

CITY OF WHEELING

Façade Improvement Program (FIP)

Program Guidelines (January 4, 2023)

PURPOSE:

The City of Wheeling's Façade Improvement Program (FIP) provides financial assistance for qualified façade improvements to: (1) privately owned commercial buildings within the C-1, C-2 and EMO zoning districts and the Central Business District* and (2) Any property (residential or commercial) in a qualified historic district in the City of Wheeling that has approved Design Review guidelines that remain enforceable and otherwise in effect. The purpose of the FIP is to support the revitalization of the City of Wheeling by stimulating private investment in high-quality improvements that enhance the appearance of buildings and properties and eliminate blight and non-conforming design standards.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE:

The Façade Improvement Committee (the "Committee") is a five-person committee, consisting of one staff member from City's Economic and Community Development Department and one staff member from the Building & Planning Department (both appointed by the City Manager), a designee from Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation, a licensed architect having an office in Wheeling and having practiced for at least five years (appointed by the Mayor with the consent of City Council), and a designee from the Historic Landmarks Commission.

Upon receipt of applications hereunder, the Committee shall meet quarterly and review and make recommendations to City Council's Development Committee, which, in turn, shall make recommendations to City Council as a whole. Ultimately, City Council shall determine which projects are to be selected for the FIP.

ELIGIBILITY:

Maximum Allowable Award: The FIP provides for a reimbursement, up to \$15,000 per property, based on the project cost approach described below

- Projects totaling \$15,000 and under will be reimbursed 50% of the cost
 - $\text{Cost of Project} \times 0.5 = \text{grant amount}$
- Projects totaling \$15,001 and above will be reimbursed the full eligible amount of \$15,000
 - $(15,000 \times 0.5) + (\text{additional amount over } \$15,000 \times 0.2) = \$15,000$
- Projects totaling between \$15,001 and \$52,499 will be reimbursed an amount between \$7,500 and \$14,999 using the same formula:
 - $(\$15,000 \times 0.5) + (\text{additional amount over } \$15,000 \times 0.2) = \text{grant amount}$

If you do not receive the entire \$15,000 in your first application, you are eligible to apply again in the future when you are making additional improvements to your building. You will only receive the difference between \$15,000 and the amount of your first award.

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants include owners of commercial properties and owners/managers of businesses located in the Districts. Business owners/managers who are leasing a building for which improvements are proposed must submit an Owner Consent Form with their completed application. Only businesses whose existing use is allowable by the City's current codes and regulations are eligible for funding through the FIP. The Committee reserves the right to deny funding to applicants who are delinquent on payment of fines, fees or taxes.

Eligible Areas: The FIP is currently available in the areas described in the “PURPOSE” section of these guidelines. (1) privately owned commercial buildings within the C-1, C-2 and EMO zoning districts and the Central Business District* and (2) Any property (residential or commercial) in a qualified historic district in the City of Wheeling that has approved Design Review guidelines that remain enforceable and otherwise in effect. *The Central Business District is defined as the portion of Wheeling bounded generally by Interstate 70 and 23rd Street on the north and south, respectively, and Chapline Street and Water Street on the east and west, respectively;

Eligible Expenditures: For purposes of this program, eligible expenditures shall include expenses related solely to those exterior improvements which are eligible for reimbursement, as outlined in the program guidelines and determined by the Committee; excludes expenditures related to interior improvements, or other expenditures deemed ineligible by the Committee.

For purposes of this program, eligible improvements to the primary façades include exterior building improvements (cosmetic and/or structural), signage, and roof repairs or replacement. Examples include, but are not limited to: exterior painting or surface treatment, decorative awnings, window and/or door replacements or modifications, storefront enhancements, streetscape, outdoor patios and decks, and architectural features. Fees for architects, engineers or other design consultants are also eligible expenditures.

- Site furnishings, amenities, non-permanent structures and movable equipment are not eligible for funding through the FIP.
- Improvements must be consistent with recommendations set forth in any applicable master plans for the area in which the property is located.
- All work must be completed by licensed contractors, legally operating in the city of Wheeling. The applicant is responsible for obtaining necessary building/site permits for all work. Applicants should contact the City’s Economic and Community Development Department for assistance with permitting.
- All design and specification work in creating construction documents, when necessary shall be prepared by a licensed design professional of the architectural or engineering discipline as defined by West Virginia Code.

CONDITIONS:

Awards under the FIP shall be considered on a quarterly basis and shall be subject in the aggregate to the maximum amount of funding as set forth in the City’s budget for each fiscal year. In no event shall the City be obligated to provide any assistance awards that would cause the amount spent on the FIP in any fiscal year to exceed the amount set forth in the City’s budget for said fiscal year.

Any physical work commenced or completed by any program participants prior to the issuance of a “Notice to Proceed” by the Committee is ineligible for any award(s) pursuant to the FIP.

APPLICABILITY:

Please contact the City’s Building and Planning Department at (304) 234-3702 [or visit the City’s website at www.wheelingwv.gov] to obtain the City’s Comprehensive Plan and its Planning and Zoning Code as amended from time to time.

