



CITY OF TAUNTON

Shaunna O'Connell, Mayor

Office of Economic and Community Development

William D. Roth, Jr., Executive Director

COMMERCIAL FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The City of Taunton, through its Office of Economic and Community Development is offering funding to qualified businesses and non-profit organizations for façade improvements utilizing funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). A façade grant is offered to owners and tenants of commercial properties as an incentive to improve and restore the original character of their buildings. (Applications prepared by tenants must be duly signed and approved by the building owner prior to submission). Façade grants will match private investments to assist owners in restoring the appearance of their buildings. Façade improvement projects must contribute to and not detract from the overall attractiveness of commercial buildings and streetscapes.

The Goals of the Program are to:

- Facilitate commercial revitalization;
- Stimulate private investment and customer patronage;
- Preserve and beautify the City's commercial districts;
- Generate business opportunities and create a pleasant walking environment by improving the visual aesthetics of the commercial building facades and commercial districts.

The objective of the program is to assist in restoring, substantially beautifying, and/or enhancing the entire façade or elevation of a commercial building. Additionally, the program is intended to assist projects that promote retail activities, create an attractive and welcoming environment, encourage neighborhood character and architectural design, use quality materials, and incorporate good design concepts.

How To Apply:

This application is available online at the City of Taunton website at: <https://www.taunton-ma.gov/economic-community-development/news/commercial-fa%C3%A7ade-improvement-program> You may submit the application via email by sending it to OECD@Taunton-MA.gov with Façade Improvement Application as the heading in the subject line; or you can drop it off in person or by mail to the Office of Economic and Community Development, Façade Improvement Program, Taunton City Hall, 15 Summer Street, Rm 302, Taunton, MA 02780

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| GRANT AMOUNT | <p>Eligible commercial property owners and tenants can receive a grant for up to \$40,000 for eligible commercial façade improvements.</p> <p>Applicants are required to provide a 25% match of the total award.</p> <p><i>The maximum grant amount allowed per project is not allowed to exceed 75% of the total project cost.</i></p> |
| FAÇADE DEFINITION | <p>A façade is considered the front (address side) of a building facing a street or public way. For the purpose of this program, the façade will be the side of the building readily viewed by the motorists or pedestrians with windows or architectural details in need of repair. In the case of corner buildings, a maximum of two street facing sides will be considered as the façade. <i>Note, this will not include any work being conducted to the roof.</i></p> |
| ELIGIBLE COSTS | <p>Façade replacement/restoration services such as storefronts, windows, doors, awnings, painting, and siding, re-pointing of brick, exterior lighting, and decorative architectural details such as cornices, parapet walls, and signage shall be considered. Paint only projects are not eligible.</p> |
| ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS | <p>Most business and non-profit organizations located in qualified census tracts (map attached) are eligible. Businesses and organizations not located in qualified census tracts must be “disproportionately impacted” per ARPA final rule, which in Massachusetts includes businesses and organizations in the following industries; Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodations, Food Services, and Personal Care Services. Businesses outside of the qualified census tracts and not in a service listed above as disproportionately impacted are not eligible to for funding.</p> <p>For-Profit Businesses must meet the definition of a ‘Small business’, meaning they;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have no more than 500 employees, or if applicable, the size standard in the number of employees established by the Administrator of the Small Business Administration for the industry in which the business concern or organization operates, and • Are a small business concern as defined by Section 3 of the Small Business Act (which includes, among other requirements, that businesses are independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field of operation). |

Eligibility Criteria

- All improvements must comply with City building and zoning standards. All proposed improvements on historical buildings will be subject to an historical review to ensure the architectural features are preserved to the greatest extent possible.
- Most businesses located in Qualified Census Tracts (map attached) are eligible. Link to interactive Qualified Census Tracts map:
<https://srpedd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=23b7ba9583d54d389ea34b6d763f39da>
- Businesses not located in Qualified Census Tracts must be designated as a “disproportionately impacted” business per the ARPA Final Rule, which in Massachusetts include businesses in the following industries:

Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services, and Personal Care Services. Businesses outside the qualified census tracts and not identified as a ‘disproportionately impacted’ business are not eligible for funding.

