

250 for 250 Friends of the Parks Grant Program

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

1. Program Overview

In celebration of America's 250th Anniversary, Commissioner Michelle Long Spears is establishing the 250 for 250 Friends of the Parks Grant Program, investing \$250,000 in community-led park improvements throughout DeKalb County Commission District 2.

This competitive grant program empowers Friends of the Parks organizations and their community partners to implement projects that create lasting public benefits, strengthen neighborhood parks, foster civic pride, and expand access to quality outdoor recreation. Projects with a public arts focus are especially encouraged and will be given priority.

Applications will be evaluated through a competitive review process using the criteria outlined in this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until all available funds have been awarded.

2. Program Goals

The program seeks to:

- Improve neighborhood parks through high-quality capital improvements.
- Encourage community stewardship and volunteerism.
- Promote environmental sustainability and resilience.
- Increase accessibility and inclusive recreation opportunities.
- Celebrate local history, culture, and community identity.
- Encourage placemaking through public art and creative design.
- Support projects that can be maintained for many years after construction.

3. Available Funding

Total funding available: \$250,000, the maximum amount that can be requested for a single project is \$50,000.

Applicants must apply under one of the following funding levels based on the requested award amount and the overall scope and complexity of the proposed project.

- A. **Mini Grants – (Projects Requesting \$5,000 or Less)** Individual awards of up to \$5,000 are intended for smaller projects and /or supplies.

- B. **Legacy Grants – (Projects Requesting More Than \$5,000)** Individual awards exceeding \$5,000, up to the total amount of available program funding, are intended for larger, more complex projects that require significant planning, procurement, coordination, construction, or contractor services. An RPCA Project Manager will be assigned to oversee each awarded project.

Applicants should request only the amount necessary to complete the proposed project. While funding level is generally based on the requested award amount, the District 2 Office may recommend a different application level based on the scope and complexity of the proposed project.

The District 2 Office reserves the right to fully fund, partially fund, negotiate project scope, or decline any application based on project merit, funding availability, and geographic distribution.

4. Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants include:

- Registered District 2 Friends of the Park Groups or community organizations partnering with a registered District 2 Friends of the Park Group.
- Projects must receive preliminary approval from DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs (RPCA).
- Applications should demonstrate the ability to manage grant funds, coordinate volunteers or contractors, and successfully complete the proposed project.

5. Eligible Projects

Examples include:

Mini Grants	Legacy Grants
Small public art projects	Large-scale murals, sculptures, artistic gateways, and other public art installations
Small scale native landscaping, tree plantings and park beautification projects	Large-scale environmental restoration, including invasive species removal and by native replanting
Small pollinator garden and demonstration gardens	Large-scale pollinator meadow and habitat enhancement projects
Install interpretive, educational, or wayfinding signage in a targeted area of the park or along a trail or at a trailhead	New trail construction or major trail extensions, or Trail resurfacing or accessibility upgrades
Install benches, picnic tables, bike racks and other small park furnishings	Install shade structures, water fountains, or renovate pavilion shelter
Volunteer event supplies, tools, and equipment	Cultural or historical interpretive installations
Hand-tool kits for invasive species removal or park stewardship	Goat or sheep grazing for targeted invasive vegetation management
Volunteer-built improvements like information kiosks, bird houses, or book boxes	Nature play areas with permanent play features

Other small, volunteer-friendly park improvement projects consistent with RPCA goals	Other permanent park improvements consistent with RPCA goals.
--	---

6. Ineligible Costs

Grant funds may not be used for:

- Salaries or routine operating expenses
- Political or lobbying activities
- Fundraising events
- Debt repayment
- Projects completed prior to award
- Routine maintenance
- Expenses unrelated to the approved scope.

7. Application Requirements

Applications shall include:

Attend / Watch Information Webinar
Approved Interest Form
RPCA preapproval documentation
Completed application form
Project narrative
Community need statement
Detailed budget
Schedule and implementation plan
Maintenance plan
Site photos
Sketches/renderings
Vendor estimates
Letters of support (recommended)
Artist qualifications (if applicable).

