



# **APPLICATION GUIDE**

**NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

**APPROVED 2-12-24**

### **Eligible Applicants:**

Associations registered and in compliance with the County's *Commissioners Court Order: County Neighborhood Associations*

- Applicants in the process of registering as an association with the County may apply; however, registration must be complete prior to County Commissioners approval of projects

### **Eligible Project Request:**

- Located outside the jurisdictional boundary of an incorporated municipality, or if within a municipality, upon County-owned property or right-of-way
- Small-scale, permanent physical improvement projects (at least 10-year expected life span)
- Physically located within or no further than a ¼ mile outside an association's recognized boundary
- Certain traffic calming requests (i.e. speed humps) must have a warranted traffic study conducted or in progress by the final application deadline

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT/ RETURN APPLICATIONS TO**

El Paso County – Planning & Development Department (Redevelopment Division)

**Address:** 800 E. Overland Ave. Suite 200 – El Paso, TX 79901

**Email:** [neighborhoods@epcounty.com](mailto:neighborhoods@epcounty.com)

**Phone:** (915) 273-3330

## **NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (NIP)**

The County's Planning & Development Department oversees the NIP application process and acts as the liaison between associations and County departments throughout the application and implementation processes.

### **PURPOSE**

The NIP provides an opportunity for neighborhood associations – registered under the County's *Recognized Neighborhood Association Court Order* – to request small-scale, permanent physical improvement projects to enhance the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

### **FUNDING SOURCE**

NIP funding is made available through the County's adopted annual budget. Availability of funding is dependent on the approval of the Commissioners Court for a given fiscal year.

### **AVAILABLE FUNDS**

Annual funding levels may change according to the adopted budget. County staff will ensure the distribution of funding per precinct & Judge (initial funding divided 5-ways) congruent with scoring metrics and an equitable achievement of program goals. Please contact the department to inquire about current funding availability.

### **IMPORTANT APPLICATION NOTES**

NIP projects may be small-scale standalone projects or may supplement existing infrastructure by providing additional amenities and aesthetic appeal. Commonly requested projects include but are not limited to: picnic tables, playgrounds, swings, murals, etc.

- Funding is competitive among applicants within a precinct
  - One or more project requests may be awarded up to the available equal funding per precinct
  - In the event of limited qualified projects, awards may be granted on a first come basis
  - Applications will be accepted after the adoption of a new fiscal year's budget, if provided for in that budget
- Applicants may submit two project applications, however:
  - If both applications are determined to be feasible, applicants will be required to select a single application to move forward during the final application review process
- No more than one project will be recommended for funding per association per precinct
- The County Judge may allocate all or part of their funding towards any otherwise eligible project, regardless of the project's precinct
- The County reviews all project requests and conducts all cost estimates – the County department that would be responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the requested project determines project feasibility

### **INELEGIBLE PROJECTS**

- Requests not on county-owned property or that require the purchase or acquisition of land
- Requests determined NOT feasible according to federal/state/local government policies, standards and/or regulations
- Applicants will finalize and submit their revised applications at the end of this process.
- Requests that exceed the available funds within a precinct (requests may be reduced in scope to be brought under the funding limit)
- No monetary or material donations are permitted for NIP project requests

## NIP CHECKLIST

### Pre-Application Form

- Statement of Intent** – Single page form with a brief description of the intended project request  
(Optional – worth 2-points on the project scorecard)

### Final Application Form

- Contact Information** – Provide the name of the association and two points-of-contact.  
(Notifications about the application process will be sent to the two contacts listed on the application. If a contact changes during the application review process, it is the responsibility of the applicant to notify the Planning & Development Department.)
- Commissioner Precinct** – Identify the precinct in which the applicant is applying for funds.
- Project Location** – Provide the physical address or general location of the proposed project.
  - ▶ **EXAMPLE:** “Ascarate Park”, “Intersection of Eastlake Blvd. and Darrington Blvd.” or “300 block of El Paso St.”
- Project Goal Statement** – One sentence that states the main goal of the requested project.
  - ▶ **EXAMPLE:** “To increase recreational opportunities and physical fitness for residents of the neighborhood.” “To improve safety and walkability for all residents in our neighborhood.”
- Project Background** – One to four sentences that explain the community need for the requested project and how the project will address that need or contribute to the enhancement of the neighborhood.
  - ▶ **IN OTHER WORDS:** What is the issue and how will your project address that issue?
- Project Scope Description** – One to six sentences that provide a detailed description of the proposed project.
  - ▶ **EXAMPLE:** “Install 2 picnic tables with four-post, metal canopies and 2 trash cans near the playground.” “Fill-in 2 blocks of sidewalk gaps and install 4 wheel chair ramps.”  
(Requests may be listed or bulleted. Be as detailed as possible, and if applicable, include quantities, approximate distance measurements, and/or desired specifications for requested items.)
- Project Map** – Illustration marking the proposed location(s) of the requested project items.
  - ▶ **EXAMPLE:** Map may be hand-drawn or a print-out of a map from the internet with hand-drawn labeling.

