

DOWNTOWN FREMONT FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Background

The Fremont Downtown Development Authority (DDA) established the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Program to promote economic development within the City of Fremont. The Program is administered by the Fremont DDA's Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee.

Program Purpose

The City is providing grant funding to encourage downtown property owners to make needed exterior building façade improvements. By improving the appearance of the building facades, the Program serves to improve the economic viability of the downtown. Having an attractive downtown should increase property values, improve the marketability of space within the buildings and attract businesses and residents to the area.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are downtown property owners whose building is within the program target area. The applicant must be in good standing with the City in terms of payment of taxes and utilities.

Program Target Area

The target area for the Program is the four-block commercial core located on Main Street in Fremont between Merchant and Mechanic Avenues. The four blocks extend south to Sheridan and north to Dayton Streets. This four-block area is the focal point of the City and is where other economic development efforts are being focused.

Project Timeframe

Projects must be completed within one year of approval of the contract. Projects not completed within one year after approval can be reviewed by the Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee for a possible extension of up to one year. The project is not eligible for reimbursement if the work is not completed during the approved or extended time period.

Funding Available

Funding guidelines for the Program include the following:

- Up to \$40,000 is available each fiscal year, subject to appropriations each fiscal year by the Fremont City Council.
- There is no set minimum or maximum number of projects per year. The number of façade projects each year depends on the number of applicants, level or amount of renovation, costs per storefront and other factors.
- A maximum of \$10,000 per façade project is available to property owners as follows:
 - A 100% reimbursement up to \$1,500 of actual architectural expenses is provided as long as the property owner uses the architectural plans for the façade renovation provided as part of the City's architectural assistance service. Staff will work with the property owner to determine if the services of an architect are needed for the façade renovation. If the services of an architect are not needed, the property owner would only be eligible for

reimbursement of expenses for the actual renovation of the façade (see next bullet below).

The architectural assistance service includes project consultation and a façade improvement drawing, which would enable a property owner to obtain a building permit. If the services of an architect are needed, the applicant must use the services of the architect whom the City of Fremont has retained in connection with the Façade Improvement Program in order to be eligible for reimbursement. In very special circumstances, the DDA may allow a property owner to use his/her own architect for the façade renovation; however, this must be pre-approved by the DDA. The architects must adhere to the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Design Guidelines.

If the services of an architect are needed, the City's Architectural Services Agreement is signed by the applicant. The applicant is required to submit \$1,500 into an escrow account at the City before services are rendered; the City will pay the architect up to the amount deposited into the account. If the architectural services fee exceeds \$1,500, the applicant will pay the architect directly for the amount over and above \$1,500. If the architectural services fee is less than \$1,500, the remaining balance in the escrow account will be returned to the applicant at the time the architect is paid. If the applicant completes the project as approved, he/she will be reimbursed from the City for architectural services already paid for by the applicant via the escrow account. Reimbursement to applicant for architectural expenses incurred for the project will be paid to the applicant at the time he/she receives grant funding for other expenses incurred at the end of the project, subject to the appropriate approvals of the project. If the applicant does not complete the project, he/she will only be eligible to receive the portion of the earnest money that was not needed to cover expenses incurred by the property owner for the services of the approved architect in relation to the approved façade improvement project.

- A 50% reimbursement of actual façade exterior rehabilitation expenses is provided in addition to the reimbursement of expenses for architectural services, if architectural services are required. This means that the DDA will reimburse the applicant up to \$8,500 for a façade exterior rehabilitation with a 50/50 match. This \$8,500 can be used all on one façade or on multiple facades. If the applicant chooses to request more than \$8,500 and no more than \$8,500 per façade, he/she may do so, but approval of the request will be at the discretion of the DDA and the Fremont City Council. In order to be eligible to receive funding for the façade rehabilitation expenses, the property owner must adhere to the Façade Improvement Design Guidelines and use the architectural plans of the architect retained by the City in connection with the Façade Improvement Program or under special circumstances the plans of an architect approved by the City, if the services of an architect are required.
- There shall be a cap of \$8,500 per eligible façade for a period of ten (10) years for reimbursable expenses and \$1,500 for associated architectural services. After ten (10) years, a business owner may apply again for funding, if desired. If a building changes ownership or if a business changes within the building, grant funding may be sought even though grant funding may have already been granted within a ten-(10) year period, but approval of funding would be at the discretion of the DDA and its Facade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee.

Project Selection

Program participants will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis, provided the applicant satisfies the requirements outlined in the Façade Improvement Application and Program Guidelines. The application must be complete before it can be considered by the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee.

Eligible Improvements/Activities

The City reserves the right to determine the eligibility for all items in a project's scope of work. This determination shall be conclusive and final. Front, rear and side facades are all eligible for improvements, subject to review. Grant funds may be used to make improvements to the following building features:

- Exterior woodwork and architectural metals
(Repair, cleaning, restoration, painting or replacement, including shutters)
- Masonry
(Repairs, re-pointing, repainting or low-pressure cleaning)
- Windows and Doors
(Repair, restoration, repainting and replacement in-kind of windows and exterior doors)
- Cornices, Parapets and Roofs
(Repair, restoration or replacement when in conjunction with a façade renovation or a visible part of the building façade)
- Signs and Awnings
(Repair or replacement of existing or the installation of new signs and awnings)
- Lighting Fixtures
(Exterior lighting fixtures for a façade)

Improvements to features not listed above may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee.

