

City of Belvidere
Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program

Overview:

The Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program is designed to enhance the overall appearance and image of Belvidere's Downtown Historic Districts. The City of Belvidere will provide matching grants to encourage façade improvements of storefronts in the downtown area. Under the program, building/business owners are eligible for up to the lesser of 50% of the actual façade improvement costs, or the maximum amount allowed by the Belvidere City Council. If more applications are received than current funds will allow, the City reserves the right to prioritize the applications or prorate the funds awarded on the basis of the location of the project, the extent of the work, the level of funding, and the relative impact of the proposed improvements on the area.

Preference is given to those projects where the existing structure reveals:

- Superior design, materials, or workmanship;
- Historic materials, design or workmanship; or
- Where the project will facilitate the restoration or reconstruction of a façade that is more compatible with the character of the building and surrounding streetscape, but does not change the footprint of the building.

General Requirements:

- A property owner or tenant may be eligible for a 50/50 match up to \$5,000 (please see attached list as to what is eligible for grant reimbursement). Façades wider than 50 feet may apply for up to \$7,500. No project will be approved without the written approval of the owner of the property. Maximum reimbursements may vary from year to year depending on funding by the City Council.
- Each building is eligible for 1 grant reimbursement every 3 years.
- Grant funds may only be used for exterior façade improvements. No interior work. Grant funds may not be approved or used for items that are easily removed from the building.
- Grant funds may only be allocated for commercial properties that are (i) in a National Register District; (ii) are a National Register and/or Local Landmark within the CB, Central Business District or (iii) all other downtown areas as documented on the attached map.
- Any work done to a locally landmarked building must obtain a certificate of appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission
- Any projects receiving grant funds must be reviewed by Planning Staff and the Historic Preservation Commission (following Ch. 58 of the Municipal Code) with final approval by City Council.
- All local and state building and fire codes in addition to zoning regulations must be adhered to.

Examples of Eligible Projects:

- *Ingress Egress Doors* (exterior)- installation, repair and replacement of doors and hardware to provide public access, or where current doors do not meet the building, Americans With Disabilities Act, or fire codes or it will improve the overall appearance of the building.
- *Painting*- painting of the exterior surface of the buildings
- *Shutters and Awnings*- repair, replacement or addition of exterior shutters and awnings
- *Signs*- repair of existing non-temporary signs, excluding murals
- *Stairs, Porches, Railings, Exits*- repair and replacement or installation of exterior stairs, porches, railings and exit facilities.
- *Walls*- repair and rebuilding of exterior walls, including: cleaning, sealing, tuck pointing, painting, etc.
- *Cornices*- repair or construction of cornices in order to replicate building's original façade.
- *Roofs*- repair and reroofing, where the effects of the repair will be visible from a public street or public parking lot (In general, sloping roofs would qualify, flat roofs would not)
- *Walkways*- privately owned sidewalks, pavers, plazas, and other permanent improvements designed primarily for pedestrian use
- *Windows*- replacement windows must be the same size of original opening and same aesthetic style of the original windows.
- *Lighting*- installation, repair and replacement of lighting mounted on a building that illuminates the façade or signage. All lighting must comply with the City of Belvidere Municipal Code.
- *Removal of inappropriate features*- such as siding and modern awnings that are not similar to the aesthetic design of the original structure.
- **Project Costs**- All approved fees shall be reimbursed after completion of a project and after submittal and approval of all relevant invoices by City Staff. Example of eligible project costs are:
 - Design professional fees
 - Actual Construction Costs
 - Architectural or structural engineering services for façade improvements (see Reimbursement of Payments for more details)

Examples of Non-Eligible projects:

- Liquor License fee rebate
- Building Permit fees and related costs
- Project Costs that are not specifically called out previously
- Extermination of insects, rodents, vermin or other pests
- Title reports and legal fees
- Acquisition of land or buildings
- Refinance existing debt
- HVAC systems
- Any interior work on a structure

- Any work that is not visible from a public right-of-way or parking area.
- Any exterior appurtenance that is deemed easily removable (excluding those specifically listed as previously as eligible)
- Sweat equity
- Working capital for business
- Resurfacing of parking lots
- Landscaping
- Painting of masonry that was not previously painted
- New additions
- Decks and fences (Unless previously existed)
- Any work commenced prior to approval of any grant and execution of the grant agreement.

Application:

Please see attached.

Agreement:

Please see attached.

Commencement of Work:

After the Agreement is approved by the City, an applicant shall obtain all necessary building permits and approvals and begin the work.

Completion of Work:

All improvements must be complete within 180 calendar days after the Agreement is approved. Upon written request and good cause shown, the City may grant one extension of up to an additional 180 days. Good cause for an extension shall include: delays caused by acts of god, riots, unusual weather delays, labor strike and unanticipated unavailability of necessary materials. If the work is not completed within 180 days (or such extension as approved by the City), the City's obligation to reimburse the owner or tenant for the project terminates.

Upon completion of the façade improvements, the funding recipient must schedule a final inspection and submit the paperwork, including but not limited to all relevant receipts for reimbursement. Project costs/expenditures are subject to audit by the City.

Alterations:

The property owner and tenant shall be responsible for maintaining all reimbursed improvements in the same condition as approved in the final inspection, without alteration for five (5) years unless approved by the Planning Staff and the Historic Preservation Commission.

Reimbursement of Payments:

Upon completion of work, the owner or tenant must submit copies of all architect's invoices, contractor's statements, invoices, and proof of payment to the Planning Department as evidence that the owner or tenant has paid all parties involved. Payment will be authorized after completion and inspection of all work items as originally approved and receipt of all of the required documents. If the applicant is doing his/her own labor, funding will be reimbursed only for material costs.

If costs exceed the original estimates, the property owner or tenant will be responsible for the full amount of the excess. The City cannot reimburse more than the total amount specified in the Agreement. Any work commenced prior to City approval and signing of the Grant will not be eligible for reimbursement funding.

Architectural Services may be reimbursed, at the sole discretion of the City as follows:

- Concept Plans and cost estimate prepared before approval of Façade Improvement Agreement.
- Architectural construction drawings and specifications for the approved improvement to the extent required by the City Building Department, prepared after City approval of an Agreement.
- Construction supervision conducted after City approval of the Agreement.

Changes to the previously approved work must be approved by Planning Staff and the Historic Preservation Commission prior to any expenditure of any funds or they will not be reimbursed.

Reimbursement grants are subject to Federal and State taxes, and are reported to the Internal Revenue Service on Form 1099. Recipient will be required to provide a Taxpayer ID number or Social Security Number as part of the Façade Improvement Program award. Please contact a tax advisor for liability information.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

The City shall implement and administer the Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program and shall review all applications for a Downtown Façade Improvement Grant in a manner that does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status or political beliefs.