

Commercial Facade Program **(Northampton County) Guidelines**

Goals: To strengthen the City of Bethlehem's ("City") position in the Lehigh Valley region as a prime location and destination and to keep the City's business districts vibrant through the stabilization and enhancement of the City's building stock. This program is administered by the City's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).

The **Commercial Facade Program** is designed to provide an incentive to building owners to restore or rehabilitate the primary elevation of a building in targeted areas in the Northampton County portion of the City. Funds may also be used to repair or replace exterior building systems in order to preserve, protect and stabilize a building. In addition, businesses that occupy first-floor space may redesign their storefront to reflect historic architectural precedent, or current architectural design or business trends, as deemed appropriate for the building, block face, and streetscape. Up to \$5,000 in grant funding is available for these improvements, with a dollar-for-dollar match by the business or property owner or other source(s) subject to approval by the City, in its sole discretion.

Program Eligibility: To be considered for funding a project must meet the following criteria:

1. Construction/alteration plans must achieve the goals, and meet design guidelines of the program as determined by the City.
2. A building must be located in one the City's designated business districts in Northampton County:
 - a. Historic North Side Business District
 - b. North Side Central Business District
 - c. East Broad Street Business District
 - d. Linden Street Neighborhood Business District
 - e. South Side Arts District
 - f. South Bethlehem's Four Block International District

City staff reserves the right to include commercial property not in these districts, as it deems appropriate.

3. A building must include a commercial or business occupant as determined by the Certificate of Occupancy as issued by the Bureau of Code Enforcement and the Zoning Officer; this does not include Home Offices and Home Occupations.
4. Use of the property must comply with the City of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance. (*Zoning Officer (610) 856-7094*). A valid Certificate of Occupancy or eligibility to receive a Certificate of Occupancy must be demonstrated.
5. Construction/alteration plans for buildings located in areas of the North Side Central Business District that are outside the Local Historic District, the East Broad Street District, the Neighborhood Business District on Linden Street, and parts of the South Bethlehem Commercial Districts may require review by the applicable architectural and historic review board when it is determined by City staff that historic resources may be affected by the Applicant's proposed project.
6. Construction plans must comply with the City's Building Codes, applicable at time of plan submission. To the extent practical, correction of code violations as they relate to the exterior of a building will be eligible for funding. (*Consult with Chief Building Inspector (610) 865-7091*).

7. Compliance with other codes, law and regulations, as determined to be applicable to the project, including Federal, State, and local regulations, must be met before, during, and/or upon completion of project, as applicable. The City may impose additional conditions on the project, in its sole discretion.
8. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings provide the guidelines. The City's local historic districts' Boards and Commissions employ the use of architectural design guidelines in their review for Certificate of Appropriateness; these architectural design guidelines are available from the City of Bethlehem Department of Community and Economic Development. Call (610) 865-7085.

Program Conditions: As they relate to the subject property, the property owner, and/or the business owner, as applicable, must agree to the following conditions:

1. All municipal taxes related to the property and the business must be current.
2. The property owner must agree to a building code inspection of the exterior of the structure.
3. The applicant will submit three (3) cost estimates for construction/alteration plans.
4. All construction related work must be performed by a licensed professional pursuant to City regulations.
5. In addition to construction expenses, i.e. labor and materials, grant funds can be used for professional fees which will directly relate to and result in building improvements.
6. The grant recipient(s) is/are responsible for completing the City-approved project.
7. A licensed contractor and/or tradesperson must complete construction.

The City reserves the right to impose additional terms and conditions applicable to the grants and/or project(s) described in this document, from time-to-time, in its sole discretion.

Terms of the Grant:

1. City or other funds contributed to Applicant's project may not exceed \$5,000 per façade improvement, but may be less as deemed appropriate by the City
2. A dollar-for-dollar match is required by the property and/or business owner, or other City-approved source, up to the \$5,000 maximum.
3. Grant disbursement will be reimbursement for invoices paid and presented to the Department of Community and Economic Development in accordance with the executed grant agreement and any other Grant Documents (defined below).

Program Application: An application form is made available during consultation with the Department of Community and Economic Development. A property owner or his/her assign may apply for funding. A tenant who makes an application must provide proof in writing that the owner-of-record has given consent for the building alterations. An applicant who has a long-term agreement of sale (Installment Sales Agreement) must submit a copy of the agreement of sale and provide written consent from the owner-of-record for the alterations.

