



2024 WBDA Façade Improvement Program Application

Applications and supporting documents due by **September 13th, 2024 at 4PM**. Submit completed applications via mail or in-person to the Washington Business District Authority, 55 W. Maiden Street Washington, PA 15301.

About the Grant

The 2024 Downtown Façade Improvement Grant is designed to improve the overall appearance of Downtown Washington by providing assistance for small businesses and property owners who wish to invest in their property and the overall Downtown streetscape.

The program grants up to \$25,000 per property for façade improvements for those who qualify. To qualify for consideration, the project must result in visible improvement of the overall façade. Selected properties are required to provide a 20% improvement match to their grant amount. The Downtown Façade Improvement Grant is funded by the Washington Business District Authority with the support of the Washington County Local Share Account. \$125,000 of funds are available for the 2024-2025 cycle.

How does this work?

In short, building or business owners submit an application to the Washington Business District Authority and are reviewed by the Facade Improvement committee. Recommendations are sent to the WBDA board for final approval. Approved projects are notified of their award amount, and work may begin once the letter is received. When the project is completed and the WBDA signs off on the work, the applicant will receive a check for the full amount of the award. All grant money is reimbursement only.

Who can apply for funding?

Any owner of a building or business located within the Central Business District (Walnut Street to the north, the train tracks to the south, the centerline of Franklin to the west, and the centerline of College to the east) are eligible to apply. If a business owner is renting their property, the application must include a letter from the property owner, on letterhead, agreeing to the proposed scope of work.

What types of improvements are eligible?

Permanent exterior improvements on commercial or mixed use buildings. Façades must be visible from a public right-of-way. Eligible improvements include the following:

- Masonry repairs and tuck pointing
 - Repair/replace/preserve historically significant architectural details
 - Storefront reconstruction back to original basis
 - Cornice repair
 - Power washing
 - Exterior painting and stucco
 - Awnings and canopies of approved material
 - Window and door repair or replacement
 - Permanent exterior signage integrated into the storefront design
 - Exterior lighting

- Repair/replacement of gutters and downspouts
 - Façade building code items
 - Visible roof repairs
 - Non-visible roof repairs in conjunction with a visible façade improvement
 - Architectural, engineering, design fees, and/or permitting fees

- **What items are not eligible?**

Generally, the following items are not eligible:

- Non-visible roofing not in conjunction with a visible façade improvement
- Mechanical equipment enclosures (non-visible)
- Parking lots
- Interior renovation
- Temporary, portable, or non-permanent improvements
- Façades not visible from a public right-of-way
- Property acquisition
- Expansion of building area
- Conversion of use
- Improvements in progress or completed prior to loan/grant approval

Grants are available for up to \$25,000 in this current cycle.

Matching funds of 20% of the grant amount are required.

IMPORTANT: All requirements and grant checklist items must be complete to be eligible for funding consideration. All approved applicants must schedule a pre-construction meeting with a member of the WBDA board prior to commencing work. All permits and plans should be in place at this point. Furthermore, a final inspection of the work must be done by a WBDA board member prior to reimbursement and prior to contractor payment. Documentation of approvals and/or permits will be required for grant payment.

All applications are due by **SEPTEMBER 13th** at **4:00PM** to 55 West Maiden Street Washington, PA 15301.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT GUIDELINES

- Only fully completed applications with required attachments will be accepted. Both property and business owners are eligible. Business owners will need signed approval of the property owner.
- Applications will only be approved for property owners who are current on all Downtown assessment payments (WBDA Special Services District Assessment) for **each** property owned within the Downtown Business District. Applicant must also be current on all City of Washington property, school, business privilege, and mercantile taxes on the property prior to approval.
- The structure in question must be located within the defined boundaries of the Downtown Business District (SSD)
 - The SSD has been defined as the designated area of Downtown Washington from the southern intersection of North Main and Walnut Streets extending south to the railroad track crossing on South Main Street, and East on Chestnut, Beau, Cherry, Wheeling and Maiden Streets to College Street, and West on Chestnut, Beau, Cherry, Wheeling and Maiden Streets to Franklin Street.
- All façade improvements must comply with City of Washington building codes and the historic review guidelines.
- ***The applicant must submit an application to the WBDA and the application must be approved by the WBDA Board before work can start. Any work that has commenced prior to this approval will not be eligible for reimbursement under this program.***
- The Director of the WBDA will notify all applicants of the acceptance or refusal of an application. Accepted applications must complete a signed grant agreement before starting work.
- All façade improvements must be completed and final paperwork with related paid invoices and proof of payment turned into the WBDA office upon completion of the agreed scope of work.

