



## **THE HISTORIC HOMEOWNER GRANT PROGRAM**

A District of Columbia government program to assist homeowners with the preservation of their historic residence

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

#### What is the Historic Homeowners Grant Program?

The program provides funding to help qualified homeowners pay for repairs that restore or rehabilitate their historic house.

#### How much are the grants?

The maximum grant allowable is \$50,000 per household. A household may have only one application or grant active at any one time.

#### What can the grant be used for?

The grant may be used for repair, restoration or replacement of exterior features, such as walls and siding, windows, doors, roofs, cornices, porches, and front steps. While any exterior work may be proposed, preference will be given for work that is visible from public streets, makes a significant difference in the appearance of the house, and which retains original architectural features and materials. Work can include the reconstruction of missing elements like a porch that was once on a house but is now gone or removal of non-original materials like vinyl siding. The grant can also be used to make significant structural repairs, such as rebuilding a collapsed floor or repairing a failed foundation.

#### What can't the grant be used for?

Interior work (other than structural repairs), heating and air conditioning, plumbing, insulation, solar panels, and additions are not eligible under this program. Grants cannot be awarded for work that is already underway or already completed. If you are unsure whether work would be eligible, please call and ask HPO staff or submit a Part 1 application for a determination.

#### Who is eligible for the grant?

Grants are available to the owner of a historic house in any District of Columbia historic district or landmark on some conditions. The owner must live in the house as their primary residence. The owner must qualify as low- or moderate-income based on current Area Median Income (AMI) levels. The owner must be receiving the DC Property Tax Homestead Deduction. Condominiums and co-operatives are not eligible.

#### What are the historic districts that are eligible?

All historic districts and landmarks are eligible, but the house must contribute to the character of the historic district or landmark. That means, for example, that a house built in 1980 would not



qualify because it is not old enough to contribute to the character of a historic district. It is modern and not historic. If you are unsure if your property contributes to a historic district, contact HPO.

Is there an income limit for grant recipients?

Yes. Grants may only be awarded to low- and moderate-income households, as defined by the Area Median Income (AMI) which is calculated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development every year. The number of people in the household and the annual Total Income (not Adjusted Gross Income) of all household members are taken into account. Homeowners are required to submit ownership and income information as part of the application process, for certification by the DC Office of Tax and Revenue.

What are the current income limits for grant recipients?

The income classifications for low- and moderate-income households are revised each year by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. To see the current classifications, homeowners should consult the current eligibility table on the Historic Homeowners Grant webpage. Income determinations are based on the most recently completed tax year

What is the Homestead Deduction requirement?

A homeowner must be receiving the Homestead Deduction for property taxes in the District of Columbia at the time the grant is issued. Homestead Deductions are only available to people who own and occupy a primary residence in the District. This means that if you rent your residence, or live outside the District, you are not eligible for this grant. If you have recently purchased an eligible house, but have not yet moved into it, you can receive a grant on the condition that you establish residency in the house within 60 days of completing the work funded by the grant. Failure to do so requires paying back the grant.

Are homeowners required to contribute some of their own money to a preservation project?

Only some homeowners are required to contribute a portion of their own money. This contribution is called a *match*. Based on household size and income, applicants will fall into one of three categories. Homeowners in the first category will not need to provide a match. Owners in the middle category must pay 25% of project costs. Owners in the third category must pay 50% of project costs. The match categories are included in the eligibility table on the Historic Homeowner Grants webpage.

Is the grant taxable?

No. The Internal Revenue Service has officially notified the Office of Planning that the grants fall under the General Welfare Exclusion doctrine and are not taxable as income. Locally, the law creating the grant program declares the grants are not taxable for the purposes of DC income tax.

### What is the application process?

There are two parts to the application. Part 1 is very short and will help homeowners quickly determine if they are eligible. Applicants should provide a few photographs of the property and describe what they would like to use the grant for. Successful Part 1 applications will receive a Part 2 application from HPO which will include an itemized Work Request. Submitted Part 2 applications will be reviewed and awarded on a competitive basis.

### What will be required in the Part 2 application?

The Part 2 application is more substantial than the Part 1 application and will require more work by the homeowner. The Work Request from HPO will describe the specific types of work and materials eligible for a grant. Homeowners will use their Work Request to obtain prices from general contractors for the work. These prices are important when a grant application is being decided. A copy of the previous year's federal tax return indicating total household income is also required.

### How will grants be awarded?

Grants will be graded on specific criteria which shall include, in part, urgency of preservation needs of the property, importance of the property to the historic district, consistency with preservation standards and guidelines, impact of the project on the historic district, relevance to DC planning goals and priorities, and equitable geographic distribution of grant funds.

### Are there any obligations for the homeowner to receive the grant?

Yes, the homeowner must enter into a covenant with the District of Columbia that requires that any work funded by the grant will remain in place and in good repair for at least 10 years. If an owner reverses or removes the results of a project, the District of Columbia can take back the grant money by placing a lien on the property. This covenant obligation conveys with the property if it is sold. Any future owner would be subject to the remaining term of the covenant.

### What are the deadlines and how long will the application process take?

Part 1 applications may be submitted at any time, and the Part 2 applications are provided to the homeowner within 30 days. The homeowner is then provided 60 days to obtain the contractor prices and return the Part 2 application. The homeowner is then notified within 30 days as to whether the grant has been awarded. From the start of the application process to the initiation of construction typically takes four months, depending on how long the homeowner needs to obtain the necessary contractor bids and the contractor's availability to commence with the work.

### What happens after the grant is awarded?

The homeowner submits all final contracts and prices to HPO. HPO certifies them as acceptable and executes a grant covenant agreement with the homeowner. HPO orders grant checks and disburses them to the homeowner in stages as a deposit to begin work and then as work is completed. The final check is disbursed when the project is complete. Historic Preservation Office staff will monitor the project during the course of construction to ensure that it is being built correctly and advise the homeowner.

### How do I obtain further information?

Call the Historic Preservation Office at 202-442-7600 or email [Brendan.meyer@dc.gov](mailto:Brendan.meyer@dc.gov).