Application Process

Step 1: Contact the City Department of Community and Economic Development at (610) 865-7085 to schedule a call or appointment with the commercial façade grant coordinator to discuss the program and eligibility.

Step 2: Schedule an Exterior Building Inspection with Bureau of Code Enforcement at (610) 865-7091.

Step 3: Develop a facade and/or building treatment plan. Include plans to address any exterior building code violations that may have been detected. Depending on the scope of improvements, it may be advisable to procure the services of an architect who is qualified in the area of historic resource treatment. The City Department of Community and Economic Development can provide a list of credentialed architects upon request.

Step 4: Complete application form and attach required exhibits and attachments.

Required Exhibits may include the following:

- i. A copy of the Property Deed.
- ii. A copy of the Lease Agreement, if appropriate. A written, notarized statement of consent from the property owner allowing the tenant to make building alterations.
- iii. Construction/alteration plans, including sketches, work write-up, project description, and architectural plans may be required.
- iv. Copy of Certificate of Appropriateness, when applicable.
- v. Three (3) construction/alteration cost estimates prepared by bona fide licensed contractors based on plans submitted with the grant application package. The City reserves the right to disallow quotes that appear to be, in the opinion and sole discretion of the City, unreasonable or out for the normal parameters of contracting for like work in the area.
- vi. A copy of the Exterior Building Inspection Report issued by the City of Bethlehem Building Inspector.
- vii. A copy of the Certificate of Occupancy as issued by the Bureau of Code Enforcement and the Zoning Officer.
- viii. A copy of scheduled inspections for Building Code compliance, as deemed necessary.
- ix. Any other document or information deemed appropriate by the City.

The City may require additional exhibits as it deems appropriate.

Step 5: Submit grant application and attached exhibits (as listed above) to:

The City of Bethlehem
Department of Community and Economic Development
10 E. Church Street
Bethlehem, PA 18018
Or email all materials to econdev@bethlehem-pa.gov

Step 6: The Department of Community and Economic Development will schedule a review of the application once deemed to be complete.

Step 7: The decision of the City will be communicated to the Applicant. Upon approval, Applicant will be required to execute a grant agreement and potentially other documents (each a “Grant Document” and together, “Grant Documents”), in the City’s sole discretion. The terms of the Grant Documents, will include conditions that must be satisfied by the Applicant, as grant recipient, including, without limitation, completion of all approved building improvements and repairs. Applicant is also referred to in this document as “recipient.”

Step 8: Upon execution of the Grant Documents, the recipient shall have thirty (30) days to enter into a contract with a licensed building contractor to have approved alterations and repairs completed. (After thirty (30) days, the grant application approval will no longer be valid, and the applicant will need to re-apply if there is an interest in completing the project.)

Step 9: Approved alterations and repairs shall be made in a timely manner in accordance with the Building Permit issued by the Bureau of Code Enforcement. The Facade project must begin within forty five (45) days of full execution of any Grant Documents, unless the City approves an extension based on circumstances such as weather or any other reason deemed appropriate by the City. The grant recipient will be requested to display on site within public view, a project sign supplied by the City Department of Community and Economic Development. All grant disbursements must be completed within six (6) months from the date of execution of the Grant Documents unless the City approves an extension in its sole discretion

Step 10: Proceeds of the grant will be dispersed in accordance with the terms of any applicable Grant Document after improvements have begun. The recipient shall submit contractor’s invoices for labor, materials, and equipment to the division of the Department of Community and Economic Development specified by the City. The Department of Community and Economic Development will ascertain that work has been done prior to submitting a request for payment to the City Controller’s Office or other City agency for processing. Funds will not be disbursed until proof is provided that correction of any code violations noted on the code inspection report are being addressed. The City may impose additional conditions on disbursements as it deems appropriate. All change orders, cost overruns, or obligations that exceed the approved limits in any applicable Grant Document are the responsibility of the recipient.

Procurement Information

As funds from Northampton County are being used to fund the grant(s) under these guidelines, the following procurement thresholds must be used for any items purchased in whole or part by these grant funds, unless stated otherwise in these guidelines:

- A. Purchases up to \$1,000 require one (1) quote.
- B. Purchases from \$1,001 - \$6,000 require three (3) quotes
- C. Purchases from \$6,001- \$10,000 require three (3) formal quotes
- D. Purchases from \$10,001 - \$24,999 require three (3) request for quote forms
- E. Purchases of \$25,000 or more require competitive sealed bids

COMMERCIAL FACADE PROGRAM **COMPONENTS**

1. Facade and Building Improvement Grants

Purpose: Funds for building owners to repair or replace exterior building systems; correct building code violations; or restore, rehabilitate, or otherwise improve the facade of their building. Funds may also be used to restore or otherwise improve their storefronts in a manner deemed appropriate by the City for the building, streetscape, and the business.