- Distribution of grant money to the property or business owner(s) will occur only after the designated work is satisfactorily completed and all related paperwork (including paid invoices and a color image of the façade), is accepted at the WBDA office. A post- construction inspection must also be completed by a WBDA board member in order for money to be disbursed.
- New businesses (less than 2 years in the business district) may be subject to submitting a business plan along with their facade grant application.
- WBDA reserves the right to photograph and document façade improvements for future use.
- All work must be completed by July 30, 2025 or such date as agreed upon by the committee.

Applicant Initials: _____ Date: ____/____/____

PART I – APPLICANT INFORMATION

APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER

Name of Applicant: _____ Telephone: _____
 _____ Email: _____

_____ Mailing
 Address: _____

IF TENANT, PLEASE PROVIDE

Name of Building Owner _____ Telephone: _____
 _____ Owner's Email: _____

_____ Owner's Mailing Address: _____

If you are a tenant, please provide a letter of support/approval for application and work to be completed written by property owner, on letterhead, with signature.

PROPERTY TO BE IMPROVED

Property Address:

_____ Washington, PA

15301 Property Parcel #:

_ Business(es) at
Property: _____

Current Use of Building:

Ground Floor: _____ Upper Floor(s):

Proposed Use

Ground Floor: _____ Upper Floor(s):

PART II – REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

- Two (2) color photos of current conditions of the property (can be emailed to shana@downtownwashingtonpa.com)
- Proof of payment for all related city taxes and assessments
 - Business Privilege/Mercantile Tax
 - City/School Tax
 - Special Services Assessment
- Letter of Approval from Property Owner for tenant work, if applicable

PART III - GRANT QUESTIONS

1. In detail, please describe all work to be completed during your facade renovation including building parts, materials, colors, and overall scope

of work that is relevant to the project. Please include/attach any related renderings, drawings, or samples related to your façade work. Use additional sheets if necessary.

2. How will this project improve your block and the overall appearance to our downtown?

3. Timeline:

Estimated Start Date: ___/___/___ Estimated Completion Date: ___/___/___

4. Do you anticipate any future building or façade improvements? If yes, describe.

PART IV - PROJECT BUDGET

Work	Item	\$ Amount	Note

Project Total: \$ _____ **Grant**

Request Total: \$ _____

Please attach all related bids, quotes, and other documentation to support your budget costs.

FINAL CHECKLIST

___ FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT GUIDELINES (Initialed and Dated) ___ PART I – APPLICANT INFORMATION

___ PART II – REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS (Photos, Proof of Taxes/
Assessment, Letter if applicable)

___ PART III - GRANT QUESTIONS

___ PART IV - PROJECT BUDGET + Related Bids, Quotes,
Renderings, etc ___ Read & Review of DESIGN GUIDELINES
(following attachment)

DISCLAIMER I hereby acknowledge that I understand the terms and conditions of the WBDA’s Façade Improvement Program, and this signature so indicates my intent to meet the specified terms if the application is approved.

I understand further that, upon grant authorization, this project is approved for payment only in strict accordance with the Design Committee approved design plans which are attached to this application and hereby made part of this agreement.

I further understand that change orders are not eligible without prior written approval from the Design Committee and that failure to comply with this agreement may jeopardize receipt of grant funds.

Applicant/Property Owner Signature Date

_____ / ____ / ____

Tenant Signature (If Applicable) Date

_____ / ____ / ____

**WASHINGTON BUSINESS DISTRICT AUTHORITY
FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM DESIGN
GUIDELINES**

The WBDA recommends the use of the “Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Buildings - Storefronts.”

Design guidelines are recommendations to help a community direct the way it is developing and to guide it toward a future stated goal. Guidelines also allow the city and its residents to work together more effectively as new developments and construction are proposed in the designated area. These guidelines have been developed to help preserve the existing built environment, and to aid the WBDA and its Design Committee in working with new proposals. Guidelines provide consistency and avoid arbitrary design, thereby giving the tools and advice needed to integrate new construction and remodeling into the Special Services District (SSD).

The intent is to establish guidelines, which will enhance the environment through basic design principles, such as building texture, color, rhythm, and pattern. Improving the visual appearance of Downtown Washington increases *Community Pride* and is critical to the success of the area as are improving economic performance, strengthening public participation, recruiting new businesses, and expanding parking and “green” spaces.

The procedure is established to encourage individual identity for specific uses and structures; to encourage a district community; to enhance property values within the city; and to insure that the location and configuration of the structures are visually harmonious with their sites and with surrounding sites and structures.

