

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 are 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.

The applicant must be up to date with all licenses and fees required by the City of Johnstown. If the applicant is not up to date on the licenses and/or fees, the City of Johnstown holds the right to deny the loan request. These licenses and fees include the following:

- ***Occupancy Permit***
- ***Cabaret License for all Entertainment Service Businesses***
- ***Amusement Tax License for all Gaming Machines located within the business***
- ***Building Permit for renovations***
- ***Contractor must have a City of Johnstown Contractor's License***
- ***Proof of paid Business Privilege Tax for the City of Johnstown.***
- ***All City Taxes must be paid current***
- ***Free of all Code Violations***

Any and all outstanding code violations with the City's Code Department will also forfeit your loan application.

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 \$10,000. Any project or architectural 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 procedure required for the City involvement:

- Application is made to the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) on forms provided by the City of Johnstown. The application is competitive, so submitting an application does not guarantee funding approval.
- The DCED verifies that the matching share for the project is available.
- The applicant will seek three (3) competitive written quotations on the specifications prepared and submit them to the DCED for review.
- Total project costs will be determined based on this review, the scope of work shall be approved, and allowable City private shares will be established. DCED will deposit the required private share with the bank where an escrow account will be maintained.
- A contract inclusive of the scope of work will be prepared between the applicant and the lowest responsible bidder by the City for execution by the parties involved.
- City DCED staff will monitor the work as it progresses and will release payment in the form of no more than two payments, one (1) at project start, and one (1) upon final inspection from the City's façade Inspector. City will submit a request to the State for the stated Grant Funds (up to \$5,000.00) once the request is approved by the State and funds are received by the City (usually 4-6 weeks after submission to the State) and payment will be made to the contractor.

Progress and payment inspections will verify that the scope of work has been followed and that all work meets relevant local codes and ordinances.

Restrictions on City Participation

- 1) City funding is competitive and subject to availability. The amount of funds requested and the amount approved may differ. 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 receipt of City approval.
- 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) Construction must be completed within six (6) months of the approval of the City's share, unless otherwise agreed to by all parties involved.
- 5) Any partial payment will be based on the actual degree of completion pending the inspection by the City. The final payment will be paid upon documentation by the City that all contractual terms have been met.
- 6) The applicant agrees not to discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment or contractor because of race, creed, color, national origin, handicap, or sex.
- 7) Applicants may submit no more than one project proposal per property during any one-year period.

Applicant Responsibilities

- 1) The applicant agrees to meet 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) The applicant understands that she/he 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.

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
