



# MEMORANDUM

---

*"...meeting community needs...enhancing quality of life."*

TO: Community and Economic Development Committee

FROM: Matt Rehbein, Economic Development Specialist  
David Kress, Deputy Director Community and Economic Development

DATE: October 11, 2023

RE: The Neighborhood Grant Program – Application Submitted by Historic Central Neighborhood

---

## **BACKGROUND:**

The guidelines and approval process for the Neighborhood Grant Program (TNGP), as summarized below, were approved by Common Council on August 6, 2014.

TNGP is open to all Appleton registered neighborhoods that participate in the City's Neighborhood Program. The grants assist in strengthening and sustaining the social network of the Appleton community and may be applied to projects that enhance cultural, beautification, recreation, education, neighborhood cleanup, neighborhood safety and family/youth issues through resident-driven activities within each neighborhood. TNGP provides an opportunity for residents to partner with the City, promote the value of community, and support strong and stable neighborhoods throughout the City of Appleton.

Grant applications will be processed twice per year on August 1 and February 1. However, staff shall reserve the option, but not an obligation, to process applications at other times when warranted. Staff will perform an administrative review of each proposal and offer an analysis of all applications to be considered by Community and Economic Development Committee and Common Council.

Grant funds will not be provided directly to the neighborhood; funds will be paid to the provider of the service/materials directly upon submittal of the proper documentation. The City of Appleton Procurement Policy applies to all activities that involve the purchase of equipment, materials, supplies and/or services.

## **FUNDING REQUEST:**

The Historic Central Neighborhood, in partnership with Appleton Area School District (AASD), is requesting \$80,000 from TNGP to add playground equipment and create

more green space at Columbus Elementary School.

**PROPOSAL DETAILS:**

**Project Description:** The Columbus Elementary playground is a unique space utilized by the school and surrounding neighborhood. It is centrally located within the neighborhood and used for both hosted events and impromptu meet ups. The proposal from Historic Central Neighborhood is seeking to make the playground safer, utilize the space more fully, and create a community gathering space for the neighborhood.

The playground is regularly used by neighborhood residents on the weekends and after school hours. During school hours, it is used by students at both Columbus Elementary and Appleton Bilingual School. The two schools serve populations with free or reduced lunch rates of 78% and 51%, respectively.

As proposed, the playground enhancement project would include removal of asphalt and replacement with grass and wood chips, installation of three bays of swings, installation of a shade structure, addition of play equipment designed for 2-year-olds and up, installation of an asphalt walkway to make an entrance more accessible, replacement of a dead tree, installation of two new varying height basketball hoops, and traction-enhanced painting on the asphalt. Further information on the proposed changes is described in the attached application document and illustrated on the attached concept plan.

**Funding Sources and Estimated Budget:** The total cost of the proposed project is estimated at \$91,500. However, that amount does not include labor by AASD staff to remove and install the various playground elements. The applicant requests \$80,000 from TNGP. Other funding sources include labor and time from AASD staff and potential funding from Appleton Education Foundation. The applicant worked closely with the AASD Facilities & Operations Department to identify estimated costs (at time of application), which are summarized below.

Asphalt removal	\$27,000
Wood chips	\$10,000
Shade cover over bench	\$7,200
Playground equipment	\$24,300
Asphalt walkway to entrance doors	\$7,500
Tree replacement	\$500
Sod (material and labor)	\$8,000
Basketball hoops	\$6,000
<u>Pavement paint for mural/maze</u>	<u>\$1,000</u>
Total	\$91,500

**Estimated Timeline:** If necessary funding is secured, the applicant proposes a timeline of June 8, 2024 - July 31, 2024 to complete the playground project.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS:**

**Registered Neighborhood:** Only registered neighborhoods will be considered for TNGP. *This application meets this requirement, as the Historic Central Neighborhood has been a registered neighborhood since July 29, 2013. See attached map for neighborhood boundaries.*

