

WARREN DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

Investing in our Historic Downtown:

The City of Warren encourages and supports building and business owner investment in existing buildings in the historic downtown district. The City has developed a Downtown Façade Improvement Program in order to:

- 1) Directly support the preservation and restoration of the historic integrity of downtown buildings, and**
- 2) Retain and attract business to strengthen the business potential of downtown Warren**

Through this program, the Redevelopment Authority will provide up to a **50% reimbursement grant** to Warren business or building owners who construct eligible improvements to the façade of their buildings. The Redevelopment Authority will match dollar-for-dollar an owner's investment in eligible improvements to the appearance of their buildings storefront façade **up to a maximum amount of \$5,000**. The following provides the program's criteria for eligibility and the approval process.

Commercial Property:

A commercial property is defined as one utilized for the conduct of buying and/or selling goods and services and which is in compliance with the City of Warren Zoning Ordinance as it pertains to Commercial properties.

Design Committee:

The Design Committee shall be comprised of two members of the Planning Commission, and two members of the Redevelopment Authority (RDA). The Design Committee will review applications and make recommendations regarding the award of Grant Funding.

Program Guidelines:

Guidelines pertaining to the preservation, maintenance, repair, or replacement of building components such as masonry, wood, architectural metals, windows, entrances, and storefronts have been established and are provided with the Grant Funding Application.

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Project Funding:

Up to fifty percent of the project cost will be awarded in Grant funding (not to exceed \$5000). The property/business owner is required to commit an amount equal to the Grant funding to the project and such amount is to be expended and evidenced by paid itemized receipts prior to Grant funding being disbursed.

Funding of approved projects will be prioritized by the Design Committee. If funds for the current year do not permit an individual project to be awarded, the application may be carried over to the next year. If carried over, an application will be reprioritized in the next funding year.

Eligible Applicants:

The property owner or business tenant (with notarized written approval from the property owner) of a commercial property within Downtown Warren as outlined on the attached map.

Property (business) owners with two or more businesses occupying a single building/property, with each business having its own entrance, are eligible for funding for each business.

The applicant must be current in respect to City of Warren real estate tax payments and sewer accounts, must not have any outstanding Building Codes, Property Maintenance, or Property Nuisance violations for any property owned within the City of Warren, and must not have any properties listed on the Warren County Blighted Properties list.

Eligible Activities:

1. Installation and replacement of awnings
2. Installation and replacement of exterior lighting
3. Façade cleaning
4. Façade painting
5. Façade masonry repair
6. Removal, repair, replacement, or addition of signage
7. Door repair and replacement
8. Window repair and replacement including upper story windows
9. Removal of coverings and additions to re-expose original features of storefronts

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10. Providing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) approved handicapped access
11. Design Assistance including architectural, historic preservation, and graphic design services
12. Roof repairs that are part of the overall façade project
13. Building permit and other miscellaneous fees
14. Demolition of property related to the project
15. Sidewalk repair and/or replacement
16. Landscaping

Program Funding Process:

The application process **must** be completed prior to commencement of construction activities related to the project for which funding is sought.

1. Interested applicants must submit a Letter of Intent to the Design Committee with a brief description of the project and a cost estimate. The Design Committee will assist with the application process.
2. The Design Committee will meet with the applicant to discuss the project, perform a site visit, and determine its initial eligibility.
3. Applicant will then complete and submit a Grant Application along with design plans and sketches which illustrate all proposed work, material samples, paint colors, signage, cost estimates, and construction schedules.
4. The Design Committee will then conduct a detailed review of the application and plans for the project. If the application meets the Design Guidelines, the Design Committee will forward the application to the RDA for its consideration.
5. If the application is not approved by the Design Committee, the Design Committee will provide a written explanation of the reason(s) for rejection and what, if any, steps may be taken to receive approval.
6. If approved by the RDA, the RDA will send a letter of approval to the applicant outlining the terms of the Grant offer and providing the timeline for completion of the project.
7. The applicant's minimum monetary commitment to the project is to be expended first and evidenced by presenting copies of paid itemized invoices to the RDA.

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8. Following fulfillment of Item No. 7, monies will then be disbursed to the applicant in accord with the Grant Agreement and pending review and approval of itemized invoices for materials purchased and/or contractor services performed.
9. The RDA will disburse funds within thirty (30) days of receipt of appropriate documentation regarding project expenditures.

Post-Application Procedure:

1. The Design Committee, with assistance from the Building Codes Department, will monitor the progress of the project.
2. Changes in the approved work specifications must be approved by the Design Committee.
3. Approved changes in work verifications will be attached to the original application, dated, and signed by the Design Committee.
4. The applicant completes the project within six (6) months and submits paid invoices to the Design Committee.
5. Applicant and the Design Committee will conduct a final inspection of the project to determine compliance with the approved plan.
6. A Certificate of Approval will be issued by the Design Committee
7. Deviation from an approved plan may disqualify the applicant from Grant Funding.
8. Failure to obtain all necessary Building Permits and comply with inspection requirements will result in cessation of grant payments.

Design Guidelines

1. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved to the extent possible. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property is discouraged.
2. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property should be preserved to the extent possible.
3. When possible, deteriorated historic features should be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature should match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities, and where possible, material. Replacement of missing features should be substantiated by documentary,

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physical, or pictorial evidence. Preservation of removed historical features through repurposing is encouraged.

4. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction should not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work should be differentiated from the old and should be compatible with the size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
5. Awnings should be compatible with the design of the building and the streetscape.
6. Signs should complement, rather than compete with, the character of the building and neighboring buildings and shall be in compliance with the City of Warren Zoning Ordinance as evidenced by obtaining the requisite Sign Permit.
7. The size, shape, details, and transparency of upper story windows shall be preserved where feasible.
8. Exterior access to the upper story floors shall be improved, where feasible.
9. The original front entrances and openings shall be preserved, where feasible.
10. Rear and alley entrances for public and service use shall be developed, where feasible.
11. Original exterior materials shall be revealed, where applicable.
12. Color schemes shall be employed that will complement neighboring buildings and coordinate façade elements in an overall composition.