

CITY OF WARRENVILLE

MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council
 From: Monica Johnson, TAC Chair
 CC: Anthony Aguilar, Accountant
 Subject: FY 2026 Hotel Tax Grant Application Recommendation
 Date: January 17, 2025

OVERVIEW

On behalf of the Tourism and Arts Commission (TAC), I am pleased to present a recommendation for the FY 2026 Hotel Tax Grant Program for review. This year, 16 applications were submitted by the required deadline, requesting funds for projects and events. 14 of the applications are for events/projects that have been previously recommended for funding by TAC. Furthermore, there were two new applications submitted to TAC, including the Park District's application to fund StoryWalk, and the Warrenville Historical Society's application to fund Outdoor Interpretive Signage, which would be installed in Leone Schmidt Park.

Grant requests for the proposed FY 2026 projects totaled \$127,127 for 16 projects, reflecting a decrease from last year's requests, which totaled \$153,550 across 16 projects. After a review of this year's applications, a total of \$123,728 is recommended for funding 15 of the 16 projects, which is within the \$150,000 budget. The new Historical Society request for interpretive signage ultimately did not meet eligibility in time for consideration as a Hotel Tax Grant project. TAC believes the funding recommendation will help to provide a variety of events for the enjoyment of residents and out-of-town guests, who, we hope, will again be supporting our local businesses and hotels.

BUDGET

Per Council policy, TAC must make their recommendations within a \$150,000 budget and is also tasked with ensuring that no one category would be awarded more than 50% of the hotel grant funding. TAC's FY 2026 recommendation adheres to this policy.

FY 2026 HOTEL TAX APPLICATIONS AND TAC RECOMMENDATIONS

Exhibit 1 lists the proposed projects in the first column. The second column shows a series of numbers going down starting with the total grant funding request amount, followed by the total recommended grant award, and the grants awarded in the previous two years, if available. The remaining columns show the breakdown of funding into each of the four funding categories. A detailed narrative about each project is provided in Exhibit 2.

Summarizing TAC's recommendations, the largest grant award would be for Warrenville in Bloom at \$30,189 with Warrenville Park District following at just over \$23,336 for the Multi Cultural Festival. The Park District's Art on the Prairie and Warrenville Library District's Concert on the Commons are both being recommended for funding at \$18,261 and \$12,746, respectively, while funding for the Park District's Fall Fest is being recommended at \$12,343. The Park District's Story Walk is being recommended for funding at \$6,419, while Warrenville in Bloom's Calendar is recommended for funding at \$4,700. An award amount of \$4,471 is being recommended for the Library District's Sunday Music Matinees. Funding for the Park District's Lunchtime Live

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summer children's music program is suggested at \$3,225, and the six remaining grants are being recommended for funding at less than \$3,000 each. The Historical Society's Outdoor Interpretive Signage was not approved due primarily to property and zoning concerns. TAC also had a discussion wondering whether the project would be appropriate for a Hotel Tax Grant award, or whether the Aesthetic Enhancement Program would be a better fit for funding this particular project.

The Commission finalized its review of the applications at its December 11, 2024, meeting. The following Commission members joined me in attendance: Commissioners Owens and Kleiber. Also in attendance were Staff Liaisons Faranaz Kavina and Anthony Aguilar. The Commission unanimously passed a motion recommending funding of the applications in the amounts shown.

Exhibit 1 – Projects

CATEGORICAL BREAK DOWN OF FUNDS					
Project	TOTALS	EVENT	TOURISM	ARTS	CAPITAL
<u>Spring Tea</u>					
Request Total	\$700				
Recommended	\$700	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$0
FY25 Award	\$700	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$0
FY24 Award	\$750	\$350	\$0	\$400	\$0
<u>Cemetery Walk</u>					
Request Total	\$225				
Recommended	\$225	\$0	\$0	\$225	\$0
FY25 Award	\$225	\$0	\$0	\$225	\$0
FY24 Award	\$225	\$0	\$0	\$225	\$0
<u>Albright Inspired Artist-in-Residency</u>					
Request Total	\$2,000				
Recommended	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$0
FY25 Award	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$1,500
FY24 Award	\$1,800	\$0	\$0	\$300	\$1,500
<u>NEW-Outdoor Interpretive Signage</u>					
Request Total	\$2,773				
Recommended	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<u>Paint the Ville</u>					
Request Total	\$1,000				
Recommended	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
FY25 Award	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
FY24 Award	\$1,150	\$150	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
<u>Walking (Mobile) Tour</u>					
Request Total	\$2,312				
Recommended	\$2,312	\$2,312	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY25 Award	\$2,112	\$2,112	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY24 Award	\$2,112	\$2,112	\$0	\$0	\$0
<u>Concerts on the Commons</u>					
Request Total	\$12,746				
Recommended	\$12,746	\$0	\$96	\$12,650	\$0
FY25 Award	\$11,096	\$0	\$96	\$11,000	\$0
FY24 Award	\$9,021	\$0	\$71	\$8,950	\$0

