



THE CITY
OF
EVANSVILLE

HISTORIC COMMERCIAL FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM INSTRUCTION PACKET



Department of Metropolitan Development
City of Evansville, Indiana

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I. Introduction:

The City of Evansville's Historic Commercial Façade Grant (HCFG) Program has been created to assist property and business owners with the rehabilitation of older commercial buildings located within the City's Promise Zone. This area was chosen as it contains some of the City's older commercial districts, which due to obsolescence, age, building deterioration and other factors have struggled to reenergize as thriving commercial centers within the City's older, traditional neighborhoods.

The HCFG is administered by the Department of Metropolitan Development (DMD) as part of its efforts to maintain a vibrant urban core that fosters entrepreneurial development. Program goals for the Historic Commercial Façade Grant Program include:

- A. Maintaining the vibrancy of core commercial areas by encouraging investments that enhance the visual aesthetics of commercial properties and lead to increased property values;
- B. Stimulating economic development by providing incentives to increase existing business investment, ensure business sustainability, and create aesthetically pleasing areas that attract new businesses and consumers;
- C. Complementing other public and private revitalization efforts to ensure the maximum leverage of resources;
- D. Supporting local businesses and encourage local entrepreneurship to foster a sense of community where personal growth and prosperity are possible; and
- E. Provide for diverse employment opportunities and job creation in the City's urban neighborhoods.

The 2019 Façade Grant program has \$100,000 available with a maximum single award of \$25,000. Property owners must be able to provide a 1:1 ratio matching basis or a minimum of 50-percent of the total project cost. Applications must be submitted to the Department of Metropolitan Development from October 1, 2019 to November 1, 2019. Preliminary grant awardees will be announced on or around December 2, 2019. Construction on approved projects should be complete by August 31, 2020.

Applicants considered for funding will receive preliminary award notification and then work with the Façade Design Committee to review and refine the scope of work before a final grant amount is decided and a Grant Agreement signed. Applicants must have a signed Grant Agreement and Notice to Proceed from the City of Evansville prior to entering into any contracts, purchasing any grant related materials, or commencing any improvements associated with the Grant's scope of work. Funds spent before the Grant Agreement is signed by both parties are not eligible for reimbursement.



II. Identifying Proposed Improvements

The City of Evansville's Historic Commercial Façade Grant (HCFG) Program focuses on improvements to the exterior of existing building façades where the building is primarily used for commercial purposes. Each building on a parcel of land and each business in a multi-tenant commercial building is allowed to be considered as a separate project and is eligible to apply for its own grant. Such buildings and/or businesses do not have to apply for a grant as one entity. An owner of a business, but not necessarily the building owner, may apply for funding. If the applicant is not the owner of the building, written consent for the submission of the grant application and proposed improvements must be obtained from the legal owner.

The letter of consent should also identify who is financially responsible for the improvements, the business owner or building owner. A detailed scope of work and cost estimate will help to determine the grant amount and the amount of funds to be provided by the applicant.

III. Determining Project Eligibility

To be eligible for the City of Evansville's Historic Commercial Façade Grant (HCFG) Program:

- The applicant/owner must be paid to date on all property taxes, payments and fees owed to the City of Evansville or Vanderburgh County;
- The building must be located within the Evansville Promise Zone;
- The building must be identified by the Evansville Historic Preservation Officer as a property that is at least 40 years old and is considered important to the density or continuity of the area's historic fabric;
- Improvements must focus on the building's facade; and
- The building must be primarily used for commercial purposes.

Upon completion of the rehabilitation, the building must have a commercial activity as its primary purpose. Commercial activities might include but are not limited to: retail and specialty stores, services, restaurants, bars, cultural venues, professional offices, commercial retail centers, and manufacturing/industrial uses. Mixed-use buildings are eligible as long as the first floor of the building is predominantly used for commercial activities. The upper floors may then include residential units. Buildings that are solely used for residential purposes are **NOT** eligible.

Vacant buildings are eligible to apply for this grant program with the understanding that the owner intends to re-activate the building for a commercial purpose. Owners must provide proof of tenant agreements if a known tenant is scheduled to occupy the space. If no tenant is scheduled to occupy the space at the time of the façade grant application, the owner must provide proof that the property is in habitable condition as defined by the Building Code (Certificate of Occupancy), or will be made to be in habitable condition for commercial use via assistance from the façade grant project.

Not-for-profit organizations are eligible to apply, with uses including but not limited to offices, community centers, retail or wholesale stores, restaurants, entertainment venues, and services. Faith-based or religious organizations are **NOT** eligible for this grant program if the properties and/or buildings seeking the grant are to be used for religious activities. However, if the faith-based

organization seeks a grant for a secular use, similar to those listed for not-for-profits, on property not used for religious purposes, then the organization may qualify for a grant.

