



CITY OF BRIDGEPORT

Bill Finch, Mayor

Office of Planning & Economic Development

Storefront Improvement Grant

Description Revised 3.10.11

The Storefront Improvement Grant is a reimbursable grant for exterior retail locations throughout Bridgeport. OPED will provide grants of **up to \$1900** per project.

The purpose of Storefront Improvement Grant is to:

- Reverse the deterioration of commercial structures in the targeted areas
- Enhance efforts to market vacant space and attract new businesses
- Stimulate new, private investment and economic growth
- Promote consistency in design and create a fresh and aesthetically pleasing environment
- Assist property owners with the appropriate exterior rehabilitation of their buildings and bring them up to code
- Increase the sense of safety and security
- Invest in historic preservation and rehabilitation
- Enhance the City tax base
- Enhance retail activity
- Promote pedestrian-friendly, sustainability-oriented business districts

This package contains the Storefront Grant application and information that will assist in completing the application process, including:

- This cover memo
- Program Eligibility
- Application Procedure
- Blank Application
- Notes on Project Budget and Budget Sample
- Design Guidelines

For more information, contact:

City of Bridgeport
Office of Planning & Economic Development (OPED)
999 Broad Street, Bridgeport CT 06604
Attn: Max Perez
Tel 203.576.3976 fax 203.332.5611
max.perez@bridgeportct.gov

City of Bridgeport Storefront Improvement Grant

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES

Applications may be submitted for commercial and/or mixed use commercial/retail properties, either owner or tenant occupied, within the federal Community Development Block Grant eligible revitalization areas.

NON ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES

Properties used primarily as residences, social service agencies and churches/places of worship are not eligible for the Storefront Improvement Grant.

Examples of eligible activities:

- Masonry repairs and pointing
- Repair/replace/preserve historically significant architectural details
- Storefront reconstruction
- Cornice repair
- Exterior painting and stucco
- Awnings and canopies
- Window and door repair or replacement
- Permanent exterior signage integrated into the storefront design
- Permanent exterior lighting
- Repair/replacement of gutters and down spouts
- Façade building code items
- Visible roof repairs in conjunction with structural improvements
- Utility/trash enclosures
- Aesthetic window displays or suitable blinds
- Removal of solid roll-down security gates

Examples of activities that are generally not eligible:

- Landscaping
- Non-visible roofing
- Attached, hanging or projecting signs unrelated to the architecture of the building
- Mechanical equipment enclosures (non-visible);
- Parking lots
- Billboards
- Interior renovation
- Temporary, portable or non-permanent improvements
- New construction
- Property acquisition
- Expansion of building area
- Conversion of use
- Working capital
- Refinance of existing debt
- Payment of delinquent taxes
- Improvements in progress or completed prior to grant approval

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

STEP 1 - APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Retail business or retail property owners located within the City of Bridgeport are eligible to apply for the Grant.

STEP 2 – COMPLETE THE APPLICATION

A completed application must contain applicant, property and project information. Incomplete applications may result in processing delays.

Please submit completed application to:
Storefront Improvement Grant
Max Perez
City of Bridgeport - OPED
999 Broad Street, Bridgeport, CT 06604

Upon receiving the application, OPED will confirm site eligibility, review the proposed scope of work and arrange for a Project Review meeting. Eligible projects will be considered on a first come, first served basis and will be evaluated for significance of impact and compliance with the Design Guidelines. While there is no deadline (applications are accepted year round), project funding may be limited due to unanticipated budget constraints.

STEP 3 PROJECT REVIEW & CONTRACT EXECUTION

A Project Review meeting, conducted by a Design Review Team (DRT), is required prior to contract execution or construction. The DRT will review the application, discuss the merits of the project and make a recommendation to (a) fund the project, or (b) re-submit application with appropriate changes. The applicant may accept the DRT recommendation or withdraw his/her application. The applicant must comply with all relevant regulatory constraints, including historic preservation, where applicable.

If approved, a Grant Agreement will be prepared for signature by both the OPED and applicant.

STEP 4 REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURE

Upon completion of the work, the applicant must contact the OPED to conduct a final inspection.

1. Both parties will sign off on a completion of the improvement (barring any dissatisfaction).
2. Applicant will complete the *Project Completion form* and submit along with copies of invoices and canceled checks for the purpose of reimbursement of applicable costs.
3. Upon receipt of **all** documentation, OPED will process the grant payment request.



CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
Office of Planning & Economic Development

Storefront Improvement Grant Application

NOTE: Work must not start prior to contract execution

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Corporation Partnership Proprietorship Individual

Name of Applicant:

Mailing Address:

Contact Name: _____ Title:

Tel: Daytime: (____) _____ - _____ ext ____ alternate: (____) _____ - _____

Email: _____

Type of Business: _____

Days of the week and hours you are open: _____

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Street address of property to be improved:

Legal Description:

Lot Block Tax Account #

Own Property

Lease Property (please include copy of lease agreement and letter of approval from owner)

Is the property currently (check one): Occupied Vacant

If vacant, anticipated occupation date? (____/____/____)

What is the current or proposed use of the property?

How many **full time** employees does the business currently employ? _____

Do you anticipate hiring additional employees after the proposed improvements are complete? If so, how many more?

Estimated Total Project Budget: \$

Total Grant Amount Requested: \$

PROJECT INFORMATION

Please attach a ***Description of Proposed Improvement Budget*** which should include:

- Estimated total cost of project
- Desired start date
- Project Timeline or Work Schedule
- Photos of existing façade condition
- Renderings, sketch or photo of work to be done or item to be installed
- Budget and supporting estimates
- Copy of lease and/or letter from property owner granting approval (if applicable)
- Paint sample, color board or other material samples (if available)

I understand that reimbursement of grant amount is contingent on submitted receipts, invoices, copies of cancelled checks, etc. reflecting actual total project costs. Grant amounts will be based on (a) the project budget or (b) the total project costs at completion, whichever is lower. In any event, the grant amount will not exceed \$1,900. I agree that in no event shall the OPED nor the City of Bridgeport be held responsible or liable for project cost over-runs.

*Applicant signature*_____

*Date*_____

*Applicant printed name*_____

Notes on Completing the Proposed Improvement Budget

An Improvement Budget is a required part of the Storefront Improvement Grant application and becomes an exhibit to the contract. Submit material invoices, quotes or estimates. If using a contractor, you must attach copies of at least 2 contractors' bids or estimates. There is no absolute requirement that the lowest bid be selected; however bids must be comparable in nature (same scope of work, materials, etc.) If completing the work yourself, estimate cost of materials utilized to complete the project but you cannot be reimbursed for the cost of labor by yourself or your employees.

Prepare an Improvement Budget based upon the below sample format to itemize costs necessary to complete your project.

For example:

Proposed Improvement Budget

Materials:

- Canopy - fabric and frame \$1,000*
- Flat Sign - \$500*
- Total Materials \$1,500*

Labor: Labor to install canopy \$ 200

Estimated Total Project Budget: \$1,700

Total Grant Amount Requested: \$1,700



CITY OF BRIDGEPORT

Office of Planning & Economic Development

Storefront Design Guidelines

Description Revised 3.10.11

Introduction

Commercial districts that have a ***unique sense of place*** have a significant competitive advantage over other, more ordinary commercial strips. The central purpose of these *Guidelines* is to encourage high quality building design in order to create an exciting, growing, and aesthetically pleasing commercial district that will attract shoppers, visitors, and those who may want to make future investments in properties and businesses in Bridgeport.

Building or business owners receiving support from the Storefront Improvement Grant must follow these guidelines when designing storefront renovations. Others are encouraged to follow these guidelines on a voluntary basis.

All building construction and renovation projects in the City of Bridgeport are subject to applicable building and zoning codes and regulations. The *Guidelines* are generally consistent with City Codes, but there are instances where these *Guidelines* are more restrictive. In those cases, these *Guidelines* will determine whether a proposed project will be eligible for funding. In cases where City codes are more restrictive or in cases where City codes address issues not specifically addressed by these *Guidelines*, City codes will take precedence.

The Storefront Context

In general, façade improvements have the greatest impact when they are part of a holistic storefront design. All façade elements (signage, awnings, color scheme, architectural features, etc.) should be coordinated to produce a strong, unified, high quality image. Items like signs and awnings should never appear “tacked on” to a façade as an afterthought.

When multiple tenants occupy a single building, all tenant signage and storefront designs should be coordinated to create a harmonious and consistent design

Façade improvements should preserve or restore historic building features when present. Projects should not cover or remove historically significant elements like ornate brickwork. If there are missing elements, such as missing transoms, they should be replaced. Where buildings are either historically designated or eligible for designation, all renovations shall be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

Signage

Signs provide businesses with advertising, image, and identity. Overall, signs that are properly designed as to scale, placement, and appearance can meet the business owner’s needs while also enhancing the image of the commercial district.

