



The Beautiful Blocks program gives residents of the Cities of Scranton, Carbondale, and Pittston an opportunity to improve their homes and their neighborhoods with the help of a matching grant for exterior improvements. The program provides an incentive for neighbors to work together to make exterior improvements to their homes. Through Beautiful Blocks, **each property can receive a matching grant of up to \$1,000 for exterior home improvements.** Homes completing sidewalk repair or replacement projects are eligible for an additional \$1,000 in funding (\$2,000 total).

Eligibility Requirements:

- Homes must be **located in the City of Scranton, City of Carbondale, or City of Pittston.** Both owner-occupied and rental properties are eligible.
- Residents must match their grant awards dollar-for-dollar, unless they meet certain income guidelines. If your household income is less than 80% of the area median income, however, you are only required to provide a 20% match. For example, if you meet these income guidelines and receive the maximum \$1,000 grant award, you must personally contribute at least \$200 towards your project. Otherwise, you must match the \$1,000 grant with \$1,000 of your own funds.
- **Residents who are completing sidewalk replacement projects are eligible for an additional \$1,000 in grant funding,** for a total grant of \$2,000, with no additional match required. Sidewalks must run in front of the home, and/or to the front porch. Concrete sidewalks are encouraged; no asphalt/macadam sidewalks are allowed.
- Grants must be used for **exterior home improvements.** Work may be completed by the resident or a contractor. **Residents are encouraged to use contractors with valid business liability insurance** (Scranton residents: contractors must be licensed by the City of Scranton, if working on a project requiring a license.)
- If using a contractor, residents must pay their contractor in full, then submit proof of payment to NeighborWorks before grant funds are issued. **No payments will be issued to contractors directly.**
- Work completed before the approval of grants will **not** be eligible for grant funding.
- Grant funds may **not** be used to purchase tools or equipment.
- Homes must be located near one another, preferably within 1-2 city blocks of each other.
- If you have received a Beautiful Blocks grant in the past, you are welcome to apply again. However, at least 25% of the residents in your group must not have participated in our 2024 program cycle.
- Once your pre-application is submitted, additional homes may **not** be added to your group.
- Participating homeowners **may not have delinquent taxes or garbage fees.**
- Applicants are allowed to enter one property per group. If an applicant wishes to enter an additional property (i.e. rental property) the individual application would need to be the responsibility of a tenant.
- Only residential properties are eligible for Beautiful Blocks funding; each applying property must contain a residential structure. Vacant/side lots, commercial properties, parking lots, and other non-residential properties are not eligible to participate.

What are some examples of eligible improvements?

- Sidewalk repairs and replacement (eligible for additional funding)
- Porch repairs
- Front doors and screen doors
- Exterior lights
- Exterior painting
- Front yard landscaping
- Awnings
- Garage door replacement
- And many more!

Role of the Block Captain

Block captains are members of applicant groups who work to recruit neighbors to form a group, complete the preliminary application for their group, and offer guidance and assistance to the group over the course of the program cycle.

The good work done by block captains is a key component in the success of Beautiful Blocks groups. If you are serving as a block captain, we ask that you assist with the following:

- * Recruit neighbors to your block group, and complete the group application.
- * Assist neighbors in completing their individual applications.
- * Monitor the progress of participating neighbors, and communicate with NeighborWorks staff on progress of individual projects (if selected)

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What financial information do I need to provide?** When completing individual applications, each group member will need to provide the total annual household income for their home. If this figure is below 80% of the area median income for your household size, you'll be required to provide a form of income verification (tax return, social security statements, etc...) upon completion of your project.
- 2. What work is not eligible for funding?** Beautiful Blocks projects are intended to provide high-visibility and impact improvements to the front of participating homes. Accordingly, projects that are not eligible include purchase of porch furniture, swimming pool work, interior renovations, or any work to the rear of a property.
- 3. How far apart are participating homes allowed to be?** In order to build a spirit of connectivity among neighbors, and to facilitate improvements in a concentrated area, we ask that you recruit and apply with homes within a close radius. Generally, this would be within a 1-2 block radius of your home. If there are neighbors further away who wish to participate, please note this when entering their information in your pre-application.

How are the projects selected?

The Beautiful Blocks program is a competitive matching grant program. Applications will be judged against one another based on several criteria:

Number of neighbors: All applications must include at least 5 properties, with a maximum of 20 properties per group. At least 25% of properties must not have received funding in our 2024 cycle.

Details: The more detail you provide about your project and how your group will work together, the higher your application will score.

Organization: All applicants must designate a Block Captain to be the point of contact for the group. Groups that show good overall organization will be given preference.

Momentum: A goal of the program is to build a lasting bond between neighbors. Groups that provide a plan for continuing to work together for the benefit of the neighborhood are more likely to be selected.

How do I apply?

- 1. Recruit your neighbors for the program.**
- 2. Complete and submit the Pre-Application to NeighborWorks.** Designate a Block Captain to act as your point of contact and choose a “team name” for your block (ex: East Mountain Marvels). Feel free to be creative! Block captains must complete our pre-application document (available via our website) and must collect and send one "before" photo of each proposed project to ghetman@nwnepa.org. Please send your group's "before" photos together, in as few emails as possible, with each photo labeled for the corresponding applicant.
- 3. Fill out and turn in Individual Applications.** After NeighborWorks staff review your pre-application, each member of your group will receive an individual application. In this phase, your group members will detail the scope of work for each home, and how each neighbor plans to complete the work. Project estimates are strongly encouraged to be submitted, along with the names of any contractors who will do work on projects.

Important Dates

Pre-Application Due: **March 28, 2025**

Full Applications Due: **April 28, 2025**

Awards Announced: **May 2025**

Project Completion Deadline: **November 3, 2025**

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