



City of West Columbia
Bridging Past, Present and Future

Façade Improvement Grant PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Program Overview

The City of West Columbia's Façade Improvement Grant (WCFIG) has been designed to encourage enhancement and investment to the overall revitalization of West Columbia. This program provides grant funds to finance exterior improvements to a property owners or tenant's commercial building that will be aesthetically pleasing and complimentary to local design guidelines.

Funding

The program provides for a one-time reimbursement, up to \$10,000 maximum per building. There are two tiers of funding levels. Businesses spending up to \$9,999 in improvements can be provided with a 50/50 reimbursement totaling up to \$2,500 maximum. Businesses spending \$10,000 and above in improvements can be provided with a 50/50 reimbursement totaling up to \$10,000 maximum. Only eligible façade improvements will be considered for funding.

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants include owners of commercial properties and owners/managers of businesses located within the eligible highlighted areas on page two Business owners/managers who are leasing a building for which improvements are proposed, must submit an *Owner Consent Form* with their completed application. Only businesses whose existing use is allowable by the City's current codes and regulations are eligible for funding through the WCFIG. The City reserves the right to deny funding to applicants who are delinquent on payment of taxes, fines, or fees.

Eligible Buildings: Eligible buildings are commercial buildings with façades visible from the Street. New construction will not be considered for this program.

Buildings do not require occupancy in order to be eligible for this program.

Eligible Expenditures/Activities: Façade renovation activities must involve the general upgrading of a building's external appearance. Façade program funding is to be used for permanent exterior visual improvements to storefronts, and is not to be used for structural repairs. Permanent exterior improvements that are eligible include:

- Masonry repairs and tuckpointing
- Repair/replace/preserve (including the exposure and cleaning) historically significant architectural details
- Storefront modification or reconstruction
- Cornice repair & exterior trim work
- Exterior painting and repairs to the finishes of original buildings

- Awnings and canopies
- Window and door repair or replacement
- Permanent exterior signage
- Permanent exterior lighting
- Repair/replacement of gutters and down spouts
- Decking and stairs
- Window bar removal
- Parking Lots
- Side and rear building façades where improvements will serve to remove blight

Examples of activities generally not eligible:

- Non-visible roofing
- Attached, hanging or projecting signs unrelated to the architecture of the building
- Mechanical equipment enclosures (non-visible)
- Billboards
- Interior renovation
- Temporary, portable or non-permanent improvements
- New construction
- Property acquisition
- Expansion of building area
- Conversion of use
- Working capital
- Refinance of existing debt
- Payment of delinquent taxes
- Improvements in progress or completed prior to grant approval
- Utility/trash enclosures
- Structural repair
- Professional fees
- Landscaping

Eligible Area: The eligible area is the Gateway Overlay District, which consists of portions of Meeting Street, Jarvis Klapman Boulevard, Sunset Boulevard, and State Street.

Review Committee

Applications will be scored and awarded based on the strength of proposals readiness to begin work, and funding availability .Projects that are rated highest will be eligible for funding first. Projects that are equally ranked will be selected based upon receipt of application.

City of West Columbia staff, including the Building Official, Grants Administrator, and the Director of Planning & Zoning will review the applications.

Scoring Criteria for the Façade Grants

How are projects selected for funding?

The City of West Columbia Façade Improvement Board will evaluate applications for eligibility and how effectively they meet the program criteria. Specifically, a project application will be scored on how well it meets each of the program criteria. A total point score will be based on the sum of the ratings.

The criteria are as follows:

VISUAL IMPACT Maximum Score 50 Points

- Overall impact of the project on the Business District.
- Are inappropriate design elements removed?
- Will the project eliminate what was previously a liability for the commercial district?

- Does the project seek to restore the historical or architectural significance of the building?
- Improvements will create more visual significance because:
 - key, highly visual elements of the building are being improved
 - the building is prominently visible due to its location (e.g., it serves as a focal point from a street, is at a prominent intersection, or is larger than other buildings around it)

FINANCIAL IMPACT Maximum Score 30 Points

- Projects that leverage more private investment will be graded higher than those seeking just the grant funding.
- The project includes improvements being made to
 - ensure public safety,
 - establish or preserve the building’s structural integrity
 - correct other serious safety issues
- The façade project is part of a larger project that improves other exterior or interior parts of the building

EXTENT OF IMPROVEMENTS Maximum Score 20 Points

- Degree of visual improvement the proposed project will bring to the storefront and the streetscape;
 - Design Consistency/Compatibility with the city’s standards.
- How permanent are the improvements (signs are more changeable than new glazing, for example) and is there a maintenance plan for improvements?

Architectural Drawings and Specifications

All applicants must contact the City of West Columbia for guidance prior to developing plans for repair/rehabilitation.

Applicants are required to include architectural color schemes, specifications of the proposed façade improvements and, if available, architectural drawings as part of their application.

General Requirements

1. All work must be done in accordance with any applicable design guidelines and all applicable local, state and federal codes, rules and regulations. **Any renovation work undertaken prior to the City's final written authorization to begin construction is not eligible for assistance under the program. All renovation work undertaken in conjunction with the façade improvement program exceeding the approved financial assistance will be the responsibility of the applicant.**
2. All records supporting the costs and components of program assisted improvements shall be maintained for a period not less than three (3) years following completion of the program agreement period, agreement termination, or default, whichever shall first occur.

Financing Policies

Reimbursements - All assistance is on a reimbursement basis following completion of the project. The total reimbursement for all forms of façade improvement assistance shall not exceed \$2,500 per tier one projects and \$10,000 per tier two projects. Applicants who qualify for funding must document all expenditures and provide the program administrator with proof of payment (receipts, paid invoices, etc.) for all eligible improvements within 30 days of completion. **Work must be completed within 90 days of the award.** Once construction is complete, the program administrator will visit the project to ensure that it complies with the approved plans. The applicant will then be provided with a one-time reimbursement for the approved amount. Reimbursement checks will be issued by the City of West Columbia.

1. Default - A recipient shall be considered in default and the balance of financial assistance immediately due and payable upon failure to properly maintain the façade after improvements are completed, delinquent property taxes, or failure to operate in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal codes, laws, and regulations.
2. Remedies of Default - The City may take whatever action at law or in equity as may appear necessary or desirable to collect any outstanding balance or to enforce the performance and observation of any other obligation or agreement of the recipient.

Contact Information

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