- All improvements must comply with City building and zoning standards. All proposed improvements will be subject to a historic review to ensure that the architectural features are preserved to the greatest extent possible.
- The owner of the building must be the applicant to the program. Commercial tenants wishing to participate must do so through the **property owner**.
- The owner / applicant must have no outstanding city taxes, fees, or other assessments due to the City of Taunton at the time of the applications submission.
- The building must contain commercial, retail, office or service-oriented space or vacant space available for commercial use.
- Eligible improvements are limited to the building facade as defined above.
- Participants must comply with all state and local code requirements.
- For buildings with a ground floor used for commercial purposes or return of previous ground/first floor commercial properties back to commercial use.
- The Office of Economic and Community Development (OECD) reserves the right to make the final determination as to the appropriateness, suitability, and design of the improvements. Further, the OECD reserves the right to make the final determination as to whether work was carried out according to approved designs and specifications.

If you have any questions with regards to eligibility, please email the Office of Economic and Community Development at; OECD@Taunton-ma.gov.

Eligible Improvements

- Replacement and restoration of original architectural details;
- Removal of elements which cover architectural details;
- New storefront construction within an existing building;
- Window replacement and window framing;
- Repointing and replacement/repair of masonry ;
- Painting of buildings; * painting to be conducted as part of other improvements.
- Repair, Replacement or installation of Signs and Awnings mounted to the facade of the building.

Ineligible Improvements

- Projects that are underway or have begun prior to execution of an Agreement with OECD are not eligible to participate in the program.
- Buildings that do not contain commercial or retail businesses or non-profits on the first floor.
- New construction
- Temporary, portable, or non-permanent improvements.
- Internally lit box signs and neon signs are prohibited.
- Interior improvements, Roof Repairs, Removal of architecturally significant features, as determined by OECD, other improvements not determined to contribute to the aesthetic appearance of the neighborhood.

Program Limitations

Maximum assistance limits will apply to the individual tax parcels regardless of number of store fronts involved. Vacant store fronts must be actively being marketed for lease. Copy of availability notification and advertisement in local real estate journals and websites will be required as proof of marketing. Advertisements must include the lease rate.

Construction

For projects involving construction, construction must be undertaken by a Massachusetts licensed and insured contractor for the trade involved. Hiring of the contractor shall be the responsibility of the program applicant. The City will not direct program applicants to or recommend any particular contractors. The property/business owner must secure at least two competitive bids, assuring that costs are reasonable to market standards. The applicant will select the lowest qualified bid. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the contractor undertakes the façade improvements in accordance with the plans approved by the City. Failure to undertake the façade improvements in accordance with the pre-approved plans or in accordance with program guidelines will result in termination from participation in the program.

Financial Terms

All Façade Improvement Program grants require a minimum 25% match. The program will assist the owner financially by providing a grant equal to seventy-five (75%) percent of the actual cost of the eligible improvements, up to a program cap of \$40,000 per building. The program will pay for eligible construction costs in two instalments, the first installment upon submission of an invoice from the property owner showing the amount paid to the contractor at approximately 50% of the work completed. The second payment upon submission of an invoice from the property owner showing the final amount paid to the contractor upon completion of the project. Itemized billing from the property owner or contractor must accompany the invoice for payment. Reimbursement will only be for pre-approved items in accordance with the program guidelines. The City will inspect the work and then authorize the release of payment upon approval of work completed. **Improvements made prior to the execution of a participation agreement between the property owner and the City will not be eligible for inclusion in the program or for reimbursement to the owner.**

OECD has the right to reject the Façade Improvement Application or terminate any agreement if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines, fails to begin construction within six (6) months of an executed agreement with OECD, or has started the project prior to executing an agreement with OECD.

