

LANSDALE BOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The Lansdale Borough Economic Development Committee Façade Improvement Grant Program provides grants of up to \$5,000 available to commercial property owners or business owners with property owner approval to encourage restoration of building facades and enhance the appearance of storefronts in the Borough. The façade improvement grants are intended to stimulate private investment in the preservation of historic downtown architecture and to foster image-making improvements to the Borough's commercial properties.

An attractive image is of critical importance to the success of any commercial area. Façade and storefront improvements are proven to be one of the most effective approaches to enhancing a commercial area's image and economic vitality.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- All grant applications will be accepted for any commercial property within the corporate limits of the Borough of Lansdale. However, priority consideration will be given to commercial properties located within the designated target area, Lansdale Borough's Core Commercial District.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Major maintenance, repair, rehabilitation and restoration of commercial storefronts and facades are eligible activities.

Projects must achieve visible results that enhance the commercial image, marketability and economic vitality, while presenting the building in its most appealing form with the original character of the building preserved and enhanced.

DESIGN STANDARDS

Project activities must conform to:

- *The Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* outlined by the Secretary of Interior
- The Program Policies set forth in the Design Challenge Grant Guidelines
- The Lansdale Borough Zoning Ordinance

TO APPLY

Applications may be obtained at the office of the Borough of Lansdale, 1 Vine Street, Suite 201, Lansdale, PA, 19446. Applications are also available online at www.lansdale.org. For more information, please call 215.368.1691.

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Funding and Administration of the Façade Improvement Grant Program is made possible by the Lansdale Economic Development Committee. Grants are awarded in accordance with the Lansdale Economic Development Committee policies outlined herein and must be in conformance with all applicable state and local requirements.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Lansdale Economic Development Committee Façade Improvement Grant Program is intended to stimulate private investment in the Borough. The program seeks to preserve and restore historic architecture and to foster image-making improvements to all commercial properties regardless of their historic significance.

Projects must achieve visible results that enhance Lansdale Borough's image, marketability and economic vitality. Façade Improvement Grants have the following specific objectives.

- Enhance the visual appeal of businesses.
- Assist with the preservation of historic commercial buildings and assure that such buildings are rehabilitated in an appropriate manner.
- Utilize properties in their historic and/or characteristic purpose, or provide new uses that require minimal changes to the defining characteristics of individual building exteriors, their site and environment.
- Reduce or eliminate vacancies in Lansdale Borough while promoting adaptive reuse of commercial buildings.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Any person(s) or legal entity that owns or leases commercial buildings is eligible to apply. Applications by lessees/tenants require the consent of the property owner.

PROGRAM GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES

All grant applications will be accepted for any commercial property within the corporate limits of the Borough of Lansdale. However, priority consideration will be given to commercial properties located within the designated target area, Lansdale Borough's Commercial and Core Commercial District.

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DEFINITION OF FAÇADE

For the purposes of these guidelines, the façade of a building is generally the front of a structure but may also include, at the discretion of EDC, the side and/or back of a building.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

A variety of commercial property improvements, including major maintenance, repair, rehabilitation and restoration of storefronts and facades are eligible activities. Eligible grant activities include:

- ❖ **Signage** – Maintenance, repair, removal and replacement. Signs must conform to the Borough of Lansdale Building Code and the Zoning Ordinances for the Borough of Lansdale (if applicable).
 - Types of signs recommended and their definitions are as follows:
 - Flush Signs are meant to be viewed from a distance. They are visible when you are directly facing a structure's façade or from across the street. Flush signs should be placed on vacant panels above doors or display windows.
 - Projecting Signs are meant to attract the attention of pedestrians as they hang over the sidewalk. This type of sign is most effective on buildings abutting a sidewalk.
 - Freestanding Signs are appropriate when a structure is set back ten or more feet from the sidewalk. They alert people of a business when its structure may be partially hidden from pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
 - Window signs are applied on the inside of display windows or doors.
 - Placement of signs should exhibit the following characteristics:
 - Use of display windows for creative signage.
 - Placement of signs and awnings may not cover or overwhelm architectural details such as cornices, trim, windows, decorative brickwork or other unique architectural features.
 - Orientation of signs should be geared to sidewalk pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Avoid extraneous information on signs and scale them to attract attention of vehicular traffic.
 - Limited signs on storefront display windows and doors. Signs should be sized and scaled to balance and should not hide or overwhelm the structure.
 - Construction and Design guidelines for signs are as follows:
 - Return to or re-create period signage, utilizing lettering characteristic of the period. Sign material and design should reflect the period of the building and the original design of the storefront.
 - Colors of signs and awnings should complement the overall color scheme of the building's façade and downtown streetscape.
 - Use artisan-crafted signs & quality sign materials manufactured specifically by the sign industry.
 - Use graphic elements and details of the building and architectural motifs as part of the sign design when feasible.