CATEGORICAL BREAK DOWN OF FUNDS					
Project	TOTALS	EVENT	TOURISM	ARTS	CAPITAL
<u>Musical Matinees</u>					
Request Total	\$4,471				
Recommended	\$4,471	\$0	\$96	\$4,375	\$0
FY25 Award	\$3,446	\$0	\$96	\$3,350	\$0
FY24 Award	\$3,871	\$0	\$71	\$3,800	\$0
<u>Art on the Prairie</u>					
Request Total	\$18,888				
Recommended	\$18,261	\$5,471	\$4,840	\$7,950	\$0
FY25 Award	\$18,430	\$5,848	\$4,672	\$7,910	\$0
FY24 Award	\$16,589	\$3,975	\$5,064	\$7,550	\$0
<u>Fall Fest</u>					
Request Total	\$12,343				
Recommended	\$12,343	\$7,190	\$557	\$4,080	\$516
FY25 Award	\$11,538	\$7,056	\$557	\$3,400	\$525
FY24 Award	\$11,206	\$6,432	\$1,288	\$2,675	\$811
<u>Lunchtime Live</u>					
Request Total	\$3,225				
Recommended	\$3,225	\$0	\$250	\$2,975	\$0
FY25 Award	\$3,275	\$0	\$250	\$3,025	\$0
FY24 Award	\$3,125	\$0	\$250	\$2,875	\$0
<u>Movies in the Park</u>					
Request Total	\$1,801				
Recommended	\$1,801	\$1,560	\$150	\$0	\$91
FY25 Award	\$1,665	\$1,440	\$150	\$0	\$75
FY24 Award	\$1,595	\$1,395	\$150	\$0	\$50
<u>Multi-Cultural Festival</u>					
Request Total	\$23,336				
Recommended	\$23,336	\$8,329	\$2,183	\$12,540	\$284
FY25 Award	\$20,668	\$7,658	\$2,183	\$10,610	\$217
FY24 Award	\$18,234	\$6,118	\$2,915	\$8,009	\$1,192
<u>NEW-StoryWalk</u>					
Request Total	\$6,419				
Recommended	\$6,419	\$5,434	\$985	\$0	\$0

CATEGORICAL BREAK DOWN OF FUNDS					
Project	TOTALS	EVENTS	TOURISM	ARTS	CAPITAL
<u>WIB</u>					
Request Total	\$30,189				
Recommended	\$30,189	\$3,440	\$766	\$0	\$25,983
FY25 Award	\$30,830	\$3,100	\$1,600	\$0	\$26,130
FY24 Award	\$31,420	\$3,100	\$1,469	\$0	\$26,851
<u>WIB Calendar</u>					
Request Total	\$4,700				
Recommended	\$4,700	\$0	\$4,700	\$0	\$0
FY25 Award	\$4,500	\$0	\$4,500	\$0	\$0

Exhibit 2 - FY 2026 Grant Application Information

Provided below is a brief description of each project. The projects are listed in the same order as shown in Exhibit 1.

Programs

Annual Warrenville Spring Tea

Description: April 2026 will feature the 22nd Annual Spring Tea hosted by the Historical Society, taking place once again at Warrenville’s VFW Post 8081. The Tea features a luncheon and includes entertainment that is historic in nature. For this year’s event, the Historical Society plans to honor our country’s 250th Anniversary. Warrenville teens are trained in formal dinner service and take on these duties for the guests that day. Warrenville residents invite guests to attend, and on average, a quarter of the attendees are from outside of our city. The event helps to raise funds for college scholarship awards for Warrenville teens.

