
TOWN OF BERLIN
Facade Improvement Grant Program

I. Overview:

The Facade Improvement Grant Program ("Program") is an economic development incentive program offered to eligible applicants who own or lease eligible property located within strategic development areas in the Town of Berlin.

The Program is intended to:

1. Attract and retain local businesses;
2. Encourage increased patronage of local businesses;
3. Stimulate efforts to improve and upgrade existing building facades and landscaping which complement transit oriented development initiatives focused around the Berlin Train Station;
4. Stabilize and increase property values;
5. Provide property owners and tenants the ability to work in partnership with the Town to implement aspects of town planning and economic development strategy(ies);
6. Ensure the design of approved projects is consistent with the Farmington Avenue Design Guidelines;
7. Encourage continued private-public partnership that allows Program funds to be leveraged with private capital to ensure the success of the Program's goals.

Grant Amounts:

A. Initial Project Design Grant:

A grant is available for up to \$1,500 or 75%, whichever is greater for initial professional design fees to assist the eligible applicant to develop a project scope and cost estimate. The grant shall be paid on a reimbursement basis to the eligible applicant (see Eligibility Requirements section).

An architectural plan is not required if the applicant can provide sufficient detailed plans and specifications to describe the project.

The applicant may either use the Town's contracted consultant or may select a different consultant.

B. Primary Project Grant:

The Program offers an eligible applicant a reimbursement grant of 50% of the total cost of the project up to \$50,000.

The \$50,000 maximum reimbursement grant shall include any grant provided for initial professional design fees.

The maximum that the Town will reimburse the applicant for professional design services shall be 15% of the grant amount.

C. Town Grant Match for approved Single Sign:

The maximum that the Town will match the applicant for signage shall be \$1,500.

II. Program Requirements:

A. Program Oversight and Administration

The Program is overseen by the Berlin Economic Development Commission ("EDC"). Each Program grant application must be complete before it shall be accepted for review and evaluation by the EDC.

No member of the EDC, Town Commissions or Town staff that have a decision-making or administrative role in the Program shall benefit either directly or indirectly from this Program.

The EDC reserves the right to amend the requirements and guidelines of the Program.

B. Lien Waiver Requirement:

Program funds shall be released to Program participant(s) on a reimbursement basis only. The Town shall require lien waivers on each Program award.

C. Project Completion Requirement:

Program participant shall complete approved project within one hundred twenty (120) days from the date of Contract execution between the applicant(s) and the Town of Berlin.

D. Project Extension Request:

Approved projects that do not meet the Project Completion Requirement may request one (1) project extension request which shall be approved at the discretion of the EDC.

III. Property and Project Eligibility Requirements:

A. Eligible Property:

1. A property shall be considered eligible for this Program if it is located in a CCD-1 or CCD-2 zone (commercial use only) or in other targeted areas as specified in the Facade Improvement Program Target Area Map located on the Town of Berlin's website.
2. The EDC shall provide Program grant award preference to eligible properties located within the strategic transit oriented development area (TOD) and within 0.5 miles of the Berlin Train Station.
3. An ineligible property shall include but is not limited to:
 - a) A property that is in foreclosure;
 - b) A property that is determined by the Town of Berlin Building Official to be unsafe or will be demolished.

B. Eligible Project(s):

1. Eligible project(s) shall include:
 - a) Improvement or upgrade to building façade;
 - b) Functional and safety improvement(s) that aesthetically improve the

- property;
- c) Repair(s) or alteration(s) that enhance the exterior of the property;
- d) Replacement of exterior doors and/or windows;
- e) Purchase and installation of exterior light fixtures.
- f) Purchase and installation of awnings,
- g) Replacement of architectural elements, including those that have structural problems;
- h) Removal of non-original materials or treatments;
- i) Correction of exterior building code violations, provided that it enhances the façade appearance;
- j) New signage;
- k) Improvements including landscaping only if such improvements are visible from the street;
- l) Other items having significant visual impact.

2. Ineligible Project(s): shall include but are not limited to:
 - a) Construction of a new building(s) or structure(s);
 - b) Any improvement to an interior;
 - c) Routine maintenance;
 - d) Furnishings (for example patio furniture);
 - e) Equipment and supplies;
 - f) Operating expenses;
 - g) Merchandising signs relating to a tenant with no lease;
 - h) Refinancing of any debt;
 - i) Payment for work done prior to final application approval.
 - j) Any work done by the property owner, relatives, or firms related to in full or part by the property owner to improve the property.

