

City of Johnstown
Department of Community and Economic Development Façade
Improvement Program Guidelines

Background

The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) of the City of Johnstown's Façade Improvement Program is designed to stimulate private investment in commercial properties, foster an attractive built environment, preserve the historical and architectural heritage of properties, and attempts to fill this gap and make funding assistance for commercial façade improvements available on a more regular basis. While it is understood that façade improvements in and of themselves are not likely to address all economic and/or community development problems facing the City, they do constitute a portion of the solution by addressing blight in commercial areas. The funding source utilized by the City for this program is offered through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Keystone Communities Program.

Program Goal

It is the goal of the Façade Improvement Program to encourage the rehabilitation of storefronts and exteriors on commercial structures throughout the City as a component of local efforts in fighting blight and revitalizing the neighborhood, and as a means of encouraging commercial development. Given the age and style of the many structures in the City, the Program shall focus on the *preservation and restoration* of the storefronts within the historical and architectural context of the given structure.

Eligibility Requirements

The Façade Improvement Program may be used for any commercial structure within the City Limits located in a commercially zoned district *or* defined as a pre-existing non-conforming use under the requirements of the City Zoning Ordinance. The owner of such property must be the applicant for the Program. Priority will be given to presently occupied premises or structures occupied for commercial use within six (6) months of the completion of the project. Mixed-use structures are eligible as long as the primary use of the first floor is for commercial activities, and the proposed façade improvements are related to and supportive of the commercial nature of the property. In this case, City funds may only be applied to the commercial floor of the building. Specific eligible activities funded under the Façade Improvement Program are summarized below:

- Painting and/or other surface treatment of existing walls of the front of the building or visible from the street on which the main entrance is located.
- Rehabilitation, repair and restoration of windows, architecturally significant details such as cornices, storefronts and upper wall surfaces, doors and entryways, and the painting of trim.
- Replacement, construction and/or rehabilitation of signage, rainspouts and gutters, awnings and canopies of appropriate content and style.

All activities undertaken shall reflect the architectural style and historic treatment associated with the building, in accordance with the architectural assistance afforded to the applicant. Funds from the Façade Improvement Program shall not be used for new construction, the refinancing of existing debt or for interior work not directly related to the façade work.

City Participation and Procedures

The portion of the total project costs eligible for funding consideration under the Façade Improvement Program cannot *exceed fifty percent (50%), up to a maximum of \$5,000*. Any project costs above these thresholds shall be borne by the applicant. The DCED Economic Development Specialist is the point of contact for the Façade Improvement Program. The following summarizes the program procedures:

- Application is made to the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) on forms provided by the City of Johnstown. DCED verifies that the project is eligible for funding and that the matching share for the project is available. Applications are competitive, submitting an application does not guarantee funding approval.
- Applicants must submit a set of color photos of façade and project area with application.
- The applicant will seek three (3) competitive written quotations on the specifications prepared and submit them to the DCED for review. (The lowest bid will be selected). Total project costs will be determined based on this review, and the scope of work shall be approved [if the applicant/owner has secured the required matching funds].
- Upon receiving project approval from DCED, the applicant will submit the executed agreement between the owner and contractor – [See Applicant Responsibilities #1 below]
No work can begin on the project until contracts are properly executed and all required paperwork is obtained by DCED (refer to checklist).
- The applicant/owner will provide project updates to DCED for the duration of the project. In the event the scope of the project changes due to unforeseen circumstances, the applicant must notify DCED.
- After successful completion of the project, final inspection will be completed by the City's façade Inspector.
- Payment: After all original receipts have been submitted to the City of Johnstown's DCED showing payment in full for all project work and/or materials installed, a single reimbursement payment is made directly to the applicant based on the amount specified in the grant guidelines and contract with the applicant. *Final payment will only be made after all work has been satisfactorily completed. If the work is not complete as per the specifications, final payment will not be approved and payment will be withheld until all work is completed or corrected.*

Restrictions on City Participation

- 1) City funding is competitive and subject to availability. The amount of funds requested and the amount approved may differ, based on eligible uses of funding. The applicant must be the owner of the property even if the commercial tenants are involved in the project in some manner.
- 2) City funds shall be used only for the work approved, and shall be used only for the allowable activities related to the Façade Improvement Program. City funds shall not be used on work started prior to the date on grant agreement.

- 3) Payment for any change orders above and beyond the original approved scope of work shall be the responsibility of the applicant and shall not be met with City funds.
- 4) All work must be completed within six (6) months of approval, unless otherwise agreed to by all parties involved.
- 5) The applicant agrees not to discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment or contractor because of race, creed, color, national origin, handicap, or sex.
- 6) Applicants may submit no more than one project proposal per property during any one-year period.

Applicant Responsibilities

- 1) Upon execution of the grant documents, the recipient shall have thirty (30) days to enter a contract with a licensed building contractor to have approved alterations and repairs completed. After the 30 days, the grant application approved will no longer be valid and the applicant will need to reapply if there is an interest in completing the project.
- 2) The applicant agrees to pay any costs not covered by City funds, including the private share of the total project costs, the costs for any change orders and costs determined to be ineligible by the City.
- 3) The applicant agrees to follow the specifications and drawings reviewed and approved by the City. Any changes in scope after this approval shall also be reviewed and approved by the City.
- 4) The applicant understands that they shall maintain improvements, pay all required City taxes and municipal fees, and keep the premises in commercial use for five years from the completion of the improvements to qualify for forgiveness. If these conditions are not met the amount of the City share of the improvements shall be repaid to the City within thirty (30) days of the City determination that he/she does not qualify for forgiveness.

Notice:

- Projects within historic districts must comply with those requirements associated with being in such a district.
- If you are completing the proposed work as owner and contractor, only eligible material costs can be funded at 50% of the value.
- Contractors must provide a copy of liability insurance and a completed w9 form prior to the start of work.
- An applicant is responsible for providing prevailing wages if their project exceeds \$25,000. The Department of Labor and Industry, through the Bureau of Labor Law compliance, determines prevailing wage rates for the construction industry and enforces the rates and classifications when public funds are involved.
- Any work completed before grant agreements are in place will not be eligible for funding.

I HEREBY ACCEPT THE TERMS AND GUIDELINES OF THE FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND AGREE THAT I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND ALL CONTRACTS BEING SIGNED AT THE TIME OF CLOSING OF THE FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM. BY PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROGRAM THE APPLICANT UNDERSTANDS THAT HE/SHE SHALL MAINTAIN THE PROPERTY FOR 5 YEARS AFTER THE PROJECT IS COMPLETED.

ATTEST:

PROPERTY OWNER:

ATTEST:

CITY OF JOHNSTOWN