Attendance: 130; no overnight stays

Cemetery Walk

Description: The Historical Society’s Cemetery Walk, in its eighteenth year and still growing in attendees, is an educational program that explores the history of Warrenville in a unique setting. Participants walk through the candle-lit Warrenville Cemetery one Sunday evening in October as costumed interpreters “come to life” at the graves of past residents, telling the stories of their contributions to the community.

Attendance: 450 in-person/virtual viewers; no overnight stays

Albright-Inspired Artist-in-Residency Program

Description: This program began in 2015 to further promote the Warrenville connection to the internationally known Albright family artists, Adam Emory and his sons, Ivan and Malvin. Each year, the Historical Society puts out a call for artists, asking for a proposal for new artwork to be created that will be inspired by one of the three Albright artists. Work by the chosen artist will begin in the fall. Duties will include creating artwork to be displayed at various businesses and public

locations, as well as public programming throughout the spring and fall, including a visit to a Warrenville classroom to inspire students with an art project.

Attendance: 3000; no overnight stays

NEW: Outdoor Interpretive Signage (will not be funded in this grant cycle)

Description: The Warrenville Historical Society is proposing to place two outdoor interpretive signs near the museum in Leone Schmidt Park. The signage would include history about Warrenville and the Albright family of artists with the hope that park visitors might be enticed to visit the museum, as well as to inform them of the history of this area on days the museum is closed. The signs will also invite residents/guests to use the QR code printed on the signage to access the popular mobile walking tour of Warrenville, which has been funded by the Hotel Tax Grant Program for many years.

Attendance: 3000; no overnight stays

Paint the ‘Ville Plein Air Painting Competition and Show

Description: The Historical Society is proposing its 6th Plein Air Painting Competition. (“Plein Air” refers to the act of painting subject matter in outdoor daylight, rather than in the studio.) Interestingly, the idea originated from a suggestion by an America in Bloom judge, who was inspired by Warrenville’s Artist-in-Residency program and the Historical Society’s tradition for sponsoring art exhibits. Selected artists will paint on as many of the three planned plein air event dates as they’d like, at various locations around Warrenville, and the public will be invited to enjoy the artistic processes on display as they work. Paintings from these three dates will be submitted for exhibit at the Historical Museum and Art Gallery in the fall, where the public will be encouraged to vote for the painting that will become part of Warrenville’s permanent collection.

Attendance: 1,000 and no overnight stays

Historic Warrenville Mobile Tour

Description: The mobile tour has been active for residents and guests for twelve successful years and continues to engage users by focusing on a variety of topics, including general history, historical architecture, art history, local family history, business history, and topics that are popular in pop culture. For the proposed thirteenth year, new sites from outside the historic section of Warrenville will continue to be added, as this has been quite popular. Featured sites will be tied to the America 250 Celebration, honoring the ways our community relates to the 250th Anniversary of the USA. The public will be allowed to interactively submit their own pieces of history for inclusion. The tour is free and can be accessed through the tour’s website or by using a smart device throughout Warrenville on the STQRY/OnCell app. Users, including students and teachers inside their classrooms, can listen to or read descriptions of specific sites in Warrenville, as well as see associated historical images.

Attendance: 3,500; no overnight stays

Concerts on the Commons

Description: A series of eight, free, outdoor musical performances on Bob Walters Commons will once again be sponsored by the Warrenville Public Library on Wednesday evenings from mid-June through mid-August. This popular concert series, being

proposed for its 16th year, features a wide variety of popular music from rock and pop to country and oldies, and is attended by all age groups.

Attendance: Attendance in 2024 averaged 225/concert; no overnight stays

Sunday Musical Matinees

Description: Sunday Musical Matinees is a series of free, live concerts that are held at the Warrenville Public Library. Seven concerts will be held during the season, once a month on Sunday afternoons from September 2025 through March 2026.

