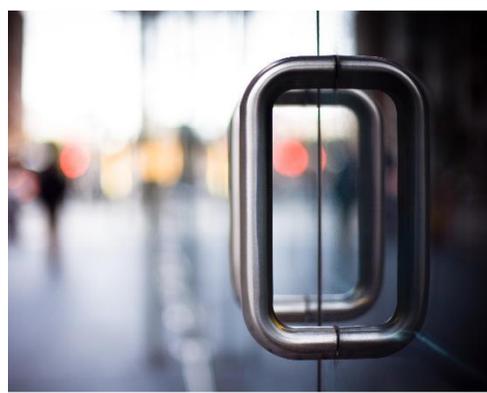
Permeable Pavers



No-VOC Paint



Energy Efficient Doors



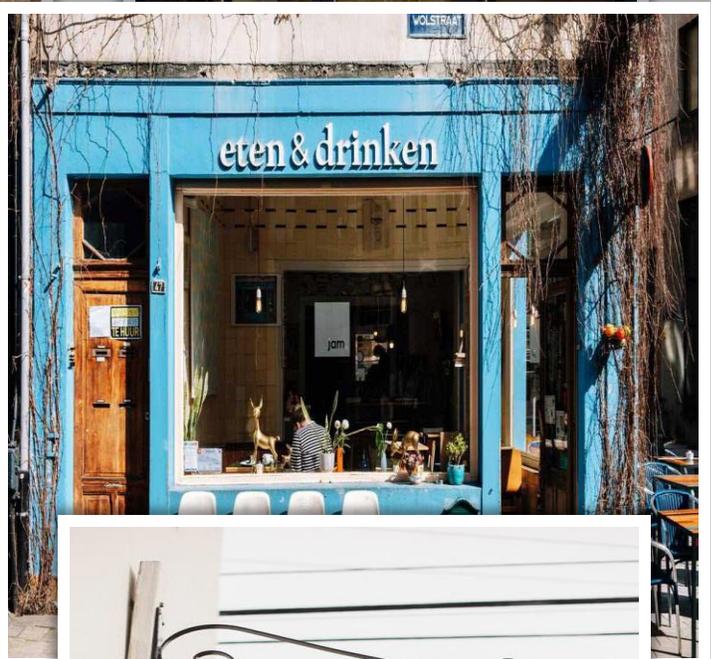
Energy Star Windows



30 Percent Recycled Material Products



# Signage



# Landscaping



# Seating: Outdoor and Indoor/Outdoor Hybrid



# Shade Structures

Sunshade



Installed Large Umbrellas



Pergolas



Installed Canopies



Non-Permanent Items Are Not Eligible

Pop-up  
Canopies  
and Tents



Consumer  
Umbrellas

# Fencing and Barriers

Decorative Fencing



Planters as Barriers



Non-Permanent and Non-Decorative Barriers Are Not Eligible



Water-filled Barriers

Temporary Fencing



# Exterior Heating

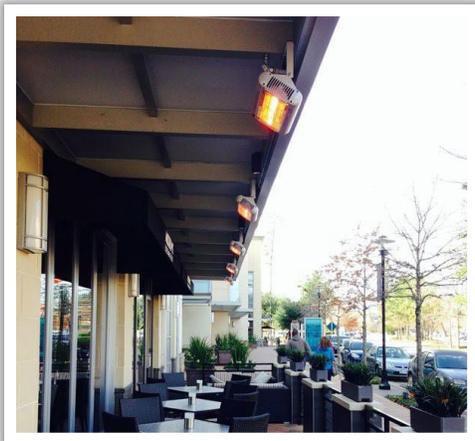
Heaters Installed as Part of Awning or Pergola Structure



Built-In Heaters Attached to Building



Heaters Built into Overhang



Built-in Heaters with Plumbed Gas



Portable Heaters Are Not Eligible