Simple signs are more attractive and communicate more effectively than a sign that is too “busy.” Keep in mind the 8-second rule – it takes the average person 8 seconds to walk past a typical retail establishment.

Pedestrians cannot make out more than 4 words/symbols on a storefront within that timeframe. Motorists only have between 1 to 2 seconds to read a sign, which further underscores the importance of simple signs.

New signs must conform to applicable City codes and sign ordinances. The proposed size of the sign should be appropriate for the context. In most cases, the size limit for On-Premise signs will apply: a maximum of 300 square feet and maximum 30 feet in length (contact the Zoning Dept for more information at 203-576-7217 or visit www.bridgeportct.gov and click "Zoning" under the department directory, and then "New Zoning Regulations" on the right and review Sec. 11-7 beginning on page 97).

You must use a City licensed sign contractor (contact the Building Dept for more information at 203-576-7225 or visit www.bridgeportct.gov and click "Building Dept" under the department directory).

All signs must be professionally designed and fabricated and made of quality materials.

Sign colors and materials should be coordinated with the overall design of the storefront.

Dimensional letters, when used, should be made of metal such as copper, bronze, stainless steel, cast aluminum or durable non-glare acrylic.

Internal illumination of signage (including "light box" signs) is not encouraged except for channel letter signs. Retail storefront signage should be illuminated by external lighting.

Front-lit signs should be illuminated by clear spotlights that shine onto the sign. The light bulbs should have some type of decorative shield to protect them from the elements and to direct the light toward the sign. The lighting system should not be obtrusive and distract attention from the sign itself.

The primary business sign should be placed on the building façade above the storefront but below the first upper story windows. Signage should not conceal architectural details and features.

Signs should not be too confusing or contain too much information. Listing the phone number or products sold, services offered, etc., are discouraged (where necessary these details can be placed on secondary signs).

Secondary signs could include window lettering in the storefront. However, signs placed on the glass should be limited in size to 15% of available window area and not obscure views into the business. Only a professional should do lettering applied directly to the glass. Colors should be complementary to the façade colors.

Signs should not advertise national (or global) brand names or logos.

On a main commercial street, a minimum of 80% of the display window at the street level façade should be unobstructed by signs and advertisements. Where facing a parking lot or side street, a minimum of 60 % of the display window at the street level must be unobstructed by signs and advertisements.

Temporary signs, either free-standing or hung from the building façade, are prohibited. This includes sandwich board signs that sit on the sidewalk.

Professional hand-painted signs applied to the masonry side walls (non-storefront walls) are permissible only if the masonry is a non-decorative type of masonry (i.e. cinder block, non-decorative brick, etc.) and has been previously painted.

Hand-painted signs on the side of the building should be limited to the business name, logo and a business slogan.

When multiple tenants occupy a single building, all tenant signage and storefront designs should be coordinated to create a harmonious and consistent appearance.

Obsolete and unused signs, sign frames, and brackets must be removed.

Awnings and Canopies

While awning and canopies are not appropriate for all locations, the installation of new awnings can dramatically improve a building's appearance at relatively low expense. Other benefits include the protection of sun-facing storefronts from sunlight damage to merchandise and shelter for shoppers during rain, snow, or harsh weather.

Awning and canopy design should be integrated with the overall design of the façade. Awnings should complement and enhance building features rather than cover major portions of the facades. Generally, awnings should fit the storefront opening that they are protecting and not be out of scale in relation to the rest of the building. In most cases, a sloped rectangular awning will be most appropriate. Domed, bullnose, and bubble awnings are discouraged in most applications.

Awnings should be made of fabric, metal or glass materials. Vinyl and plastic materials are not encouraged.

All awnings and marquees shall be supported entirely on the building on which they are erected, and there shall be no posts, brackets or other obstacles located on public property.

In general, the bottom of any awning or canopy should be just above the top of the main entry door, but in no case higher than 8 feet, 6 inches. The top of the awning or canopy shall not exceed 12 feet above grade.

The projection of the awning shall extend outward from the building no more than half the width of the sidewalk, or 4 feet, whichever is less.

Wherever possible, the bottom and top edges of awnings should line up with adjacent awnings. Use similar shaped awnings and colors when facades abut one another.

Awning colors should coordinate with the color scheme of the façade. Colorful awnings are appropriate but extreme, brilliant, or harsh colors should be avoided.

