

CITY OF WESTBROOK DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Overview

Program Summary

The City of Westbrook administers the Downtown Façade Improvement Program to provide financial assistance to downtown businesses and property owners who wish to make physical improvements to the exterior of their buildings in Westbrook's downtown district.

The program requires applicants to submit their application materials to the Economic Development Department.

The Downtown Façade Improvement Program is a reimbursement program. Approved projects can be reimbursed for half (50%) of eligible costs up to \$15,000 per project. These funds can be used for a variety of façade improvement activities listed in the "Eligible Projects" section.

Any contract for project construction/services is between the business/property owner and the contractor(s). The grant is a reimbursement to the applicant and in no way binds the City to the work performed.

Façade Improvement Program funds are available on an ongoing basis until existing funds are exhausted. Funds are dispersed to approved projects on a first-come, first-served basis by received date.

If your application meets the program criteria, you will be conditionally approved and [you must submit any necessary permit request with the Code Enforcement office](#). The program cannot accept applications for work that has already been completed.

Administration

The Economic Development Department will review grant applications for approval. The Planning and Code Enforcement Department may require aspects of the project to obtain a building permit, sign permit, or meet ordinance criteria.

The work performed under approved projects shall conform to all federal, state, and local codes, and applicants are responsible for acquiring all necessary permits.

Process

1. To apply for a Downtown Façade Improvement Program grant, read this *Westbrook Downtown Façade Program Overview* and complete the *Westbrook Downtown Façade Application* linked on the website.

2. Collect estimates and other required materials listed under **Document Attachments** in the Application.
3. Submit your materials to the Economic Development Department in person, email or mail.
4. We will contact the applicant with a decision within two weeks of receipt of application in the form of a grant award letter. The City reserves the right to reject incomplete applications or projects that do not meet the criteria of the program.
 - Successful applicants may begin improvements after receiving a letter of conditional approval, and any necessary building permits. Improvements begun prior to award notification may not be eligible for reimbursement. **Projects that require any City permits (Building, Electrical, Village Review, Signs, etc.) must be obtained prior to any work commencing. If work proceeds without the required City permits, the City may withdraw the Façade Improvement grant funds.**
5. After the project is complete, the applicant shall submit the following documents to the Economic Development Department which will initiate the reimbursement payment to the applicant:
 - a) W-9
 - b) Contractor(s) invoices
 - c) Proof of payment in full to contractor(s) that matches invoices
 - d) Signed lien waiver(s)
6. The City will process payment to the applicant after all final documentation listed above is submitted to the Economic Development Department and a site walk through is complete.

Program Guidelines and Eligibility

- The grant applicant shall be either the property owner or tenant. A tenant shall have the property owner's signed approval in the application.
- The building owner shall provide proof of ownership. Tenant shall provide proof of current lease or occupancy.
- All property taxes for the applying entity must be current.
- A Downtown Façade Improvement Program grant may only be made to any property downtown as delineated on the Downtown Façade Improvement map and has at least one street level, front facing commercial use.
- Grant funds will be paid directly to program applicants when the project is complete and the following documents are received by the Economic Development Department: W-9, contractor invoices, proof of payment, and signed lien waiver.
- Grant funds cannot be used towards City permit fees or design costs.

- All projects shall be completed within one (1) year of award. A request for an extension may be granted if the delay is due to a legitimate cause. Written request for an extension shall occur before the 1-year deadline has elapsed.
- The applicant shall submit three (3) bids from contractors for their project(s). Two bids are acceptable if the applicant can demonstrate attempts for a third bid were unsuccessful.
- Contractor(s) and sub-contractor(s) shall be insured and are required to sign a lien waiver upon completion of work.
- An applicant may apply consecutively provided the project(s) meet program eligibility and is not duplicative.

Eligible Projects

All proposed improvements shall comply with Code and Village Review requirements. Please review the [City of Westbrook Land Use Ordinance Section 403 Village Review Overlay Zone](#) for architectural standards (specifically, **Section 403.7 Downtown District Regulations**, depending on the property's location within the Zone).

- Signage
- Awnings
- Storefront improvements
- Restoration of original/historic windows, doors, and trim where applicable
- Repair or replacement of windows, doors, and trim
- Cleaning and/or painting of surfaces
- Cleaning and/or repointing of surface brick or stone
- Removing paint from brick or stone
- Exterior lighting
- Removal of "modernization" alterations/additions
- Cleaning and repair or installation of approved siding
- Landscapes/hardscapes
- Increased accessibility for ADA compliance
- ***Interior leasehold improvements may be eligible for applicant match if the improvements are part of larger project that includes exterior façade improvements. In such a project, no less than 50% of applicant's funds shall be spent on exterior improvements. For example, if \$1,000 of applicant's funds were matched by \$1,000 of City funds, a minimum of \$500 of applicant's funds shall be spent only on exterior work.***
- **Other:** Explain how the proposed project fits in with the spirit of the program.

Ineligible Projects

- Purchase of commercial property/equipment
- New building construction
- Routine maintenance
- Interior improvement (*unless they meet the criteria listed with the asterisks (***) above.*)

FAQ:

What permits do I need before I start my project?

- Depending on the scope of your project, your project will likely require a Sign Permit, Building Permits or other City approved project elements. **Applicants must work with the Planning and Code Enforcement department** to obtain any necessary permits.

My entire project will cost more than \$30,000. Can I still apply?

- Yes. Apply for a maximum of \$15,000 for eligible projects within the entire project.

Can I be reimbursed for improvements that were made before I applied?

- Any improvements made before your application is approved **are not eligible** for reimbursement. Please submit your application before beginning work on improvements you intend to request reimbursement for.

What if my approved project ends up costing more than what I was awarded?

- Cost overruns above estimated cost (grant amount) shall be communicated to the City for consideration and increased approval award up to \$15,000.

Can you reimburse my contractor instead of me?

- The City of Westbrook reserves the right to make payment to contractor(s) under special circumstances communicated between the applicant and the City in advance.