Attendance: 50 attendees per concert on average; one overnight stay (out of town performer)

Art on the Prairie Art and Music Festival

Description: This is a two-day, outdoor Art and Music Festival that features artwork and performing artists hosted by the Warrenville Park District. Art on the Prairie attracts both local and out of town artists for a Juried Art Fair and features ethnic, folk, and various dance groups, along with a variety of musical performers. A Paint Station, as well as a face painter and a balloon artist have become family favorites at this event, as well. Wine and Microbrew tasting will be available. The *Many Faces of Warrenville* banner art program will again feature local artists' work on light pole banners celebrating the festival.

Attendance: 1000 estimated; Overnight stays will depend on the artists

Notes and Restrictions

- Reimbursements cannot be used for Park District staffing
- Theatre and Music Performers Line Item can only be used for performers

Fall Family Fun Fest

Description: Highly popular and family-centered, this annual Park District event includes a costume parade, games and prizes, crafts, live entertainment, inflatables, a petting zoo, beverages and fresh grilled food for purchase. The event proposed for FY26 will feature a live band, the Headspin Guy, storyteller, face painters and balloon artists.

Attendance: 850+ attendees; Overnight stays are unlikely

Notes and Restrictions

- Funds cannot be used for Park District staff

Lunchtime Live

Description: The Park District is proposing to continue this popular and continually growing, free children's summer concert series for a 7th year. The grant would fund five children's entertainers performing in June, July, and August at Cerny Park.

Attendance: 100+ /event and no overnight stays

Notes and Restrictions

- Funds cannot be used for Park District staffing
- Must apply for park rental prior to event(s)

Summer Movies in the Park

Description: The Park District is requesting funding for their 8th Annual Summer Movies in the Park, which is free to the public. Family-friendly movies are projected on a 16'

inflatable screen beginning at dusk at Cerny Park one evening per month in June, July and August. A local vendor will again be used to provide concessions.

Attendance: 100+ / event and no overnight stays

Notes and Restrictions

- Funds cannot be used for Park District staffing
- Must apply for park rental prior to event(s)

Warrenville Multi-Cultural Festival

Description: The Warrenville Park District's Multi-Cultural Festival, proposing a fourth year in FY26, will continue to celebrate the vibrant cultures that make Warrenville a strong and diverse community. This free event, held outdoors at the City Hall complex, will continue to be a fun afternoon of live performances to encourage social cohesion and inter-community harmony, hoping to enrich our cultural vitality in ways that may impact generations to come. Coloring murals, an international flag display, yard games, and musicians/performing arts acts will all be featured at the event. Attendees will also be treated to the talents of face painters, balloon twisters, and a henna tattoo artist.

Attendance: 1000+ with few to no overnight stays

Notes and Restrictions

- Funds cannot be used for Park District staffing

NEW: StoryWalk

Description: This project will be a cooperative effort between the Warrenville Park District and the Warrenville Public Library. StoryWalk is a series of mounted signs featuring sequential spreads from a children's picture book. Following the StoryWalk promotes early literacy, physical activity, and family time together in nature. The walks are normally less than a mile in distance and follow a paved, accessible path through a local, community park. StoryWalks have been installed in all 50 states and twelve countries and are received with enthusiasm and appreciation. Summerlakes Park has been chosen for this project, as it has a paved walking trail accessible to everyone.

Attendance: 1000+ / no overnight stays

Warrenville In Bloom Beautification

Description: WIB is requesting funds to continue their mission to beautify strategic locations in the community with plants and flowers and to maintain those planters and gardens as long as possible through the summer. The Curb Appeal program acknowledges citizens' efforts with yard signs for lawns that are well cared for and beautified.

Attendance: No overnight stays – beautification of Warrenville can be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike

Warrenville In Bloom 2026 Photo Calendar

Description: WIB is requesting funds to print a 2026 version of a calendar featuring color photos of Curb Appeal recipients' yards. WIB has printed 2025 calendars with Hotel Tax Grant funds and would like to continue this effort to raise awareness of their mission and to highlight the beauty of Warrenville. The calendars are free to

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Curb Appeal Award Winners, business donors, and to residents at-large while supplies last via the city's businesses, Facebook posts, and on the WIB website.

Notes and Restrictions

- Recommended that City Meetings and events sponsored by the Hotel Tax Grant Program continue to be listed on the calendar.