



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



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**City of Westbrook
Downtown Façade Improvement Program**

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Overview

1. 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. The program is designed to create visual improvements in the downtown (see attached map for eligible area).

The funds are dispersed to projects with a visual impact on a first-come, first-served basis by the date received, provided the activities meet the eligibility below. Submit completed application to the Economic Development Department at City Hall (address above).

The Downtown Façade Improvement Program funds cover any amount up to \$15,000 per-project award with a dollar for dollar match ratio up to \$30,000 total project cost. 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.

2. Administration

The Economic Development Department will review grant applications for approval. (The Village Review Committee/Planning Department may review if façade improvement project meets ordinance threshold 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.

3. Program Guidelines and Eligibility

- a. The grant applicant shall be either the property owner or tenant. A tenant shall have the property owner's signed approval of the proposed building improvements.
- b. Building owner shall provide proof of ownership. Tenant shall provide proof of current, signed rental/lease.
- c. All property taxes are current.
- d. A Downtown Façade Improvement Program grant may only be made to any property in the downtown as delineated on the Downtown Façade Improvement map and has at least one street level, front facing commercial use.
- e. Grant funds will be paid directly to program applicants only upon completion of the project(s).
- f. Grant funds cannot be used towards City permit fees or design costs.
- g. All projects shall be completed within one (1) year of award. A request for an extension may be granted, if delay is due to a legitimate cause. Written request for extension shall occur before the 1-year deadline has elapsed.
- h. The applicant shall submit three bids for their proposal(s). Two bids are acceptable provided the applicant can demonstrate attempts for a third bid were unsuccessful.
- i. Contractor(s) and sub-contractor(s) shall be insured and are required to sign a lien waiver upon completion of work.
- j. An applicant may apply consecutively provided the project(s) meet(s) program eligibility and is not duplicative.

4. Eligible Projects

All proposed improvements shall comply with code and design 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).

- a. Signage
- b. Awnings
- c. Storefront improvements
- d. Restoration of original/historic windows, doors, and trim where applicable
- e. Repair or replacement of windows, doors, and trim

- f. Cleaning and/or painting of surfaces
- g. Cleaning and/or repointing of surface brick or stone
- h. Removing paint from brick or stone
- i. Exterior lighting
- j. Removal of “modernization” alterations/additions
- k. Cleaning and repair or installation of approved siding
- l. Landscapes/hardscapes
- ~~m.~~ Increased accessibility for ADA compliance
- n. 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.
- o. **Other**, explain how the proposed project fits in the spirit of the program

5. Ineligible Projects

- a. Purchase of commercial property/equipment
- b. New building construction
- c. Routine maintenance
- d. Interior improvement (unless they meet the criteria of 4o.)

6. Process

- ~~a.~~ To apply for a Downtown Façade Improvement Program grant, access and thoroughly read the Westbrook Downtown Façade Improvement Program Overview and Application materials.
- b. Collect estimates and other required documentation as per the Self-Check Pathway. This will include contacting the Planning Department to review your project and determine the necessary permits.
- c. Create and submit a packet of all required documentation.
- d. The City’s Economic Development staff will review applications for approval.
- e. The applicant will be contacted 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 the projects that do not meet the criteria of the program.)
- f. Successful applicants may begin improvements after receiving grant award letter.
Improvements begun prior to award notification may not be eligible for reimbursement. Additionally, projects that require City permits (Building, Electrical, Village Review, Signs, etc.) shall be applied for and granted prior to any work

commencing. If work proceeds without the required City permits, the City may withdraw the Façade Improvement grant funds.

- g. After overall project completion, the following documents shall be submitted to Economic Development staff:
- W-9
 - Contractor(s) invoices
 - Proof of payment in full to contractor(s)
 - Signed lien waiver(s)
- h. City will process payment after all final documentation is submitted.

NOTE: Cost overruns above estimated cost (stated grant amount) shall be communicated to the City for consideration and increased approval award.

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