All improvements and related architectural costs and permitting fees must be for the exterior of an eligible building, including masonry cleaning, pointing, repair or replacement of windows and doors; exterior painting, exterior lighting, awnings, signage permanently affixed to the structure, and removing non-historic materials added to a building façade. The restoration of the entire facade is preferred, but a minimum amount of work is required - either the entire storefront or the entire facade around the storefront. Storefront improvements will have priority over other facade improvements. Roof, interior repairs, parking lots and landscaping are **NOT** included. All improvements are subject to design review and approval before work on a project begins.

IV. Conformity to Design Guidelines and Zoning Ordinances:

Once it is determined that the desired improvements meet the minimum eligibility requirements for funding, the next step is to review any design guidelines, building codes and zoning ordinances, along with local, state and federal laws that may be applicable. Since these structures are older and contribute to the neighborhood's identity, the design guidelines should focus on honoring a building's original historic design, especially concerning architectural features, while respecting building patterns exhibited on the block or surrounding area. In addition, district design guidelines may provide guidance in use of color and quality of materials to be used.

The Area Plan Commission and/or the Historic Preservation Commission will be able to assist an applicant with design review for special districts where design guidelines are enforced, including:

- Downtown Design Guidelines
- Jacobsville Redevelopment Area Design Guidelines
- Evansville Arts District, Haynie's Corner, Design Guidelines

Making sure a project conforms to design guidelines and zoning regulations will make processing the application by the Façade Design Committee (FDC) much easier. Therefore, we recommend becoming familiar with what might be in effect in the area in which the project is located. For more information on Historic Preservation guidelines go to the City of Evansville Department of Metropolitan Development site at: <http://www.evansvillegov.org/city/departments/division.php?structureid=139>

The FDC may also make design recommendations not related to compliance. Incorporation of these recommendations is not mandatory, but is advisable.

V. Defining the Scope of Work & Obtaining Cost Estimates:

After receiving a preliminary grant award letter, the applicant will meet with the FDC to finalize the scope of work and to make any changes necessary to create bid specifications. Each applicant will then utilize these specifications to obtain detailed cost estimates for work to be performed under the façade grant. Details will include the quantity and quality of building materials to be used along with color, finish or style. The detailed scope of work is intended to be descriptive enough to generate a reasonable cost estimate, but not so detailed that it becomes a contractor bid form.

An applicant is required to submit a general estimate of cost along with the application. Ideally, the estimate should fall within 10-15% of an estimate that might be obtained through a bid process following the City of Evansville's bid process guidelines. For smaller or simple projects, a building owner may be able to prepare the cost estimate with the help of one or more contractors. Providing the detailed scope of work to a general contractor for an estimate is usually the easiest way to obtain a realistic cost estimate as it will include both materials and labor costs.

If a grant recipient decides to change the project after the scope of work and bid sheet approval, they must immediately contact the Grant Administrator in writing for additional project review and written approval before going forward with the changed project scope. A project recipient may decide to make the changes if cost estimates are higher than anticipated and the owner is unable to meet the 50% match or additional and maybe more critical repairs are identified that will need to be completed prior to those improvements initially identified.

Funding awards cannot be increased after notification of the initial award, unless approved in writing by the Grant Administrator, and only if additional funding is available. If a grant recipient reduces the level of investment, the City retains the right to reduce the grant amount previously approved or deny the grant entirely. There is no guarantee that the changes will be approved. Therefore, it is very important that owners have a thorough understanding of all improvements needed and the proper sequence of those improvements before submitting an application.

VI. Timeline

Applications are received once per year during an open application period lasting approximately 30 days. Upon closing of the open application period, projects will be reviewed for compliance with submittal requirements and design guidelines. Incomplete or non-compliant applications will be rejected. It is anticipated that applications will be validated within 2 weeks of the application's being submitted. As the commercial façade grant program is a competitive grant program, all applications confirmed valid will be evaluated by City staff on project merit. All preliminary grant award recipients will be formally notified of their grant status (preliminary grant approval or grant denied) by mail approximately one month after the due date.

After notification of preliminary grant award status, preliminary grant awardees will be scheduled to attend a meeting with the Facade Design Committee (FDC). This meeting will determine compliance with the program's Design Guidelines, clarify any further details under the proposed scope of work, review the cost estimate information and begin the process for creating a bid sheet for the project. With the scope of work and bid specs approved, the applicant will seek a minimum of two (2) project bids. This design review and bid process should take no longer than four to five weeks.