STOREFRONT DESIGN HISTORY

The traditional commercial storefront can be considered the most important element that sets apart the Downtown Washington *character*. When originally constructed, our downtown buildings shared a consistency in design and proportion that was and is still important in conveying how our downtown is perceived by the customer seeking goods and services. A visually unified downtown is a powerful tool for attracting people – visitors, customers, employers and employees – to Washington, as well as to the individual stores, galleries, restaurants, and services.

Changes have occurred to our buildings during the years in response to various merchandising trends, technology, natural disasters, fire, and changing ownership. In most cases, the changes affected the commercial first floor storefront area, while the upper façade remained intact. In some of these cases,

the original storefronts may still be in place, but are covered or in need of maintenance and/or repair.

The traditional commercial façade consists of three parts: the storefronts with an entrance and large display windows; the upper floor masonry façade with regularly spaced windows; and the decorative cornice that caps the building. These components may appear in various shapes, sizes, and styles, but the result is essentially consistent with the traditional façade. In the Downtown Washington Special Services District (SSD), the typical façade is two to three story masonry construction.

DESIGN

The traditional Downtown Washington building façade has a well-defined opening that the original storefront filled. The opening is bound on each side by piers, which were usually constructed of masonry. It is bounded on top by the storefront cornice, which is the structural member supporting the upper façade and bounded below by the sidewalk.

The storefront was composed almost entirely of windows. The large glass opening served to display goods the business had to sell, as well as to allow natural light deep into the store, thus minimizing the need for artificial light sources.

The visual transparency of the storefront is also important because it is part of the overall proportion system of the façade. The proportion of the window to wall areas in the traditional façade calls for more glass and less wall space at the storefront level, balanced by more wall space and less glass on the upper façade. When these buildings were constructed, the importance of maintaining these proportions so that Downtown Washington would be unified by a consistent design theme was recognized, thus making it an attractive place for customers to do business.

IMPROVEMENTS

In considering improvements to the storefronts, it is very important that the original opening be recognized and maintained. The remodeled storefront should be designed to fit inside the original opening and not extend beyond it. Attempt to obtain old photographs of your building to compare with the current structure. Identify elements that have been changed or covered over.

Key points to consider:

- ● The storefront should be composed almost entirely of glass.
- ● The entry should be maintained and restored in its original location and configuration. If the original entry is gone, the new entry should be designed and placed with consideration to traditional design themes and their relationship to the overall building and symmetry.
- ● Transom windows that are covered or blocked should be reopened and restored.
- ● Storefront bulkheads should be restored or renovated.
- ● Original elements should be restored, such as columns, cornices, and entry doors and lighting fixtures.
- ● Signage should be integrated into the storefront design.
- ● Awnings, if required, should be integrated into the storefront design.
- ● The storefront design should be true to the time period in which the building was constructed.

WINDOWS

Windows are an important component of the façade; they open the building with light and offer a proportional continuity between the upper floors and the storefront. Often deteriorated windows have been inappropriately replaced or simply neglected, thereby diminishing the overall character of the building. Every effort should be made to retain and preserve each window, its function, and any decorative details still remaining.

Protect and maintain the wood and metal of the window and its surrounds with appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning or rust removal. All bare wood should be primed with high quality oil or latex based primer and painted with one or two coats of latex or oil based paint. A gloss finish is preferable, being more dirt resistant and easier to clean.

Lose or broken window panes can be fixed easily by a qualified glazier. Make windows weather tight by caulking and installing or replacing all weather stripping.

Check the overall condition of the window materials and window features to determine if repairs are required. Check all the wood parts of the window for decay, cracks, or splitting. Pay particular attention to the sills and window sash bottoms where water may collect. Repair window frames and sashes by patching, splicing, or reinforcing. Replace all parts that are deteriorating or missing. Cracks should be filled with caulk, wood putty, or epoxy reinforcement and the surface sanded. Do not replace the entire window when limited replacement of parts is appropriate. If necessary, consider using replacement windows that are energy efficient.

If a window is missing or deteriorated beyond repair, replace the window with one that matches the building's original window. Use overall form and any detailing still evident as a guide. Always fill the entire window opening, even if part of the opening has previously been filled in.

Windows filled in with brickwork or other closure materials should be reopened and restored to their original dimensions.

WALLS

- ● Masonry walls should not be covered with siding.

- ● Masonry walls shall not be covered with stucco or stucco like finishes without exhausting all possibilities of repairing and painting original wall material.

