

Storefront Improvement Program Guidelines

City of Philadelphia, Department of Commerce



Program Description

The purpose of the Storefront Improvement Program is to encourage businesses and property owners **within eligible neighborhood commercial corridors** to improve their storefronts, making these areas more attractive to shoppers and growing their vitality and economic performance. The program reimburses owners of commercial buildings and businesses who make storefront improvements. The program can reimburse up to 50% of the cost of eligible improvements to a maximum of \$8,000 for a single commercial property, or up to \$12,000 for a multiple address, or corner business property.

Eligible Applicants

1) Owners of commercially occupied property; and 2) operating tenant businesses with approval of property owners. Office and industrial buildings are generally not eligible. Applicants must be operating legally, properly registered, licensed with the City of Philadelphia and current with all city taxes. A property improved under this program may apply for the maximum \$8,000 or \$12,000 allowances no more than once every five years, with exception of signage and/or awning costs for a new business. **Applications submitted after construction has begun will not be considered.**

Eligible Improvements

Improvements must be exterior and visible to the public, and preserve and enhance the historic and architectural integrity of buildings. Typical projects include:

- Masonry/Brick pointing
- Cornices
- Exterior Painting
- Windows/ glazing
- Exterior doors
- Exterior façade lighting
- See-through security grills
- Signage and awnings

Design Review: Applications will be reviewed by a design committee who may suggest changes to the proposed work or require specific changes for the application to be approved and the eligible for reimbursement. In areas with local design guidelines and processes, applicants should consult the local guidelines and seek feedback on their proposal from their local organization first.

Security Improvements: Security improvements such as cameras and alarm systems will be eligible as part of a larger storefront improvement project. Applicants who apply for security improvements only will be subject to design review as described above. Exceptions will be made when applicants document that they have recently been the victim of a crime.

Solid security grates, elimination of windows, or projects that reduce the size of window openings are not be eligible.

Application Process

- 1) **Meet with your relationship manager at the property to review the program guidelines and application, and to discuss and begin planning your project.** Your relationship manager will be either a representative of an neighborhood organization responsible for the commercial corridor where your business is located, or a City staff person. To find out the relationship manager for your area, call (215) 683-2025.
- 2) **Contact your relationship manager when you have completed the program application and gathered the required documentation.** The application must include:
 - a) Photos of your building clearly showing all areas to be improved, and at least one photo showing the entire front facade of your building.
 - b) An illustration of the work you would like to do. A hand drawn sketch, a printed-out digital picture with written notes, a photo with post-it notes attached or an architect's rendering all are acceptable. If your project includes signs or awnings, ask your contractor to prepare a picture of what the new sign or awning will look like for review.

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- c) Contractor estimates detailing 1. on-site labor and 2. offsite material and fabrication costs. Two estimates are required. We recommend you secure at least three. You can obtain a sample contractor estimate form from your relationship manager that your contractor can use. All applicants must seek proposals from businesses owned and controlled by minority persons (MBEs), women (WBEs) or disabled persons (DSBEs) as described below.
 - d) A letter from building owner (if this is not you) granting permission for the proposed work.
- 3) **Fully documented applications should be delivered by mail to Ana Fuentes, Commerce Department, 1515 Arch Street, 12th floor, Phila PA 19102 or ana.fuentes@phila.gov.** Applications will be reviewed for completeness. The applicant and their relationship manager will be notified that the application has been received and whether anything is missing. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
 - 4) **Complete applications will be reviewed by a design committee within two or three weeks of receipt.** The committee may suggest changes to the proposed scope of work or require specific changes for an application to be approved and the proposal to be eligible for reimbursement.
 - 5) **The applicant must receive written approval from the City prior to commencing work.** Approved applicants have up to 6 months to complete proposed improvements.
 - 6) **Approved applicants should proceed with the agreed upon scope of work in compliance with any special conditions set forth in the award letter.**
 - 7) **Upon completion, applicants must submit the following by mail:** invoices, receipts, cancelled checks, credit card statements or other payment verification, as well as copies of any required permits and color photographs of the completed work. If you pay your contractor in cash we will be unable to reimburse you.

Additional Program Requirements

Economic Opportunity: As part of Mayor Michael A. Nutter's Strategic Plan for this Administration, a goal to create and retain jobs by fostering an improved business environment has been established. One of the strategies designed to achieve this end is strengthening supports to minority, women, and disabled residents and businesses. All applicants certify to make "best and good faith efforts" to include businesses owned and controlled by minority persons (MBEs), women (WBEs) and disabled persons (DSBEs) in their projects. In exercise of "best and good faith efforts" applicants for this program must solicit MBEs, WBEs and DSBEs for participation in the project. NOTE: Potential M/W/DSBE project participants can be found in the City of Philadelphia's Office of Economic Opportunity Directory of Certified Firms (Contact OEO at 215-686-6232 or review the online directory at www.phila.gov/mbec/directory.asp) or the Pennsylvania Unified Certification Program's Directory of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (<http://www.paucp.com>). The approval letter will advise applicants that they may be required to report on "best and good faith efforts" as a condition of receiving the reimbursement offered by this program.

This program is funded in part with Community Development Block Grant Funds. As a result, Federal Labor Standards Requirements for Construction wage costs may apply. This may increase project costs.

Funds are awarded on a first-come first-served basis.

The amount that this program is able to approve for reimbursement will not always be equal to 50% of the eligible costs or the maximum amount due to availability of funds and restrictions in how program funds can be spent.

Restaurants that serve alcohol will be asked to provide a copy of their Sunday Sales License which documents that a significant portion of their revenue comes from food sales. Bars that cannot provide this documentation will not be eligible. Restaurants may be asked to submit a copy of their menu.

Approved applicants who change the scope of their work, or elect to use a new contractor must submit new estimates and a revised proposal which must be reviewed and approved for the work to be eligible for reimbursement.

Projects within areas with special design controls or within historic districts must comply with those requirements.

Improvements to buildings occupied by non-profits will be evaluated on a case by case basis and will only be eligible if the non-profit uses the space to provide services or programming that are open to the public. Churches and schools are not eligible.