



Public Announcement: Paul Bruhn Revitalization Grant Looking Up Downtown Application Period Open

Minnesota Main Streets by Rethos announces applications are now being accepted for the first round of Looking Up Downtown grants.

The Minnesota Main Streets Looking Up Downtown grant program will fund the historic rehabilitation of currently vacant or underutilized upper floors into productive use. Business or building owners within a Minnesota Main Street historic district may apply for up to \$50,000 in funding. This competitive grant will fund two rounds of historic rehabilitation and revitalization of historic buildings located in Minnesota Main Streets districts across the state.

Minnesota Main Streets by Rethos is the Main Street America Coordinating Partner. The Looking Up Downtown grant is being funded by the National Park Service (NPS) Paul Bruhn grant.

To view the application and associated information, [click here](#).

LOOKING UP DOWNTOWN FAQ'S

- **What is Looking Up Downtown?**

The Minnesota Main Streets “Looking Up” program assists owners of historic rural downtown buildings to rehabilitate their second stories. This is a competitive grant program with funding from Rethos made possible by the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program through National Parks Service (NPS). [To read more about Paul Bruhn click here](#).

- **Who can take advantage of Looking UP?**

Business or building owners with a building in a rural community (population less than 50,000) located within a Minnesota Main Streets historic district may apply for funding. To qualify, buildings must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Buildings that are contributing to a district are eligible. Although buildings can be considered if they aren't already listed, those properties must have a formal Designation of Eligibility from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and

MUST be listed by the end of the grant period. Note that it is an involved and lengthy process to gain designation. Costs toward designation cannot be covered by this grant, so it is recommended to have the designation for the building before applying. Buildings must be at least 50 years old and must contribute to the significance of the local Main Street district. Your local Main Street director will assist you in determining if the building meets this eligibility requirement.

- **How much can I apply for?**

We will accept applications for up to \$50,000. This grant also requires a 10% match for the application amount. The match must come from non-Federal sources.

- **What can I use these funds to do?**

This is a historic preservation program, and the focus should be on the preservation and rehabilitation of existing features and spaces. While new fixtures and finishes are allowable, they need to be part of a larger scope of historic preservation and will not be allowed in isolation. Projects must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation and will be subject to Section 106 Review. [Read more about Section 106 Review here.](#)

Examples of acceptable uses of the grant could be to offset the costs of installing or repairing a fire suppression system or ADA accessibility. Other possible uses could be electrical or plumbing, energy efficiency, paint, millwork, or flooring.

Ineligible uses of these funds would be new building construction, recreation of historic properties that no longer exist, long-term maintenance beyond the grant period, and/or work performed prior to the grant, and exterior work to the building.

- **What about windows?**

Looking Up is a grant focused on rehabilitating interior spaces. Because of exterior implications, windows cannot be replaced. However, existing windows may be repaired as needed within the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation guidelines.

- **Where are these funds coming from?**

The Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant Program is part of the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), an important source of national grant funding for preservation projects as well as essential funding for State and Tribal Historic Preservation Organizations and Certified Local Governments. Rethos, the parent organization for Minnesota Main Streets received a \$700,000 grant to execute the Looking Up Downtown subgrant program and will be administering the Paul Bruhn grant for Minnesota Main Streets communities. [Read more about Rethos here.](#)

- **What is a preservation covenant/easement?**

In brief, grantees undertaking development projects are required to place an easement (also called a covenant) on the entire property to protect the grant-assisted work. These requirements are described more fully [here](#), and an easement example is included in the application as Appendix C.

Preservation easements may be called a "covenant" or "restriction," depending on jurisdiction. Regardless of what the document is called, a 5-year preservation easement will be recorded with the property title and is a required part of the Looking Up Downtown grant. A key term of your grant agreement is that you will agree to assume, after the completion of the project, the total cost of continued maintenance, repair, and administration of the grant-assisted property in a manner satisfactory to the Secretary of the Interior.

A draft covenant/easement must be submitted to the NPS for review within one calendar year of the date a grant agreement is signed. Following the completion of all grant-assisted work, the preservation covenant/easement must document the grant-assisted condition of the site and the character-defining features. The covenant/easement must then be executed by registering it with the deed of the property. A certified copy of the executed covenant/easement must be submitted to the NPS prior to the end of the award period of performance. Rethos will assist with all easement work.

- **Are there any other ongoing responsibilities after the work is complete?**

As part of the public use/benefit agreements within the grants, all subgrantees will approve of Rethos utilizing their space for 'open houses'. These events, held at least once during the project and after completion, will be used to promote the benefits of upstairs rehabilitations. Open houses will be open to the public and will cover the basics of how to begin rehabilitation, what options are available, the potential businesses or housing opportunities these projects can create, and the benefits preservation can bring to a community.

- **When is the deadline to apply?**

There will be two rounds of grants awarded. The first grant deadline to apply will be June 30, 2024, at 11:59 pm. The second opportunity to apply will be announced in fall 2024.

- **What is the process to apply?**

Start by contacting your Main Street Director to make sure your project is a good fit. Register and attend the upcoming webinar on the Paul Bruhn Looking Up Grant application process. Take the time to gather your materials, then click this link to fill

out an application. For a downloadable file of the grant application, visit [Minnesota Main Streets | Rethos](#). Note: *the downloadable file is for reference only. All applications must be completed online.* Following the application deadline, the grant review committee will select the finalists for approval by the Rethos Board of Directors. Finalists will be forwarded to NPS to determine preliminary eligibility. The selected projects that meet the preliminary technical review will be notified and move into the technical review process. If any of the selected projects do not meet the preliminary benchmarks, the grant review board will determine if another project is ready for preliminary review. Projects that do not gain first round funding may re-apply in the second round.

- **How will I know if I am a successful applicant?**

Rethos will contact all applicants after the selection process and preliminary review. However, funded work cannot begin until after the Technical Review is complete.

- **What if I need more information?**

Contact Minnesota Main Streets Manager Shannon Laing for more information here: shannon@rethos.org.

About Rethos

Rethos, formerly the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose board, staff, and partners work nationwide together to protect and promote communities shared environment and culture. The Minnesota Main Streets program at Rethos helps cities maximize both their people and built assets for economic vitality. Minnesota Main Streets is a Main Street America™ Coordinating Program and provides local Main Street communities with the training, tools, information, and networking they need to reinvigorate their downtown districts. More at <https://www.rethos.org>.