Ineligible Improvements/Activities

Items not eligible for grant funds include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Maintenance
- Interior improvements
- Sidewalks
- Landscaping

Approval Criteria

The DDA's Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee shall review and evaluate a grant application according to the following general criteria:

- Applicant must submit all items specified in the grant application.
- The improvement must be planned for a building in the program target area.
- The property owner must agree to adhere to the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Design and Program Guidelines in relation to the façade improvement. In terms of paint selection, if a program participant selects colors from the original approved color palette, which was built around Sherwin William's historic color line of paint colors, the program participant may decide which color is to be used for accent colors and which for the main color. However, if the program participant wants to use colors, either accent or main colors other than those approved by the City, the City must approve the color selection and its use on a particular building.

- Applicants who are participating in the Fremont Downtown Rental Housing Rehabilitation Program will be given higher priority.
- The proposed improvement or design is of the quality that will have lasting and long-term value.

Grant Application Process

1. The Façade Improvement Program application must be submitted to the City. Estimates that are to be outlined in the application for the work to be performed on a façade must be submitted on letterhead from a professional qualified to perform the work. A minimum of two estimates for the work to be performed must be submitted. The amount of funding requested from the applicant shall be based on the lowest responsible estimate submitted, and the exact amount of the grant funding should be outlined on the application. Even if the cost of the project ends up exceeding the initial estimate, the applicant will only receive the amount requested and approved. If an applicant desires to phase-in the improvements, he/she may do so. However, he/she will be required to submit a new application and outline the work to be performed in connection with each new phase of work. No property owner is allowed to receive more than \$8,500 in funding for the same façade within a ten-(10) year period.
2. If an applicant requests funding for more than one façade, the applicant may be required to complete a separate application for each façade
3. “Before” and “after” pictures must be taken by the applicant and presented to the City. High-quality digital photos are preferred.
4. City staff will review the application to ensure that all submission requirements have been satisfied and to determine if the services of an architect are needed. If the application is complete and no architectural services are required, City staff will schedule a meeting with the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee to review and vote on the grant request. The applicant and their chosen general contractor should plan to attend the Subcommittee meeting.

If an applicant cannot complete the application because the services of an architect are needed to assist with the estimates, a meeting of the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee is scheduled to discuss the situation and to vote on the matter. The application must outline the intent of the desired facade improvements. If the Subcommittee feels the proposed project will satisfy the Program Guidelines, the Subcommittee may vote on the proposed project subject to the property owner using the services of a City-approved architect. The DDA will then consider the recommendation of the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee and vote on the final disposition of the application.

If the estimated project cost is not expected to exceed \$6,000, the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee may approve an application with a funding request up to \$3,000 without the approval of the full DDA, but with City staff representation on the Subcommittee and with its approval. The intent of this provision is to be customer-service oriented so that smaller projects (e.g., awnings) can be approved in a timely fashion.

5. Once the application is approved, another meeting of the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee will be scheduled to review and vote on the proposed design work. If the façade work is simple (e.g., awning), the Subcommittee has the discretion to approve the application and the design work in one meeting. The DDA retains final disposition authority on the proposed design work for any major façade improvement project. If the plans are not approved, the DDA will provide, in writing, an explanation as to the reasons for rejection, and what, if any, steps can be taken to receive approval.

6. Once the façade design has been approved, the program participant signs the Façade Improvement Program Grant Award Contract Agreement. The amount of the grant funding approved by the DDA or its Subcommittee, if appropriate, will be clearly outlined in the contract.
7. The Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee must approve changes in approved work specifications, subject to approval by the full DDA. Deviations from an approved plan may disqualify the applicant from this grant program or from reimbursement of prior renovation or architectural expenses.
8. No funds will be disbursed to the program participant until the project is complete, proof of payment is provided and the proper approvals are obtained. The grant is awarded on a reimbursement basis. If desired by the DDA or the DDA Façade/Historic Preservation Subcommittee, the program participant may be required to come before either group to entertain any questions regarding the façade work to ensure the work is consistent with the design guidelines and any other requirements, before funding is disbursed.

The applicant must submit copies of invoices, receipts and an itemized statement of the total cost of the project, signed by the program participant. All documentation for payment must be provided at one time to the City for one payout. The receipts must be provided no later than fifteen (15) months after the application has been approved or as stipulated in the request for an extension. Payment will be made to the program participant by the City of Fremont within four weeks after City deems all project costs and documentation to be complete. Payment shall be made only to the program participant. The amount of the reimbursement must adhere to the Program Guidelines.

General Requirements

1. All work must be performed in accordance with the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Design Guidelines and all applicable local, state and federal codes. The applicant must agree to be bound by the Façade Improvement Program Guidelines.
2. Code deficiencies or violations only in relation to the work being performed in connection with the Façade Improvement Program must be corrected as part of the façade renovation.
3. All construction management shall be the responsibility of the applicant. If the property owner performs any of the work for himself or herself, or it is performed by any relative or employee, the property owner will not be eligible for reimbursement for the labor. The property owner may be reimbursed for materials as long as proper receipts are provided.

Program Amendments

The details of the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Grant Program may be amended at any time subject to the formal approval of the Fremont DDA and final approval of the Fremont City Council.

Note: Please request a copy of the Downtown Fremont Façade Improvement Design Guidelines.