

Neighborhood Spruce-Up Grant Program 2025 Overview

Southeast CDC

Southeast Community Development Corporation was founded in 1975. We practice a comprehensive and collaborative approach to community development by partnering with residents through investments in home renovation, new business development, community schools, neighborhood volunteerism, and leadership development. We offer full-service housing counseling including pre-purchase, foreclosure prevention, financial coaching, and reverse mortgage counseling in both English and Spanish. We manage the Healthy Neighborhoods loan program, which offers incentives for buying and renovating homes and have Community School Coordinators in five public schools.

Program Overview

Southeast CDC's Neighborhood Spruce-Up Grant program funds meaningful, long-lasting, neighborhood-driven public space improvements in Southeast and East Baltimore communities. These projects aim to raise the quality of life, facilitate grassroots engagement and ownership of neighborhood spaces, improve personal safety and streetscape appeal, and/or enhance the quality of the environment around schools.

This program is made possible thanks to a grant from the State of Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (MD DHCD) Baltimore Regional Neighborhoods Initiative (BRNI).

Timeline

Applications open	Monday, April 28, 2025
Optional virtual info session	Friday, May 9, 2025 (5:30-6:30pm)
Full applications due by noon	Friday, May 30, 2025
<i>Applications reviewed</i>	June 2 – June 6, 2025
Award announcement!	Monday, June 9, 2025
Signed grant agreements due , project period begins	Monday, June 30, 2025
Quarter 1 report due	Sunday, October 5, 2025
Quarter 2 report due	Sunday, January 4, 2026
Quarter 3 report due	Sunday, April 5, 2026
<i>Project period ends, all funding must be spent</i>	Tuesday, June 30, 2026
Final report due	Sunday, July 5, 2026

Eligible Projects & Applicants

Individuals, community associations, and non-profits working on projects in Southeast CDC's BRNI area. Our BRNI area includes part or all of the following neighborhoods: Baltimore Highlands, Bayview, Butchers Hill, CARE, Ellwood Park/Monument, Greektown, Highlandtown, Madison-Eastend, McElderry Park, Milton-Montford, Patterson Park, Patterson Place.

Please visit <https://portal.dhcd.state.md.us/GIS/revitalize/index.html> to verify if your proposed project falls within the boundaries.

The applicant must have a 501(c)(3) designation or use a 501(c)(3) as a fiscal agent.

Examples of Potential Spruce-Up Projects

- Creating and installing gateways and signage
- Streetscaping and pedestrian lighting
- Improving underutilized public spaces like plazas, bus stops, vacant lots, or school grounds
- Implementing public art projects
- *Note: String light projects are not eligible to be funded by Spruce-Up*

Projects must connect directly to a community's master plan or neighborhood goals. Projects must include direct engagement with neighbors or other potential users; proof of local community support is required.

Application Process

Applicants must use the provided template, which includes:

- A project description
- Description of the community need the project is aiming to address
- Evidence of support for the project from impacted stakeholders (such as neighborhood associations, schools, churches, or local businesses); evidence could include letters of support or petitions
- Project scope (specific description of what will be accomplished by the project)
- Description of applicant's connection to the project and ability to execute the project
- Project budget with uses and funding sources, including proof of outside funding commitments, if applicable
- Detailed timeline
- Pictures of existing conditions
- Conceptual drawings or renderings of final project, if applicable
- Evidence of site control/access and permits to implement the project

The applications will be reviewed by a committee of stakeholders including community residents and professional designers, public artists, and landscape architects. Once the grant review committee has made its final decisions, we will notify all applicants and publicly announce those projects that were awarded funding and the funding amounts. In some cases, we will award less money than was requested where we identify opportunities for savings or specific challenges with implementation.

Financial Guidelines

Spruce-Up funds can cover capital costs only, including:

- materials like paint, benches, plants, and trees
- design and installation labor
- permitting fees for installation

Spruce-Up funds cannot support operating costs, such as:

- staff time
- youth stipends
- permits for events
- conceptual design drawings

Funds cannot be used on any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office or the lobbying of governmental action, for religious purposes, or in any capacity that excludes any persons.

The size of grant awards typically range from \$7,500 to \$20,000. Southeast CDC can pay vendors directly or reimburse neighbors after purchases are made. Please know that it can take up to 30 days for our organization to process a check request.

Awardees must save all receipts and submit them to Southeast CDC as proof of payment using a “Request for Payment” form. Only expenses outlined in the approved budget will be reimbursed, starting on the day of the funding period. Any funds not used by the deadline may be forfeited to MD DHCD.

Matching funds and in-kind donations can be used for any types of expenses, as designated by the donor. Proposals that include committed matching funds will receive priority in the grant review process, but there is no specific minimum or maximum matching amount that is required.

Monitoring and Reporting

Grant awardees submit quarterly project updates; Southeast CDC will provide a reporting template and outline the reporting schedule in the grant agreement. The reports allow SECD to monitor the progress

of each of the projects ensuring that each project is on track and enable our staff to help problem solve issues that arise during the implementation process.

Promotion and Visibility

Projects must include a “marketing plan” that promotes the project to the community. Depending on the scale of the project, this could include regular social media postings on community Facebook groups, inclusion in a community newsletter, creating posters or flyers to share the project steps with nearby neighbors, or hosting events at the project site. We encourage project partners to mention or tag Southeast CDC in public postings about the projects; we will provide our logo for publications.

All sites will receive a Spruce-Up yard sign that includes funders’ logos and information about the program to display on site. Southeast CDC occasionally plans public tours of our Spruce-Up projects, which may include a stop to your site!

Permits and permissions

Property owner approval is required at the time of application. Some projects may include work that requires City of Baltimore review, such as projects on vacant lots or within the City roadway or alleys. Approval from relevant agencies is required to apply, although permits are not required before application.

Because this project is funded by the State of Maryland, all projects are subjected to review by the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT). MHT examines proposals to ensure they are consistent with the historical design of the site and is primarily concerned with projects that involve physical changes to buildings, such as installing lighting or murals. This review may take up to 30 days and is incorporated in the project review timeline and coordinated by SECDC.

*Please direct all program communications, including applications,
to Jade Harper at jade@southeastcdc.org.
Feel free to call with any questions – 667-481-8271*