Upon receipt of project bids, the City will prepare a formal Grant Agreement that states the exact amount of the grant award, based on the lowest bids. Once the Agreement has been signed by the City and the applicant, the City will secure a Purchase Order from DMD's Finance Officer. Once the Purchase Order has been secured, the Grant Administrator will issue a Notice to Proceed to the award recipient. At that time, and not before, the applicant is free to enter into contracts/agreements with contractors and make purchases related to the façade project. Any contractor agreement entered into, work performed, or materials purchased prior to the signing of the Grant Agreement by both the City and the applicant will not be eligible for reimbursement through the Commercial Façade

Grant program. The target date for having all façade Grant Agreements and Notice to Proceeds issued is within 60 days of Preliminary Notice of Grant Approval.

All approved façade grant projects must be started within two (2) months of signing the Grant Agreement. If extenuating circumstances prohibit the project from commencing within this timeframe, then an extension must be requested in writing before the two (2) month deadline date. Approval of the extension request (if granted) must be given by the Grant Administrator as an Addendum to the Grant Agreement. The Addendum must be signed by the applicant and Grant Administrator. Additionally, all required construction/building permits must also be obtained within two (2) months of signing the Grant Agreement or by the approved Addendum extension date. Permits must be displayed per building code requirements. If projects have not started by the two (2) month deadline date or approved extension deadline date, then the grant award may be revoked and funds placed into the next year's façade grant award coffers.

At completion of the façade improvements, the applicant will notify the Grant Administrator that the work is finished and is available for inspection. The Grant Administrator and/or Community Development Inspector will inspect the work and make a determination as to whether or not the work is satisfactory. The Grant Administrator may seek the assistance of the Facade Design Committee in making a determination on the satisfactory nature of the work. When the Grant Administrator determines that the façade improvements have been completed in a manner consistent with the approved scope of work, the applicant may pay the contractor and request reimbursement for work completed.

VII. Completing the Grant Application:

The application should reveal the relationship between the applicant and the building to be rehabilitated, as well as, identifying the primary contact person. If the applicant is not the owner, the owner must provide written consent for the application to be submitted. The application will also provide general information on the age, condition and zoning of the building and whether or not it is occupied. To allow for verification of these facts, documentation proofing ownership, taxes being paid and tenant occupation will be needed (see Application Checklist).

Along with the application form, applicants are required to submit a detailed scope of work and a cost estimate of the proposed project. These two documents are vital in determining whether or not the project fits the goals of the HCFG program and helps establish the grant amount to award the applicant. Additional detail on completing this portion of the application is included in Section V of these Instructions.

As part of the application submittal, a graphic presentation of the project should be attached. The most common way to achieve this is through the use of print-outs of digital photographs (or photocopies of actual photographs) and site plan sketches. Photographs of every side of the building where improvements are expected to be made should be identified on these photographs. For example, if the project proposes to replace just the first story windows on the front façade, then submit a picture of the front façade and draw an outline around the first story windows with a notation to replace the circled windows.

A narrative describing the proposed improvements, an explanation of business operations, and how the project will benefit the business and the area should be included. Section VII Project Evaluation Criteria can be helpful in pinpointing what information might be contained within the narrative. An applicant should also provide details on additional work that may be ongoing in regards to the interior or outside area not associated with the grant request. This information assists in determining the overall investment in the structure that the City is leveraging and can be a positive impact on the project evaluation.

Applications may be mailed or hand-delivered to:

Evansville Historic Commercial Façade Grant Program
Attention: Christine Prior, Project Manager / Promise Zone Liaison
City of Evansville Department of Metropolitan Development
306 Civic Center Complex
1 NW Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Evansville, IN 47708-1869

Any questions in regards to the program may be directed to Ms. Prior at 812-436-4555 or cprior@evansville.in.gov.

VIII. Project Evaluation Criteria:

The Historic Commercial Façade Grant Program is a competitive grant. Grants received will be evaluated on:

- The level of private investment. Applicants that provide more than the required 50% match or performing other rehabilitation work to the property in accordance with historic guidelines may receive a more favorable review.
- The project's proximity to other public and private investments, such as, city-involved catalyst projects, previously awarded façade grant projects, formal streetscape projects, reuse of historic building, or location in commercial corridors.
- Repurposing a currently vacant or blighted building to an active commercial use.
- The visual prominence of the building and the business's ability to enhance local character.
- The proposed project's ability to aesthetically transform the building, along with the aesthetic impact the proposed improvements will make to a commercial corridor.
- The degree to which the improvements will enhance the originally intended design attributes or historic features of the building.
- The long-term durability and sustainability of the improvements (structural improvements vs. less permanent improvements).