- ● When stucco and stucco like materials must be used, their applications should be carefully designed to represent the material being covered. For example, cement

plaster stucco covering brick could be divided into brick size shapes with standard width joints between the bricks. In a less representational situation, the applied stucco could be divided into sections, which would indicate floor levels so that an observer would be able to perceive the number of stories in the upper floors.

- Walls which are unaltered should be repaired where necessary and cleaned to restore the luster of the original material.

DOORS

The entry into a storefront often can be the focus of the façade. Maintaining a traditional entry door or pair of doors can contribute to the overall character of the façade. Traditionally, the entrance door was made of wood with a large glass panel. Every effort should be made to maintain and repair an original door.

If a door is to be replaced, consider one of the following options:

- ● Have a new door built with the same design and proportions as the original.
- ● Find a manufactured wood or steel door that resembles the traditional storefront door.
- ● Use a standard aluminum commercial door with wide stiles and a dark anodized or baked enamel finish.
- ● Avoid doors that are residential in character or decorated with molding or window grilles.

SIGNS

Signs are a vital part of any commercial street in calling attention to the individual stores and in defining the image of the overall business area as well.

When a streetscape is cluttered with too many signs or signs that are too large or randomly placed the result is an impression of confusion. When

signs are kept to the right proportions, are appropriately placed, and are designed to be compatible with the facades, the result is a streetscape which gives a sense of harmony and order to the shoppers it attracts.

Placement of signage

- ● Wall signs should be mounted above the show windows and should not cover the architectural details of the storefront.
- ● Show window signs can be mounted or painted directly on the glass or onto a clear acrylic panel suspended behind the glass.
- ● Window signs should be placed slightly higher than eye level.
- ● Store hour signs are best when placed on or near entrance doors.
- ● Store addresses can be applied to or painted on the transom over the entry door.

Size

- ● A wall sign can extend the width of the storefront, between the columns or piers. Its height generally should not exceed 2 1/2 feet.
- ● A show window sign should not cover more than 20% of the glass. Quantity
- ● In general, a shop front should not have more than two permanent signs, one primary, like a wall sign, and a secondary one, like a window sign.

Lettering

- ● A sign should be lettered with a maximum of two different letter styles
- ● Letter styles should be selected for readability and should relate to the type of business

represented.

- ● Generally, letters for wall signs should be about 8” to 15” and occupy approximately 65% of the sign board.
- ● Lettering for show windows should be a maximum of 6” high.
Message
- ● Signs should be kept simple, giving the minimum amount of information needed to identify the business and its main product or service.
- ● A sign is not meant to serve as an advertisement for every item the store carries. Colors
- ● Sign colors should compliment the building and storefront colors.
- ● Colors should be selected to reflect the type of business.
- ● Letters and background must have enough contrast for easy reading.
Lighting
- ● Signs can be externally illuminated with hooded incandescent or fluorescent fixtures.
- ● Individual neon-tube letters can also be effectively used.
- ● Internally lit sign boxes should be avoided. If one is already installed and cannot be removed, it can be made less offensive by keeping the background opaque so that only the letters are lit.

- ● Flashing signs are distracting and detract from the positive image of the commercial streetscape and should not be used.

WBDA and its Design Committee will review the signs for conformity in the external material composition, exterior structural design, external appearance and size with similar advertising or information media used in the architectural period of the district and a permit granted thereon.

PAINTING

If you are considering painting the outside of your structure there are some very important facts to consider before you begin. First, it is a general rule that limestone, brick or other masonry should not be painted. Brick masonry, if not already painted, should be cleaned by the gentlest method possible and

re-pointed if necessary. Never sandblast as it pits the masonry and loosens the mortar, causing damage that can never be repaired. Additionally, if the structure has already been painted and the paint is peeling, it should be wire brushed prior to painting.

Primers provide a base coat for a fresh layer of paint. Unfinished or freshly scraped surfaces should be primed. Careful preparation is essential to a paint job. Latex and oil base paints are often incompatible. Applying one directly over the other can result in excessive peeling.

Paint Removal

Four basic alternatives for paint removal are:

- ● Hand scraping, which can be tedious, makes sense for small areas.
- ● Sanding, which removes part of the actual surface along with layers of old paint is often appropriate for large unadorned areas.
- ● Burning paint off with torches or heat lamps can be very effective. However, it runs the risk of

scorching or burning the wood.

- ● Chemical remover is probably the safest and easiest method of paint removal. They are appropriate for both plain and ornamental surfaces. The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation* provides information regarding methods for approaching preservation. Following appropriate repair and restoration techniques ensures a quality, durable storefront finish and eases maintenance needs over time.

