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**PANDEMIC-RELATED
FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT
PROGRAM**

INFORMATION and GUIDELINES

The City of New Haven’s Façade Improvement Grant Program has been an important tool for the elimination of blight, the stimulation of economic growth, the promotion of the welfare of its citizens and the creation of an environment that stimulates economic growth.

In mid-March, 2020, the City of New Haven, together with the rest of the State, instituted several responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the closing of restaurants, retail outlets and other businesses to in-person service. With the develop of vaccines, along with increasing scientific knowledge as to how to deal with COVID-19, the State of Connecticut gradually has permitted businesses to reopen with limited indoor occupancy with masks, sanitizer and social distancing becoming the norm.

Despite this gradual reopening, the City encourages businesses to diversify their means of selling their products and services by implementing outdoor activities that might help them to serve customers in a safer environment.

The City has developed a Pandemic-focused Façade Improvement Grant Program to offer for-profit businesses support in providing alternate opportunities to serve their customers while following current COVID-19 health restrictions.

This Program provides an enhanced reimbursement grant of up to \$20,000 to assist with the cost of implementing permanent exterior business improvements that will help businesses to attract customers during the pandemic and beyond. These improvements may include all of the currently eligible improvements, but with an emphasis on those exterior improvements, such as openable front or “garage door”-type of windows and other exterior improvements that enhance ventilation, thereby creating safer conditions for customers to safely patronize the business indoors.

This Program will be available to all for-profit businesses within New Haven that are appropriately registered with the City/Town Clerk and the Assessor’s office. Businesses must be current on all City tax obligations and have no Code violation (e.g., Building, Health).

This Program will become available on April 1, 2021 and will cease when funds are expired or on September 1, 2021, whichever occurs first.

Phase One – Review and Preparation

Step 1 **Pre-Review**

The Pandemic-focused Façade Improvement Grant Program is intended to support façade improvements to commercial and mixed-use properties. Improvements must focus on providing customers with an opportunity to safely patronize a business under any pandemic-related guidelines, and must provide a real benefit to the for-profit business(es) occupying the property.

Eligible façade improvements are those non-structural improvements made to the outside of the building running parallel to a public street and include the following:

- Doors and windows, focusing on products that permit increased interior ventilation
- Awnings and canopies that will complement outdoor dining opportunities
- Exterior signage
- Exterior lighting, especially lighting projects that complement outdoor dining opportunities

Applicant must be a property or for-profit business owner (business owners must obtain written permission from the property owner to apply) for the property located in New Haven being proposed for façade renovations. Business owners that apply must provide proof of space commitment (i.e. lease agreement) of at least six (6) years beyond the time of façade renovations. Finally, applicants must adhere to any design guideline standards set forth by the Program.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Prior to submitting an application, Applicants must meet with the Program Coordinator:

- *to review the Program process.*
- *to discuss the property to be proposed for façade renovations;*

The Program Coordinator will review all pre-application information and conduct a visit to the property. This will permit the Coordinator to assess whether the economic impact of the proposed renovation justifies the financial investment of this Program.

Step 2 **Prepare and Submit an Application Package**

Applicant hires a licensed architect to prepare renderings and collect samples of all proposed materials. The Applicant's contract with the architect should also include assembly of bid documents, preparation of construction drawings for review by the Building Department and assistance with any required permits.

A complete Application submission includes the following:

- Completed and signed application;
- Completed, signed and notarized Disclosure and Certification Affidavit from Applicant. If Applicant is a business owner and is not the Building Owner, the Building Owner must sign the Application where indicated and submit a signed and notarized Disclosure and Certification form;
- Completed Vendor Form (Applicant only, no signature required);
- Completed and signed IRS W-9 form;
- Typed summary of proposed façade renovations with attached photographs of existing conditions;
- One copy of architectural renderings (to scale), including but not limited to the following: color scheme (provide swatches), lighting concept, signage concept, etc.;
- As appropriate, samples of proposed materials.

Applicants should also discuss their proposal with the City of New Haven's Building and City Plan Departments to determine if a permit or a variance is required prior to implementation.

The Program Coordinator will review application packages in the order they are received for completeness and eligibility. If package is complete, Applicant will be contacted with available dates for presentation of their project to the Program's Design Review Committee.

Step 3 **Design Review Committee Presentation and Approval**

A Design Review Committee (DRC), consisting of appropriate volunteers from the New Haven Community and City staff, evaluates the proposal and has the following authority:

- To approve, deny, or request revisions to a proposal;
- To determine the stipulations of a proposal approval;
- To create special exceptions to Program standards.

DRC meets on the third Tuesday of each month; additional meetings will be considered based on Program demand. Application and design materials must be submitted by the first Friday of the month to be on the DRC agenda for that month.

Phase Two – The Agreement

Step 4 **Grant Allocation**

Applicants that complete the first phase and are approved to enter into the second phase of the Program are eligible to receive, *subject to available Program funding*, a reimbursement grant of up to 50% of the total pre-tax façade construction cost up to a maximum of \$20,000

per façade (not to exceed three [3] facades per property) plus up to \$1,500 per facade for architect/design services. Any taxes, permit or other fees are not reimbursable.