- Project Site Photos** – One to four pictures of what the current site looks like.
- Project Illustration** – One to four pictures of a similar project to replicate or rendering/drawing of the envisioned project.

*(Upon request, and no later than a week prior to the deadline, the Planning & Development Department may assist applicants with the creation of a map, project site photos and project illustration.)*

## **NEIGHBORHOOD SUPPORT**

- Neighborhood Support Form** – If an application is determined feasible during the application review process, applicants will be required to provide documented evidence of support from residents in the neighborhood.
  - ▶ Applicants **MUST ONLY USE** the signature sheet provided by the Planning & Development Department. No other form of project support will be accepted as a substitute.
  - ▶ A minimum of fifteen (15) household signatures are required. If more than one person signs from a single household, they will only be counted as one household signature.
  - ▶ Signatures will need to be collected by households immediately adjacent to the proposed improvement if applicable.
  - ▶ Neighborhood Support Forms that were collected previously may be resubmitted if the current application and scope of work is substantially similar.

## **NIP APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS**

### **Step 1: Review**

### **Pre-Applications & Design Lab**

All pre-applications will be reviewed by a **County staff review team** to determine project intent, understand project goals, and work with Neighborhood Association to finalize a scope and put together the final application. County Staff will hold Design Lab workshops with the applicants to review each proposed project for the following:

- **Feasibility**
- **Alignment with other County services/Infrastructure for greater impact**
- **Site location and project limits**
- **Scope to align with project intent**

## **Step 2: Internal Review of Applications for Feasibility, Constructability and Scope**

All applications will be reviewed by a **County staff review team** to determine project feasibility based on federal/state/local government policies, standards and/or regulations. County staff review team includes the following County departments:

- **Planning & Development Department** – Lead organizer and liaison between departments and applicants.
- **Parks and Recreation/Parks Maintenance Department** – Provides the initial review of park improvement projects.
- **Public Works** – Reviews all requested improvement projects and provides the project cost estimates (*no outside cost estimates will be considered*).
- Preliminary Cost estimates will be determined for proposed project scopes.
- Applicants will be notified of the feasibility of their proposed project and if the application will move forward to the next stage of the review process. For applicants that went through the pre-application process, the project scope will have been revised to meet feasibility, and will be checked for budget.
- At the Project Scope Review Meeting, if an applicant submitted two feasible applications, they will be required to select which application to move forward for final consideration.

## **Step 3: Neighborhood Support**

Applicants will be required to complete **Neighborhood Support Forms** to document support for their application from residents in the neighborhood. Signatures will need to be collected by households immediately adjacent to the proposed improvement if applicable.

- Neighborhood Support Forms will be emailed or mailed to applicants after the project scope review meetings and will include the deadline for submission.
- Applicants will have at least eight weeks to collect support signatures.
- Electronic signatures with an accompanying email will be accepted.

## **Step 4: Score Applications**

With the preliminary cost estimates, revised scope, and when the neighborhood support forms are collected, the County staff review team will score each application on a 100-point scale (*see scorecard on the following page*).

- For each Commissioner Precinct, staff will recommend funding for the highest scoring application followed by the next highest scoring application(s) that can be substantially completed within the remaining available funds.
- Applicants will receive notice by email or mail of the County staff review team's recommendations.

### **Step 5: Final Scope of Work and Cost Estimates on highest ranking applications**

- The Public Works Department will be revising the project cost estimates based on feedback from the County departments and applicant feedback on the highest ranking applications, and finalize the project scope.
- Cost estimates will include all project costs, which may include any of the following: materials, park equipment, demolition, construction, contingency, design and design fees, topographic surveys, project coordination, project engineering, inspections, testing, contract compliance, and/or utility service upgrade/relocation.

### **Step 6: Present Recommendations**

Final approval of all NIP project requests is determined by the Planning & Development Department at a public meeting.

- Applicants will receive notice by email or mail of the date, time and location of the public meeting where Commissioners Court will take official action on staff's recommendations.

### **NIP IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

The Public Works Department is responsible for implementing the construction of the approved projects. Planning & Development will submit the required forms and documentation to the Public Works Department to begin implementing approved projects.

The Planning & Development Department will continue to be the liaison for periodic updates on project status between the awarded applicants and County departments.

All awarded projects are subject to the County's bidding, purchasing and construction policies and procedures.

# Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP)

## Project Scorecard

<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>100.0</b>

<b>1) Pre-Application &amp; Technical Merit (0-5pts)</b>				<b>5.0</b>
0 to 2-pts, Did the applicant submit a pre-application?				2.0
0 to 3-pts, How well did the applicant develop their overall project proposal?				3.0
<b>2) Project Goal (0-3pts)</b>				<b>3.0</b>
0 to 3-pts, How well does the applicant provide a clear & concise goal for their proposed project?				
<b>3) Project Background (0-10pts)</b>				<b>10.0</b>
0 to 5-pts, How well does the applicant describe a significant community need/problem?				5.0
0 to 5-pts, How well does the applicant make a case for how the proposed project will address the stated need/problem?				5.0
<b>4) Project Description (0-10pts)</b>				<b>10.0</b>
0 to 10-pts, How well does the applicant clearly describe what they are requesting (ex. styles, types, colors, quantities, etc.)?				
<b>5) Project Map (0-5pts)</b>				<b>5.0</b>
0 to 5-pts, How well does the applicant clearly label the desired location(s) of the proposed project and proposed project items?				
<b>6) Project Picture/Illustration (0-5pts)</b>				<b>5.0</b>
0 to 2-pt, How well does the applicant provide a clear picture of what the current site looks like?				2.0
0 to 3-pts, How well does the applicant provide a clear illustration of what they envision the project to look like?				3.0
<b>7) Neighborhood Support (3-20pts)</b>				<b>20.0</b>
20-pts, 100 or more household signatures or 50% households within boundary	16-pts, 80 household signatures	11-pts, 55 household signatures	6-pts, 30 household signatures	
19-pts, 95 household signatures	15-pts, 75 household signatures	10-pts, 50 household signatures	5-pts, 25 household signatures	
18-pts, 90 household signatures	14-pts, 70 household signatures	9-pts, 45 household signatures	4-pts, 20 household signatures	
17-pts, 85 household signatures	13-pts, 65 household signatures	8-pts, 40 household signatures	3-pts, 15 household signatures	
	12-pts, 60 household signatures	7-pts, 35 household signatures	(Minimum Requirement)	
<b>8) Project Budget - (For Project Design Team) (0-5pts)</b>				<b>5.0</b>
5.0-pts, if project cost is under \$20,000		2.0-pts, if project cost is \$120,000 to \$139,999		
4.5-pts, if project cost is \$20,000 to \$39,999		1.5-pts, if project cost is \$140,000 to \$159,999		
4.0-pts, if project cost is \$40,000 to \$59,999		1.0-pts, if project cost is \$160,000 to \$179,999		
3.5-pts, if project cost is \$60,000 to \$79,999		0.5-pts, if project cost is \$180,000 to \$199,999		
3.0-pts, if project cost is \$80,000 to \$99,999		0-pts, if project cost is \$200,000 or over		
2.5-pts, if project cost is \$100,000 to \$119,999				
<b>9) County Strategic Alignment - (For County User Department ONLY) (0-25pts)</b>				<b>25.0</b>
0 to 7-pts, Does the proposed project align with County strategic plans and department policies and/or standards?				7.0
0 to 5-pts, How does the proposed project affect department maintenance costs? (5-pts for very low maintenance projects)				5.0
0 to 3-pts, Does the proposed project help promote a healthy lifestyle?				3.0
0 to 3-pts, Are there other opportunities to fund the proposed project within this program cycle?				3.0
0 to 7-pts, Overall, do County departments support the proposed project?				7.0
<b>10) Previous Funding - (For PLANNING &amp; DEVELOPMENT ONLY) (0-10pts)</b>				<b>10.0</b>
Was the applicant awarded funding previously?				
10-pts, if applicant was NOT awarded		4.5-pts, if project awarded funds were \$100,000 to \$109,999		
9.5-pts, if project awarded funds were below \$10,000		4.0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$110,000 to \$119,999		
9.0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$10,000 to \$19,999		3.5-pts, if project awarded funds were \$120,000 to \$129,999		
8.5-pts, if project awarded funds were \$20,000 to \$29,999		3.0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$130,000 to \$139,999		
8.0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$30,000 to \$39,999		2.5-pts, if project awarded funds were \$140,000 to \$149,999		
7.5-pts, if project awarded funds were \$40,000 to \$49,999		2.0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$150,000 to \$159,999		
7.0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$50,000 to \$59,999		1.5-pts, if project awarded funds were \$160,000 to \$169,999		
6.5-pts, if project awarded funds were \$60,000 to \$69,999		1.0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$170,000 to \$179,999		
6.0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$70,000 to \$79,999		0.5-pts, if project awarded funds were \$180,000 to \$189,999		
5.5-pts, if project awarded funds were \$80,000 to \$89,999		0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$190,000 or over		
5.0-pts, if project awarded funds were \$90,000 to \$99,999				
<b>11) Re-Submitted Feasible Application - (For PLANNING &amp; DEVELOPMENT ONLY) (2pts)</b>				<b>2.0</b>
2-pts, Did the applicant submit a substantially similar, feasible application previously, but was not awarded due to limited available funds?				
Project recommendations are based on funding the highest scoring application followed by the next highest scoring application(s) that can be substantially completed within the remaining available funds.				