COLORS

The storefront colors are an important component of the overall continuity with the traditional storefront colors given preference for the overall design. WBDA will approve paint color for all buildings.

Selection of color on an old structure is one of the final steps in the process of repair, renovation and maintenance.

The color of your structure should be related to the colors of the other structures on the block. Generally no more than three colors should be used on the façade; either natural or painted brick counts as one color. Trim and details may be painted either in a color which contrasts with the walls, or you may choose a monochromatic scheme using a lighter or darker shade of the wall color. The color scheme should be used consistently throughout both upper and lower portions of the building. Several color combinations are on file with the Main Street Manager who is happy to help you select your colors.

LIGHTING

Lighting has two purposes:

1. Illuminating the business
2. Creating a sense of safety on the street

Lighting creates a feeling of security for the passerby and is an important factor in a commercial setting. A variety of light sources and locations should be considered in carrying out storefront renovations. Sign lights, display window lights, architectural lighting, and general area light is encouraged to advertise the business, highlight building features, and to illuminate dark corners of the

property or street. In some cases, where general street lighting is sufficient, a storefront may require minimal illumination.

Discouraged

- ● Flashing, pulsating, dynamic, or moving lights
- ● Lights which glare onto the street, public way or adjacent properties
- ● Domestic style fixtures or fixtures that do not correspond to the character of the building. For example “carriage lamp” style fixtures.
- ● Neon tubing bordering display windows
Preferred
- ● Street lighting typically provides general exterior illumination. Where this lighting is inadequate, providing an even level of illumination may be desired.
- ● Indirect lighting is encouraged.
- ● General Interior lighting of display areas help prevent break-ins by allowing both police and passersby to see the activity inside the store.
- ● The scale and style of the light fixtures should be in keeping with the storefront design.
- ● Decorative fixtures such as sconces and general building lighting accent storefronts and enhance a building’s architectural details.

- ● Lighting should attract attention to signs, store information, or building details but not to itself.
- ● Supplemental security lighting such as floodlights should be hidden or shielded to avoid glare.

SECURITY

Storefront security is paramount in any retail environment and any neighborhood. However, elements such as metal bars and grates reflect a feeling of fear and of a crime-plagued area. These perceptions, whether real or not, result in a decrease in popularity and prosperity of the commercial zone. Solid grates are a liability for several reasons: they detract from the neighborhood quality of the street, they promote a perception of fear, and they conceal the interior from view. Grates are best built into the interior of the storefront ceiling where they are concealed during the day.

There are a variety of ways of securing a business without evidence of fortifications. Large, transparent windows and doors allow pedestrians and traffic to visually monitor safety. Security measures can also be enhanced through discrete solutions such as quality locks, internal alarms and notification systems, laminated safety glass and community watch efforts.

The following types of storefront security measures are prohibited in Downtown Washington

- ● Solid roll-down grates
- ● Grates mounted on the exterior of a storefront.
- ● Horizontally closing, scissor type gates
- ● Open mesh grates
- ● Security bars on the exterior of windows and doors.

- ● Replacing or covering glass with Plexiglas.
Acceptable
- ● The installation of electronic alarm systems, especially combined with laminated safety glass, provides a reliable security means.
- ● Lighting of both buildings and streets to deter crime.
- ● Decorative metal gates to secure a vestibule area.
- ● Removal of exterior roll-down grates and grate boxes is strongly recommended.

AWNINGS

Storefront awnings and canopies are both functional and decorative. They provide sun control for displayed merchandise, shelter for pedestrians, and an additional location for signage. Awnings also offer a tremendous range of color appeal to compliment the storefront and streetscape.

Whether the awning or canopy is a fixed or retractable type, select a soft, weather treated canvas or vinyl covering. Metal awnings are totally out of character with the historic qualities of the district. Be sure they are not oversized and out of proportion. They should fit within the storefront area and not cover columns or cornices.

STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

“Rehabilitation means the process of returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values.”

The following “Standards for Rehabilitation” shall be used by the Secretary of the Interior when determining if a rehabilitation project qualifies as “certified rehabilitation” pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976 and the Revenue Act of 1978. These standards are a section of the Secretary’s “Standards for Historic

Preservation Projects” and appear in Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1208 (formerly 36 CFR Part 67).

1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, or site and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purpose.
2. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure or site and its environment
3. shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.
4. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.
5. Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right and this significance shall be recognized and respected.
6. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.
7. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different

architectural elements from other buildings or structures.