**Neighborhood Support:** Each application must have a minimum of three households within the registered neighborhood “signed on” as supporters of the project. *This application meets this requirement, as nine households within the neighborhood have offered their support for the project. In addition, Mayor Woodford wrote a letter in support of the proposed project (see attached).*

**Involvement in City’s Neighborhood Program:** Preference will be given to neighborhoods that have actively participated in the programs offered by the City’s Neighborhood Program. *The Historic Central Neighborhood has been one of the more active registered neighborhoods. HCN frequently has multiple representatives at the City’s Spring and Fall Neighborhoods Meeting, has completed several neighborhood projects (with and without Neighborhood Grant funds), and has included staff in various activities within the neighborhood.*

**Neighborhood Program Goals:** Each application will be reviewed against how well it aligns with Neighborhood Program goals, such as strengthening and sustaining the social network of the Appleton community. *According to the applicant, creating a community gathering space is a priority in this neighborhood, where parks and other green space are in short supply. The proposed project would meet the needs of students during school hours and provide another recreation opportunity within the neighborhood.*

**History with TNGP Projects:** Consideration will be given to whether a neighborhood has received TNGP funds in the past and whether the project was completed as proposed. *The Historic Central Neighborhood was previously awarded TNGP funding to support Porchfest, neighborhood surveys, and other materials to connect neighbors.*

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Eligibility:** Currently, the funds available for TNGP are administered through the CDBG Program. These funds come with restriction of use area and use type, as described below.

### In Low-to-Moderate Income (LMI) Areas Only

- The attached LMI map indicates use areas within the City. In LMI areas, improvements to publicly accessible property, such as parks and schools, are eligible. Projects that qualify as an “area benefit” to all residents, such as infrastructure, are also eligible.

### Spot Blight Removal (does not have to be in LMI area)

- Spot blight removal is an eligible activity. Examples include demolition of vacant/deteriorated buildings and site clearance.

*The proposed project would qualify for CDBG funding, as it meets the LMI eligibility criteria. Although the Columbus Elementary School site is located outside of an LMI census block group, the proposed project would constitute an “area benefit” to serve nearby LMI families and/or individuals. The applicant also noted that the free or reduced lunch rate at Columbus Elementary School is 78%.*

**Comprehensive Plan 2010-2030:** The Comprehensive Plan 2010-2030 establishes a vision for future land use, physical development, and quality of life in the City and provides a comprehensive set of goals, policies, and initiatives to achieve that vision. *Staff has reviewed this proposed project and determined it is compatible with Comprehensive Plan 2010-2030. Related excerpts are listed below.*

- *Goal 2 – Neighborhood Development  
Appleton will preserve and enhance existing City neighborhoods, and require quality design in newly developed areas, to continue to provide an attractive setting for living and raising a family.*
- *Policy 5.4.2 Housing and Neighborhoods  
Engage neighborhood areas to identify target activities on which residents and City government can partner to take action.*
- *Policy 7.3.1 Utilities and Community Facilities  
Continue to collaborate with the Appleton School District and private schools on issues such as joint development and use of recreational fields, telecommunications infrastructure, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and similar issues.*

**Funds Available:** For the CDBG funding source, TNGP currently has a balance of \$79,999.73 that is available to award to qualifying projects. *The applicant’s request of \$80,000 slightly exceeds the current available balance. If the full \$79,999.73 is awarded, it would spend down CDBG funding that has been carried over for several years. Spending CDBG funding in a timely manner is important, as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development checks the spend-down status on an annual basis. The Neighborhood Program anticipates requesting an additional \$40,000 in CDBG funding for the 2024 program year.*

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Based on staff analysis, the Neighborhood Grant Program request submitted by the Historic Central Neighborhood meets the established criteria and warrants consideration by the Community and Economic Development Committee.

Staff recommends approval of the Neighborhood Grant Program request submitted by the Historic Central Neighborhood and awarding of funds, in an amount not to exceed of \$79,999.73, for the proposed playground enhancement project.