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- Lettering should be kept to a minimum. The message should be brief and to the point. A logo or illustration can be substituted or included to communicate the nature of the business.
- Multiple signs are to be avoided when one sign is sufficient so as to avoid confusion and distraction. Small secondary signs used for direction purposes are acceptable so long as they maintain the same design elements of the main identification sign. Freestanding sandwich signs advertising daily specials or events are acceptable so long as they maintain the same design elements of the main identification sign.
- Lighting for signs should adhere to the following:
 - They are to utilize external lighting fixtures rather than internally lit plastic features.
 - The use of flashing lights is not permitted.
 - Sign lighting should be directed to the sign itself and not used to light the surrounding area. Separate fixtures should be used for area lighting.
 - Lighting fixture design, if visible, should be consistent across the façade and compliment the architectural period of the building.
- ❖ **Awnings** – Installation, repair, and maintenance of fabric awnings in connection with real property improvements. Characteristics of approved awnings are as follows:
 - Both fixed position and retractable awnings are acceptable.
 - The name and nature of the business may be displayed on the front face and/or side facings so long as simple lettering designs are used and the message is brief.
 - Awnings may be used on street level and upper stories so long as they are appropriate to and maintain the architectural style of the façade.
 - Weather-treated canvas or natural looking materials are to be selected. Plastic awnings are not appropriate.
 - An awning should not be oversized; it should fit within the storefront area and not cover architectural elements.
- ❖ **Brick and Stone Masonry** – Structural repairs, cleaning, repointing, and painting.
- ❖ **Architectural Metals** – Repair, cleaning, refinishing, painting, duplication and restoration of exterior doors and installation of storm windows in conjunction with other significant façade improvements.
- ❖ **Doors and Upper-Story Windows** – Maintenance, repairs, replacement, and restoration of window sashes, exterior doors and installation of storm windows in conjunction with other significant façade improvements.
- ❖ **Exterior Woodwork** – Maintenance, repair, rehabilitation and restoration of sills, window and door frames, bulkheads, storefront and roof cornices, window hoods, decorative moldings.
- ❖ **Storefronts** – Removal of inappropriate coverings and additions, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of display and transom windows, lighting.

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- ❖ **Improvements to Sides or Backs of Buildings** – The building's side must be fully exposed to a public street or other public area.
- ❖ **Painting** – Surface preparation, cleaning, painting.
- ❖ **Landscaping & Streetscaping** – Installation of landscaping and streetscaping (hardscaping, for example: paver stones and fencing, or softscaping, for example: plant and shrub materials).
- ❖ **Design Assistance** – Architectural, historic preservation, and graphic design services (note: professional design fees are reimbursable through the grant for up to 10% of eligible project costs up to a maximum of \$500 per building).

Eligible activities will be evaluated based on appropriateness of design, impact on the program area and objectives, as well as order of receipt of application.

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- General and/or minor Maintenance Projects
- Plastic Signage and Electronic Digital Signage (e.g., LED and LCD signs)
- Roofing or Siding Repairs
- Sidewalks, Driveways, Parking Lot Repairs
- New Building Construction

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TERMS OF GRANT AWARD

The Lansdale Borough Economic Revitalization Committee Façade Improvement Grants are part of a broader planned effort to restore the Borough's commercial image and character. Grant awards are calculated as follows: 50% funding of expenses up to \$10,000. The maximum Façade Improvement Grant that may be awarded is \$5,000 for projects costing \$10,000 or more. Grants are made on a cost reimbursement basis, following a process of application, design review and approval, and satisfactory construction completion in accordance with the program requirements.

- All Borough financial obligations must be met before applicant is eligible for approval of funds.
- Receipt of grant awards is contingent upon submission of construction cost invoices from bona fide contractors or tradesmen.
- A joint façade improvement project (with 2 or more properties that share a common wall) is eligible for grants up to \$5,000 per deeded property or 50% of the total project cost, whichever is less.
- One grant per storefront will be considered for tenant/leaseholder/owner applicants.
- All work must conform to local and state ordinances: permits from the Borough of Lansdale and/or permission from the property owner will be required, if applicable.
- All work must be completed in a manner consistent with the work described in the approved Façade Improvement Grant application. Reimbursement will be made upon completion of the project. Proof of payment must be provided in order for the reimbursement to be issued.
- The applicant must submit to the Economic Development Committee documentation that substantiates the work is complete.
- All work must be completed within 3 months of the grant approval date; otherwise the grant may be forfeited. Extensions may be granted at the Committee's approval.
- Project costs are inclusive of appropriate Pennsylvania sales taxes.

DESIGN STANDARDS

Project activities must conform to:

- The Secretary of Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (see Attachment "A")
- Lansdale Borough Code and Zoning Ordinances and Guidelines

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GRANT APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

- Obtain a Lansdale Borough Economic Development Committee Façade Improvement Grant Application. Applications are available at the Municipal Office of Lansdale Borough, 1 Vine Street, Suite 201, Lansdale, PA, 19446 and online at www.lansdale.org. Telephone: 215-368-1691
- Submit to the above address the completed Application inclusive of the following:
 1. Applicant identification and contact information.
 2. Property owner identification if different from applicant.
 3. Property location.
 4. Written project description, design plan, drawing, schematics, photographs, etc. Professional design consultation is recommended to assure compliance with the Program Design Standards.
 5. Matching funding verification. Must include a minimum of 2 written cost proposals from bona-fide tradespeople, contractors and/or suppliers. For projects being completed by the property owner, a written cost proposal along with a list of 1 contractor and their price quote must be submitted.
 6. Signature of the applicant and property owner (if different from applicant).
- The Lansdale Borough Economic Development Committee reviews the application for completeness and conformance to Program design standards within 30 days of receipt.
- All applications are subject to approval by the Lansdale Borough Economic Development Committee as a condition of the grant award.

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ATTACHMENT "A"

SECRETARY OF INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

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GUIDELINES FOR REHABILITATING HISTORIC BUILDINGS

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, other visual qualities, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials, shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If the resource must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize a property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.