Projects with an estimated total cost less than \$10,000 are required to submit bids from at least three contractors, but compliance with City Ordinance Chapter 12-1/4 is optional. The grant amount would be determined based on the lowest responsible bid. DELETE

Projects are required to consult with Lila Snyder in the Small Contractor Development (“SCD”) Program, who will assist with providing bids from at least three contractors and who will monitor the project for Chapter 12-1/4 compliance. ADD

The grant will be determined as follows:

For Projects with a Total Cost Under \$10,000

For projects with a total cost under \$10,000: 100% reimbursement for the first 25% of total project cost (up to \$2,500), then, up to 50% of all remaining costs up to the maximum project cost of \$9,999.99. For these smaller projects, the maximum grant would be \$6,250.00.

- The Applicant will work with the Coordinator for the City’s SCD Program with the submission of at least three (3) bids for implementation of the façade project. The grant amount will be based on the lowest responsible bid submitted.
- Applicants must then continue working with the SCD Coordinator to ensure that the project meets the requirements of City Ordinance Chapter 12-1/4.

For Projects with a Total Cost of \$10,000 or More

- For projects with a total cost of \$10,000 or more, 100% reimbursement for the first 25% of total project cost (maximum \$5,000), then up to 50% of all remaining costs up to the maximum grant amount of \$20,000.
- The Applicant will work with the Coordinator for the City’s SCD Program with the submission of at least three (3) bids for implementation of the façade project. The grant amount will be based on the lowest responsible bid submitted.
- Applicants must then continue working with the SCD Coordinator to ensure that the project meets the requirements of City Ordinance Chapter 12-1/4.

In addition to the construction grant reimbursement, the Program will reimburse up to \$1,500 in properly-documented facade-related architect/design costs.

Applicants will have six (6) months from an agreed-upon start date to complete the improvements.

Step 5 **Variances and Permits**

If zoning relief is necessary, the Applicant must file an application and obtain such relief from the City, as required. Applicant is also responsible for obtaining the necessary building permits from the Building Department and any approvals that may be required from the Board of Alderman.

Step 6 **The Agreement**

Once the amount of the grant has been determined, the Coordinator begins the process of securing a written Agreement that the Applicant (and the Building Owner, if applicable) will sign. The Agreement details the amount of the grant, the scope of the work to be undertaken, the timeframe for completion of the Project (six [6] months) and that the Applicant must maintain the project for a minimum of six (6) years.

The Coordinator must approve revisions in the scope of the work, or in the schedule, if changes are made. Return all signed copies of the Agreement to the City, as instructed, along with a Certificate of Insurance (if required), naming the City of New Haven copies of variances, permits or a waiver indicating a permit is not required.

Unless otherwise agreed to by the Applicant and Program Coordinator, the Effective & Date of the Agreement is considered to be the Start Date for the work to be completed

(PLEASE NOTE: The City is under no obligation to provide grant funds under this Program for façade work executed prior to the Start Date of the Agreement).

Phase Three - Construction

Step 7 **Begin Construction**

The Applicant may begin construction of the approved façade work on or after the Start Date. **For projects with a total cost of \$10,000 or more, (DELETE)** the Applicant will be required to work with the SCD Coordinator to ensure the requirements of City Ordinance Chapter 12-1/4, as applicable, are followed. The Agreement will provide that façade work must be completed within 6 months of the Start Date; extensions of time may be provided for extenuating circumstances.

Step 8 **Project Completion**

In the timeframe identified in the Agreement, the Applicant must notify the Program Coordinator about project completion. Notification should be followed by a submission of the original copies of invoices market PAID IN FULL, cancelled checks and other documentation as the Program Coordinator may require. The Program Coordinator will inspect the property and certify that all work has been performed in accordance with the Agreement. The SCD Coordinator will also provide a statement to the Program Coordinator as to compliance with Chapter 12-1/4.

Step 9 **Reimbursement**

Typically, within thirty (30) days after successfully reviewing all submitted financial documentation, a full reimbursement is sent in check form by mail or made available for hand delivery. (Note: Along the way, if modifications are made to the original scope of work used to acquire an agreement, the reimbursement will be in accordance to the approved work performed.)

*It is most important to understand that Program grant disbursements are **reimbursements** for work already completed and paid for by the applicant. It is only after completing 100% of the approved renovations and passing the Program Coordinator's inspection that the applicant can request for payment. Applicant must show proof of payment at this time by providing copies of paid invoices and cancelled checks or other payment media.*

Step 10 **Maintenance**

The Applicant and/or Building Owner is obligated to maintain improvements for six (6) years from the date of the Agreement, unless approval is obtained for alterations or replacement.

FINAL NOTE: **Income Taxes**

The Applicant (Grantee) should note that grant disbursements may subject the Applicant (Grantee) to federal and state income tax obligations.

*The Program Coordinator **strongly** recommends that Applicants (Grantees) consult with their accountant or other financial advisor to determine possible tax implications for their specific situation.*

Additional Information

Further information concerning a specific project is available from:

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