Process

The following steps outline the general process that shall be followed;

- Applicant submits a complete application to the OECD. Submission of the application does not constitute a grant approval or reservation or guarantee of grant funds. Funding commitment will be issued upon the execution of a written grant approval and participation agreement.
- Applicant meets with the OECD Project Manager to discuss the requested renovations and to discuss alternatives if necessary.
- Applicant meets with the Historic Commission (if in a Historic District) to review project scope.
- Property is evaluated by OECD for feasibility and eligibility.
- Owner submits a plan/sketches or if necessary a formal set of detailed construction plans articulating the proposed work.
- Plans and designs are reviewed for conformance with program outlines and neighborhood aesthetic.

- City issues a letter of conditional approval.
- Properties situated in the various historic districts must have Historic Commission approval prior to commencing work.
- Owner obtains quotes from licensed/insured contractors.
- Copies of the quotes are provided to OECD for review.
- Owner enters into formal agreements with the City.
- All necessary permits are acquired by the contractor.
- Work commences, periodic inspections are conducted by the OECD Project Manager.
- Contractor provides invoices to the City for the first payment request.
- Work is completed, all permits are completed and signed off by the Building Department Inspections division.
- Final invoice is submit upon completion to OECD.

Design Considerations

A well designed storefront contributes to the overall vitality of a commercial corridor and is a critical marketing tool for a business, as the storefront's appearance provides a critical first impression for a potential customer.

These guidelines are intended to help applicants and ensure that enhancements to existing storefronts are consistent with the character defining features which establish the aesthetic, historical, and architectural value and significance of the City of Taunton. Improvements for buildings not having notably historic or architectural features should be an opportunity to enhance the appearance of the building and their streetscapes.

Design Principles

Storefront design should be oriented to the sidewalk, invite interaction, enliven the pedestrian environment, and provide visual interest both day and night.

Storefront improvements funded by the program must respect the design of the building and be compatible with the scale, materials, colors and texture of the building in which it is located and adjacent buildings.

Existing original or significant historic storefronts should be removed and replaced with a newly designed compatible storefront.

New facades may be differentiated from historic facades, but should be compatible with the materials, features, scale, proportion, and massing of adjacent buildings.

Elements such as windows, doors, bays, etc., should complement the size and scale of neighboring buildings. Each should also be consistent and in proportion to each other.

Design Guidelines

Storefront Alteration: Existing original storefront components, including those presently concealed, shall be retained or repaired if feasible, or if repair is not feasible, replaced in kind. Design of the ground floor is to be complementary to the façade layout above. Façade designs should respect the individuality of adjacent buildings rather than attempt to unify them.

Display Windows: New display windows should be appropriately scaled to the building and encourage viewing into the storefront.

Signage: Signage should be attractively integrated into the architecture of the building, including the window area, awnings or canopies, and entrance ways. Use of horizontal sign band and directory signage for multiple tenants is encouraged. Signage must be in conformance with City zoning ordinances. **Internally lit box signs and/or neon signs will not be permitted.**

Awnings: Awnings should complement the architecture of the façade and should not obscure important architectural details. Awning designs should be appropriate to the historic period of significance of the building or historic district. Awnings along the same building should be harmonious with one another, using similar shapes and materials. Internally illuminated awnings are not permitted, except down lighting is permitted to illuminate the adjacent sidewalk.

Lighting Fixtures: Lighting fixtures shall complement the architectural style of the building and shall only illuminate the storefront, sidewalk, and ground story signage.

Building Materials: All building materials used shall complement the adjacent buildings and are to be historically accurate for the building period or historical district (if within a Historic District).

Colors: The use of colors should complement the adjacent buildings and are to be historically correct for the building and/or commercial district, but may include accent colors that honor the cultural diversity of the building tenants or neighborhood.