Signage on awnings and canopies shall not exceed forty percent (40%) of the surface area.

Signage on awnings and canopies is limited to the business name, address, logo or business slogan and shall not include any specific product advertising.

Backlighting of awnings is prohibited. Accent lighting from above is preferred.

Colors & Materials

The color of individual façade elements (signs, awnings, trim, windows, etc.) should be part of a coordinated color scheme for the building. Colors should be selected to enhance the business image and convey a sense of quality.

Colors selected should be harmonious with the color of existing building materials, including brick, limestone or porcelain enamel panels.

In general, subdued color schemes are encouraged. A vibrant color palette may sometimes be appropriate, but harsh or garish colors must be avoided.

Materials such as brick or limestone that have not been previously painted should remain unpainted.

A minimum of 80% of any building façade which faces a public street, excluding window and door openings, shall consist of the following building materials: Masonry, stone or porcelain.

Painted or unfinished concrete block, rough-textured concrete block, and split-face block are prohibited as new building materials on any façade abutting a public street.

Fine and smooth-textured surfaces shall be used when using materials such as architectural precast concrete, textured block, or stucco.

Doors & Windows

Original door and window openings and patterns should be preserved, especially on historic or architecturally significant buildings. "Bricking in" existing openings is prohibited. Opening up previously bricked-in openings is encouraged.

In new construction or major storefront reconstruction, windows area should be a minimum of 60% of the street level façade along main commercial streets. The use of glass block shall not be considered as providing a window.

Display windows shall be set at a maximum of thirty-two (32) inches above the finished grade and within 12 inches from the finished ceiling, not including window frames.

Reflective or mirrored glass or glass that is dark-tinted is prohibited.

Window frames, including display windows, shall be set back a minimum of two (2) inches from the typical wall plane in the window opening.

Storefront doors should be compatible in design with the rest of the storefront. In general, the primary storefront door should be made largely of glass or contain a glass panel that customers can see through.

Storefront Security

Business owners need to be safe in order to be successful in business. However, heavily fortified stores detract from the attractiveness, popularity, and prosperity of commercial areas. Businesses need to address security issues without turning their stores into fortresses. Therefore, security features should be designed to be as invisible as possible.

The main way to accomplish this is for the commercial district to establish a perception that people respect and value the street and for the businesses themselves to take a pro-active stance towards fighting crime. This approach starts by keeping buildings in good repair, employing good lighting so potential customers feel secure, keeping public spaces free of debris, eliminating any signs of graffiti, removing any elements that have

been recently vandalized until they can be repaired, and reducing the perception that security issues exist. Attracting more customers to the street will ultimately deter more crime from happening.

Security gates are strongly discouraged. In rare instances where security gates may be funded, an open-mesh or transparent material type must be used and be installed on the interior of storefront windows. Solid garage door-style roll-down gates are prohibited.

Fixed window bars placed on the outside or inside of windows will not be funded.

Businesses may want to consider installing break-proof glass instead of security grates. This laminate glass looks and functions like traditional glass but is impossible to break through. The increased cost of the glass is offset since security grates and other expensive security measures are not needed.

Businesses are encouraged to install monitored alarm systems. Alarm installation costs are eligible for Façade Improvement Program funding when part of a larger façade improvement project. These systems can not only save a business from theft but also can save it from devastation with smoke and fire alarms.

Burglar alarm sirens should not be mounted on the walls that are visible from the street. These can be concealed under awnings.

Barbed or razor wire on fences or any portion of the building or property is prohibited.

Exterior Lighting

Exterior lighting should be integral to the overall storefront design, and should be used to enhance building and site features.

Lighting fixtures shall be located, aimed, and shielded so as to avoid creating light spill into the night sky, distracting reflections, or glare into residential areas and adjacent properties.

Lighting should generally not attract attention to itself, although the creative use of neon in individual circumstances may be supported. Flashing, pulsating, glaring or otherwise distracting lighting should be avoided.

Off-Street Parking Lots

Parking lots are not eligible for Grant funding but the following suggestions will complement good storefront design practice. The visual impact of parking facilities can be softened and screened with 3-foot high decorative walls, fencing and complimentary landscaping to reduce the visibility of parked cars from the street and the pedestrian corridor. Interior landscaping is recommended, including islands defined by curbs and planted with shade trees, plus the addition of decorative style parking lot light fixtures, and parking identification signs for use throughout the business district.