8. Evaluation Criteria (100 Points)

Criteria	Points
Community Benefit: Extent of public benefit, underserved populations, accessibility, and alignment with community needs.	20

Project Readiness: Status of planning, approvals, schedule, and ability to begin work promptly.	10
Feasibility & Budget: Reasonableness of budget, implementation strategy, procurement approach, and likelihood of successful completion.	10
Long-Term Sustainability: Quality of maintenance plan and expected project lifespan.	10
Community Partnerships: Volunteer participation, nonprofit collaboration, schools, businesses, civic engagement and letters of support.	10
Public Art/Cultural Component: Integration of artistic or cultural features that enhance the park experience.	10
Matching Contributions – Amount and type of committed cash or in-kind matching contributions that leverage County funding and demonstrate local investment	Up to 10
Friends of the Park Group – Active involvement of a registered Friends of the Park Group	5
Consistency with an Adopted Park Master Plan – Degree to which the proposed project advances recommendations contained in an adopted park master plan or other County-approved planning document.	10
Funding Equity – Priority for eligible organizations or park groups that have not received funding through this grant program within the previous five (5) years.	5

10. Review Process

Applications will first undergo an eligibility review. Eligible applications will be independently scored by reviewers using the published criteria. Scores will be averaged to establish a final ranking. Funding recommendations will consider project score, geographic equity, available funding, and overall program objectives.

Recommended Funding Thresholds:

- 90–100 Highly Competitive
- 75–89 Competitive
- 60–75 Fund if funds remain
- Below 60 Not Recommended

11. Award Administration

Successful applicants must execute a grant agreement, obtain all required County approvals prior to beginning work, comply with applicable procurement requirements, and complete projects within 12 months unless otherwise approved.

Grantees must coordinate early and regularly with RPCA staff, submit progress updates upon request, provide a final financial report with supporting documentation, submit before-and-after photographs, and acknowledge District 2 support in project signage or communications when appropriate.

12. Reporting and Closeout

Projects are to be completed within one year of being awarded funding. Final reports shall summarize accomplishments, expenditures, volunteer participation, project outcomes, and lessons learned. The District 2 Office reserves the right to inspect completed projects and verify compliance before final reimbursement or closeout.

Draft Project Schedule

Project Phase	Timeframe	Key Activities
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Released	August 18, 2026	Grant application period officially opens. NOFO, application materials, and supporting documents are made available to prospective applicants.
Pre-Application Informational Webinar	August 25, 2026, 6:00 PM	DeKalb County will host a virtual informational webinar to provide prospective applicants with an overview of the grant program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, evaluation criteria, funding priorities, and project expectations. Attendance is encouraged but not required.
Pre-Application Period (<i>two weeks</i>)	August 25 – September 8, 2026	Submit a short pre-application form to RPCA that gives an overview of the proposed park project, the project location and the general amount of funding being requested.
Pre-Application Review & Evaluation (<i>two weeks</i>)	September 9 – September 23, 2026	County staff will review applications for eligibility. Eligible pre-applications will be invited to complete a full grant application.

Application Period (<i>one month</i>)	October 1 – November 1, 2026	Applicants prepare and submit complete grant applications, including all required supporting documentation, by the application deadline.
Application Review & Evaluation (<i>one month</i>)	November 1 – December 1, 2026	County staff will review applications for eligibility and completeness. Eligible applications will be evaluated and scored based on the published evaluation criteria.
Grant Awards Announced	Mid-December 2026	Successful applicants will be notified, and award recommendations will be announced following County approval.
Grant Agreement & Kickoff	January 2027	Grant agreements are executed, project scopes are finalized, project teams are established, and awardees participate in a required kickoff meeting.
Project Planning & Procurement	Months 1–2	Finalize project design, obtain required permits and approvals, prepare procurement documents, solicit quotes or bids as necessary, and execute contracts in accordance with applicable procurement requirements.
Material Procurement	Months 2–4	Purchase equipment, materials, and supplies necessary for project implementation.
Project Implementation	Months 3–9	Complete construction, installations, volunteer workdays, site improvements, public art installations, landscaping, planting, or other approved project activities.
Project Monitoring & Progress Reporting	Throughout the Grant Period	Submit required progress reports, maintain financial documentation, monitor project schedule and budget,

		and coordinate regularly with County staff.
Project Completion	Months 10–11	Complete all project activities, conduct final inspections, address punch list items, and ensure the project is complete and available for public use.
Final Reporting & Grant Closeout	Month 12	Submit the final performance report, photographs, invoices, proof of expenditures and matching contributions, volunteer documentation (if applicable), and any other required closeout materials.

13. General Conditions

The District 2 Office reserves the right to reject any application, request additional information, modify award amounts, or cancel this funding opportunity at any time. Submission of an application does not guarantee funding.

14. Contact Information

District 2 Office

Beth Ganga

Email: aeganga@dekalbcountyga.gov

RPCA

Lauren King Lambert

Email: leking@dekalbcountyga.gov