Eligibility: A project must meet program eligibility criteria, and the following additional criteria to be eligible for funds:

A building owner may receive only one (1) Facade grant per building location.

Examples of eligible facade, building alterations and storefront improvements include, without limitation:

- i. Improvements to windows such as shutters, frames, etc.
- ii. Columns, porches, and porticos
- iii. Decorative features found on the building facade
- iv. Repairs and replacement of existing features and systems
- v. Gutters and downspouts
- vi. Windows – Weatherproofing and repairs
- vii. Doorway stoops, ramps for accessibility, railings
- viii. Storefront plate glass display windows and framing
- ix. Lighting fixtures for illumination of main entrance and signs
- x. Doors
- xi. Awnings (non-sign awnings only)

Architectural Design Guidelines: Design for building alterations shall follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation when applicable. Applicability of the Standards is determined by the location and/or the age of the building. The architectural design for buildings located in either the Bethlehem Historic District or the South Bethlehem Historic Conservation District requires a Certificate of Appropriateness upon recommendation of either the Historic Architectural Review Board or the South Bethlehem Historic Conservation District Review Board and approval by City Council.

Terms: The fund will provide a dollar-for-dollar match of construction/alteration costs. The grant amount will be derived from at least three (3) cost estimates. Proceeds will only be disbursed upon submittal of construction cost invoices for materials and/or from contractors or tradesmen for services provided. The City may impose additional conditions on disbursements, from time to time.

Funding for the cost of repair to building facilities, considered building stabilization such as roof repairs, spouting and gutters, and brick pointing can only be included in the grant where further façade improvements are being completed in concert with the program's goals and can only be covered for a maximum of 50% of the costs. The building stabilization costs may not be the majority of funding unless those costs include the replacement of non-appropriate materials with new appropriate materials.

The City may impose additional conditions on Applicant(s) grant(s) or project(s), in its sole discretion.

2. Sign Grants

Purpose: Funds to enable a business owner to be traditional or creative in identifying their businesses, selecting from among the various sign types that are appropriate for buildings in eligible areas.

Eligibility: A project must meet program eligibility criteria, and the following additional criteria to be eligible for sign package funds:

- i. Generally, an Applicant may receive only one (1) sign package grant per building location. However, the City may modify this general policy, on a case-by-case basis, in its sole discretion.
- ii. All signs must comply with the City of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance. (Zoning Office (610) 856-7094) and all other applicable law or regulation.
- iii. Signs to be placed in the public right-of-way must be permitted by the Public Works Department, (610) 865-7063.
- iv. The City may impose additional conditions as it deems appropriate.

Design Guidelines: Design for signs shall follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, when applicable. Applicability of the Standards is determined by the location and/or the age of the building. The architectural design for buildings located in either the Bethlehem Historic District or the South Bethlehem Historic Conservation District requires a Certificate of Appropriateness upon recommendation of either of the Boards, as applicable.

A variety of sign conventions can be appropriate for the buildings of Bethlehem's business districts including flush mounted wall signs, window signs, directory and other changeable message signs, address and building identification plates, suspended signs, projecting wall-mounted signs, and freestanding portable signs. Awnings are also used as signs and may be an eligible item if signage is included on the awning.

Terms: The sign grant fund will provide a dollar-for-dollar match of materials, construction, and installation costs, up to \$2,000. The grant amount will be derived from at least three (3) cost estimates. Proceeds will only be disbursed upon submittal of construction cost invoices for materials and/or from bona fide contractors or tradesmen for services provided; labor performed by grant recipient(s) is not reimbursable. Sign grants require an internal review and approval by the appropriate City staff.

The City may impose additional conditions on any grant covered in these guidelines, in its sole discretion. The City may waive or modify any conditions contained in these grant guidelines, in its sole discretion, to the extent permitted by applicable local, state, or federal law or regulation and/or any binding agreement between the City and funders or any other counterparty, including without limitation, any other units of government or government agencies. If any provision in these guidelines conflicts with provisions in any Grant Document, the City may deem which provision(s) control, in its sole discretion.