Additional ineligible project(s) may be prohibited at the discretion of the EDC provided it does not meet the intent and purpose of the Program.*

IV. Program Application Guidelines:

Initial Project Consultation:

To help ensure that eligible applicants are planning a project(s) that is consistent with the Program objectives and requirements, applicants may be required to participate in a consultation with the Director of Economic Development and the Director of Development Services.

The EDC strongly encourages applicants to take advantage of this consultation prior to completing the formal Program application. Please contact the Town of Berlin Economic Development Department at 860-828-7005 for additional information.

Application Guidelines:

- a. Completed application is submitted to the Economic Development Director's Office. Applications shall include a current photograph of the property, a description of the improvements that are planned, an itemized estimate of the project budget, and a rendition of the proposed look of the . Please use the Itemized Estimate template.

- b. An applicant must secure at least 2 bids/quotes for any and all work to be performed which will be submitted to the Economic Development Director's Office for review. The applicant is not required to select the low bidder, but the Town may limit its grant to 50% of the low bid if there is a significant difference between the low bid and the accepted bid.
- c. Town staff will review application for the eligibility of the applicant and planned scope of work. Other eligibility criteria include the impact of the project to improve the appearance of the building and surrounding structures in the business corridor; leveraging additional economic activity; furtherance of the general goals of the Façade Improvement Program; and furtherance of other town studies and plans.
- d. The property owner is notified by the Economic Development Director's Office of project eligibility based on meeting the basic eligibility criteria described above. An eligibility denial by the Economic Development Director can be appealed to the Economic Development Commission.
- e. If the applicant is seeking matching design funds, the Economic Development Director shall prepare an agreement to reimburse up to 75% of the cost of professional services, not to exceed \$1,500 for the applicant to prepare plans and cost estimates for the project. The professional services must produce sufficient information for the applicant to submit an application for construction funding including drawings of proposed improvements, a written description and itemization of materials for the proposed improvements, including materials, and an itemized estimate of costs. Please use the Itemized Estimate worksheet.
- f. Once the design and cost estimate is complete, the applicant will complete the application for construction grant funding. The Director of Economic Development and other Town staff and or design consultant/architect will meet with the property owner and its consultant as needed to answer questions related to the project scope and estimated cost and will authorize the applicant to proceed for design approvals. The applicant will apply to the Economic Development Commission (EDC) for initial approval which will include the determination of eligible work and the level of funding. Once approved by the EDC, the application will go to the Planning and Zoning Commission for design approval for consistency with the Farmington Avenue Design standards. .
- g. The property owner is notified by the Economic Development Director's Office of application acceptance or denial. If a project is awarded, the notification includes the maximum dollar amount of the grant. In the case of awarded projects, the following steps are taken.
- h. Applicants are responsible for obtaining all necessary governmental permits, including building permits.
- i. The Town will authorize reimbursement of payment after completion of the project in accordance with the approved project. The Town will not contract to perform any of the work, but will reimburse the applicant for approved expenses. Satisfactory proof of payment is required for reimbursement.

Staff will be permitted to inspect the project to ensure conformance with the agreed upon project scope.

V. Additional Terms and Conditions

Complete applications will be reviewed and awarded by the EDC on a first come first served basis. The EDC may reject any application that is not complete or requires additional supporting documentation as determined by the EDC.

By accepting Program funds, the Applicant agrees to maintain all improvement(s) and to keep applicable property clean and presentable for a minimum of five (5) years from date of project completion. The property shall be maintained at the Applicant's own cost and expense. The Town shall take a lien on the property to secure this commitment. The lien shall be recorded on the Town of Berlin Land Records and be for a term of 60 months from the time of the Planning & Zoning approval. As long as no major changes have happened with the façade work, the lien will expire upon the date 60 months out.

No Program funds shall be awarded to including but not limited to: any individual, LLC(s), or any member of partner in an LLC with outstanding debt(s) owed to the Town of Berlin including but not limited to; fees, liens, and taxes.

* This discretion can include, but not limited to; limited amount of funding available, a location outside of the targeted TOD area, costs that are not in line with market rates for the work to be performed, and if it is determined that information on the application was willingly put it as untrue, false or misrepresented.