Exterior Building Improvements: The City's Design Guideline Manual for Wheeling's Downtown Historic Area, and the Design Review Guidelines developed for the Chapline Street Row and Centre Market Square Historic Districts shall apply to new construction, renovation, or reconstruction of existing structures.

Signage: Any new signage must comply with the City's current Planning and Zoning Regulations as amended from time to time. Expenses related to the removal of a non-conforming sign and subsequent replacement with a new conforming sign (if applicable) are eligible.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

APPLICANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT THE CITY'S ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT TO REVIEW THE PROJECT PRIOR TO SUBMITTING A COMPLETED APPLICATION.

- All applicants must submit the following information to the Committee:
 - Completed application
 - Photographs of existing façade
 - Plans and/or elevations of proposed improvements
 - List and/or description of materials to be used *
 - Detailed cost estimates/bids for proposed improvements *
 - IRS W-9 Form: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>
 - If applicant is property owner: Proof of Property Ownership OR if applicant is not property owner: Owner Consent Form

**The Committee reserves the right to preferentially consider if applicants will use local contractors and/or service and material providers for improvements. A "local contractor" is one that would be so characterized under the City's bidder preference guidelines, primarily having its principal place of business in the municipality.*

- Upon receiving completed applications, the representative from the City's Economic and Community Development Department will arrange a meeting with the Committee to review the proposal. The completed application and additional required documents must be approved by the City Council prior to commencement of work.
- The Committee will then provide written notification to the applicant stating whether the proposed façade improvements have been approved as submitted, approved with changes or disapproved. The Committee will also advise the applicant of the anticipated amount of reimbursement authorized, provided the improvements are completed as approved.
- The Committee has the authority to request modifications of a proposed design to ensure the appearance of the site or building will be compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood. If the applicant chooses not to make the modifications as requested, the committee reserves the right to withdraw approval and deny funding.

- Within thirty (30) days of the issuance of an award under the FIP, the applicant shall provide the Committee with a contractor's qualification statement for each contractor hired by the applicant to perform the contemplated improvements.
- The Committee reserves the right to request further information from the applicant or visit the applicant's property in an effort to evaluate the merit of applicant's proposed façade improvement.
- Projects deemed eligible for reimbursement must be completed within one year of receiving approval by the Committee. The Committee reserves the right to withdraw approval and deny funding to projects not completed within one year of approval.
- The Committee will consider the following information when reviewing an application and making their recommendation to City Council:
 - Historical / Architectural Significance of the Property
 - Number of times the building has been previously funded by program
 - Number of times the owner has been previously funded by program
 - Existing Conditions / Occupancy Status
 - Overall Consistency with Purpose of the Program
 - Evaluation of Relative Visual Public Benefit or Impact to the Streetscape
 - Proposed Work to the Property
 - Level of Investment

REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS:

Applicants who qualify for funding must document all expenditures and provide the Committee with proof of payment (receipts, paid invoices, etc.) for all eligible improvements within thirty (30) days of completion of the entire façade improvement as detailed within the application process. Once construction is complete, the Committee will visit the project to ensure that it complies with the approved plans. The applicant will then be provided with a one-time reimbursement for the approved amount. Reimbursement checks will be issued by the City of Wheeling.

NOTICES:

Program participants may be eligible for the following incentives and assistance:

- *West Virginia and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives.* Interested parties are hereby advised to contact an accountant or tax advisor to determine eligibility.
- *Reinvent Wheeling Design Assistance Grants.* Interested parties are hereby advised to contact Alex Weld (304) 232-3087.
- *Friends of Wheeling Preservation Loan Fund assistance.* Interested parties are hereby advised to contact Jeanne Finstein (304) 242-0341 or jeanne-finstein@comcast.net.

| Category | Score |
|---|-------|
| Historical / Architectural Significance of the Property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant: 5pts • No Significance: 0 pts | 5 |
| Number of times the building has been previously funded by program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st time: 5 pts • Multiple Requests: 0 pts | 5 |
| Number of times the owner has been previously funded by program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st time: 5 pts • Multiple Requests: 0 pts | 5 |
| Existing Conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing property's appearance and compatibility with surrounding properties is poor or the vacancy is more than 75%: 10 pts • The existing property's appearance and compatibility with surrounding properties is fair or the vacancy is between 25% and 75%: 5 pts • The existing property's appearance and compatibility with surrounding properties is good or the vacancy is less than 25 percent: 0 pts | 10 |
| Overall Consistency with Purpose of the Program | 10 |
| Evaluation of Relative Visual Public Benefit or Impact to the Streetscape | 15 |
| Proposed Work to the Property / Project Extent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project includes major / complete façade work and site redevelopment 25 pts • The project includes moderate façade work and site redevelopment 18 pts • The project includes minor façade work 12 pts • The project only involves the roof 6 pts | 25 |
| Level of Investment / Project Extent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1 - \$15,000 6pts • \$15,001 – \$52,000 12pts • \$52,001 – \$100,000 18 pts • \$100,001+ 25 pts | 25 |
| | 100 |