



City of Salem

Facade Improvement Program- Guidelines

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Program Description

This program provides commercial property owners and business owners with financial support and design assistance from the Design Review Board (DRB) for the renovation of commercial building facades. The goal is to strengthen Salem's neighborhood business districts and its downtown by enhancing the exterior of commercial properties and preserving the character of our neighborhood streetscapes.

Funding Source

Funding for this program is provided through the City of Salem's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, made available by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Applicants must meet and comply with all Federal requirements of the program including Federal Labor Standards, Section 3 Opportunities and Environmental Review Procedures.

Eligible Properties

Eligible properties must be commercial or mixed-use buildings and be in either:

- The Downtown Renewal Area (see map [here](#)), or
- A Low-Moderate Income Area as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (see map [here](#)).

The property must comply with local zoning and building regulations to be deemed eligible.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include:

- Owners of eligible properties, and/or
- Ground floor commercial tenants, with approval of the property owner.

An applicant must be current on all local taxes and fees to be deemed eligible.

Eligible Activities

Examples of eligible activities include:

- Complete façade renovations including restoration of historic architectural details,
- Removal of roll down grills,
- Installation of new exterior lighting,
- Exterior painting in combination with other façade improvements,
- Restoration of, or new, windows and doors,
- Awnings and/or signage in combination with other façade improvements, and
- Accessibility improvements for ADA compliance.

Eligible activities must be on the exterior of the building, visible from the public way, and be on the ground floor.

Funding Logistics

What is a UEI number and why do I need one?

A Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number is a 12-character unique number assigned to all entities (public and private companies, individuals, institutions, or organizations) who must register to do business with the federal government. See a UEI Fact Sheet [here](#). To learn how to set up your UEI, go [here](#).

How much money can I get?

The maximum grant award is \$2,500 per business.

Owners of a large property with multiple first-floor tenants may apply for a grant that will benefit multiple storefronts. The maximum total award per property is \$5,000.

The applicant must contribute a cash match of equal or greater value to the grant award.

Can I get the money before I start work and/or the project is completed?

No, you will be reimbursed the grant funding after submitting documentation that the project was completed and paid for. Staff will verify that the work was done according to the plans, review payment documents, issue reimbursement. The grant funding is reimbursed only at the end of the entire project.

I have already started work on my building/storefront; can I submit for reimbursement for that work?

No. Only work that is reviewed and approved as part of the Façade Improvement Program is eligible for reimbursement. Work may not start until you have completed the review process and received an approval.

If I run out of money and do not make all the improvements that I was approved for, can I still be reimbursed for the work I do?

Yes. Though you will only be reimbursed a percentage of the grant award in proportion to the amount of work performed.

May I select and hire contractors of my choosing?

Yes. You may choose your own contractors. Please note that if your project exceeds \$2,000 then you and your contractor must comply with the Federal Davis-Bacon Wage Law, read about Davis-Bacon [here](#). Appropriate wage rates will be provided to your and/or your contractor with your commitment letter. Documentation that these wage rates have been paid will be required with your reimbursement request.

The city encourages businesses to work with diverse businesses and contractors. Go [here](#) for a list of state-certified businesses. Go [here](#) for a regional Diversity Directory featuring businesses in Salem and the surrounding communities.

Are there any exemptions from the Davis-Bacon requirement?

Yes, exemptions from Davis-Bacon apply, if

1. Your total project is less than \$2,000 in combined materials and labor, or
2. Construction is undertaken directly by the property or business owner and volunteer labor, or
3. Labor is provided by self-employed contractors with no employees – the contractor must have a separate Federal Tax I.D. number for the business.

When do I get the funds?

Once the project is complete, you will submit an invoice with documentation that all contractors/vendors have been paid in full, including Davis-Bacon prevailing wages, if applicable. The project and submitted documentation will be reviewed for completeness. Once the reimbursement request is approved, payment will be made in approximately 2 weeks.

Application, Review, and Selection Process

What is the process to apply?

If you believe you are eligible (please review applicant and project eligibility requirements), the application process begins by completing the application form and gathering all the required documents. You may download the application form [here](#). Once complete, you may submit the application package electronically to Kate Newhall-Smith at knewhallsmith@salem.com.

What is the deadline to apply?

There is no deadline to apply; applications are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. Grant awards are dependent on funding availability.

What do I need for the application?

In addition to the application form and signed General Conditions, you will need to submit the following information:

- Color photos of the existing condition of the site
- Drawings of and specifications for the proposed improvements
- Estimated project budget
- Any additional information regarding colors or products

How are applications reviewed?

Once received, staff will review the application for its completeness and contact the applicant if additional information is needed. Once deemed complete, staff will add the application to the next available Design Review Board (DRB) meeting agenda.

Staff and the DRB will evaluate the proposal for consistency and compliance with the [Commercial Design Guidelines](#), Design Standards in the [Urban Renewal Plan](#), the City's [Sign Ordinance](#), and the [SRA Sign Manual](#). The DRB will also consider the level of impact any proposed improvements may have on the subject properties, as well as the overall streetscape and neighborhood.

Once the DRB completes its review, members will offer a formal recommendation to staff as to the appropriateness of the proposal. Staff will discuss the recommendations with the applicant and upon reaching a final design plan, staff will issue a formal approval and contract for the project. The approved work may begin once all permits have been issued.

What projects will require additional permitting?

Signs: All proposals that include adding, changing, or updating signs must file for a Sign Permit. The application can be found [here](#). All signs funded by this program will be reviewed by the Design Review Board.

Façade Improvements: If the business is located in Salem's Downtown Renewal Area (see map [here](#)), the applicant will need to apply for a Small Project Review by the Salem Redevelopment Authority (SRA). The application can be found [here](#). This review process will be wrapped into the application review process as described above but will include an additional meeting with the SRA; staff will coordinate with the applicant regarding meeting dates.

Building Permit: Projects may require a building permit. For questions regarding building permits, please contact the Building Department at 978-619-5641.

Other Permits: Certain locations may require approval by the Salem Historical Commission, Conservation Commission, or other permitting authority. Please contact program staff to determine if other approvals are required.

Questions regarding this program may be sent to Kate Newhall-Smith at knewhallsmith@salem.com.