



FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The Village of Plainfield Facade Improvement Program is designed to promote the continued use and maintenance of commercial buildings in the downtown area by helping property owners and tenants rehabilitate and restore eligible structures. Reimbursement grants are provided to owners or tenants in recognition of the positive impact that individual building improvements can have on the overall appearance, quality, and vitality of the downtown.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for a Facade Improvement Program reimbursement grant, a building must be used in whole or in part for commercial purposes and must be located within the target area. Retail uses are preferred. The target area coincides with the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district located in the historic downtown.

Property owners or business tenants who will make at least \$1,000 in qualifying improvements are eligible to receive a matching grant. (A description of qualifying and ineligible improvements is provided under the “Eligible Improvements” section of this document.) If property owners or business tenants were to nominate their property for landmark status or create/join a historic district, this program and the Rehabilitation Grant Program could be applied for simultaneously. See requirements for the Rehabilitation Grant Program for more information. Both grant programs would be reviewed jointly, thus the review and approval process would be determined by the more restrictive program.

FUNDING GUIDELINES

Grants are available to make certain improvements to a building’s facade. A facade is defined as any building or structural elevation fronting a public roadway or viewable from a right-of-way (including alley and courtyard facades), for the purposes of this program. The grant reimburses up to 50% of the total project’s construction cost, not to exceed \$150,000 per project. Rebates and other forms of economic incentives may be utilized as part of the grant reimbursement at the Village’s discretion. Funding amount can be influenced by the scope of the project, facade orientation, building use, and other factors.

While architectural services by a licensed architect are encouraged, they are not required to participate in the program. The Village reserves the right to require the services of an architect for project with a significant scope of work, historic significance, or otherwise. If the Village approves the project, the architect may provide bidding and construction plans and documents, as well as construction supervision. Only architectural services directly related to the approved facade improvements will be reimbursed. The facade grant program will provide reimbursement of 50% of Village-approved architectural services not to exceed 10 percent of the eligible construction costs, which amount is in addition to the \$150,000 funding cap for reimbursement of construction costs.

Should the Facade Improvement and Rehabilitation Grants both be approved, the matching requirement of the Rehabilitation Grant Program will be waived. The maximum grant available from the Rehabilitation Grant Program will be the maximum reimbursable amount, unless specified otherwise in the program and subject to Village Board approval.

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Interested parties should schedule a pre-application meeting with staff at (815) 439-2824 prior to preparing any materials for submittal. Following said meeting, the applicant may complete and submit a grant application form, available on the Village's website or in the Planning Department office. Submittal requirements are set forth on the application form, including the requirement for two bids to be submitted for each item in the scope of work. The Village may enlist the services of an architect or construction manager to provide an independent review of the bids to provide an opinion as to whether the proposed costs are fair and reasonable. These expenses would be incurred by the Village and paid from the TIF District. In addition, staff may request material samples to gain a better understanding of the proposed colors. Information provided by the applicant will be used as the basis for preparation of the staff report to the Village Board.

The Village retains the right to approve an entire request, to approve portions of a request, suggest and/or ask for changes/additions to a request before approving, or to deny any request or portion thereof. Staff will prepare a report offering a brief introduction to the project, a review of the various aspects of the proposal, and a suggested recommendation based on an evaluation of the proposed work against the Village's Downtown Design Guidelines. For projects with a significant cost or scope of work, Village staff may coordinate with the Village's Advisory Task Force on Economic Development to form a recommendation based on project's potential contribution to the TIF district's goals. The report will then be presented to the Village Board for approval.

Every project will be evaluated for its preservation value, extent/scope of work proposed, and its potential to contribute to the program purpose. The staff report will be presented and consider various aspects in the following method:

1. Introduction to the project and proposal
2. Analysis of proposal
 - a. Preservation value
 - i. *Service of the building*
 - ii. *Historic significance*
(While historic preservation is not the primary goal with the facade improvement program, it is important to consider the historic character of the building. Historic significance will be based on the historic resources surveys available in the Planning Department.)
 - b. Extent/scope of work proposed
 - i. *Discuss each aspect of the project*
(Utilize photographs and descriptions submitted by the applicant to explain and evaluate the project. Properties with historic designations may require a COA.)
 - ii. *Evaluate adherence to the Downtown Design Guidelines* (Available for purchase at the Village or on-line at www.plainfield-il.org)
 - c. Economic contribution to the program purpose

- i. *Building use following improvement project*
 - a. Contribute to economic vitality of downtown (i.e. retail)
 - b. Historical character
 - ii. *Impact on block/neighborhood*
 3. Summary
 - a. Highlight any aspects of the project that are desirable or unique
 - b. Funding proposal
 4. Recommendation

PROCESSING TIMELINES

Upon receipt of a complete application, with all required attachments, a petition will be scheduled for the next available Village Board meeting. Typically scheduling occurs within 30 days. The Village Board meets in regular session the first and third Monday of each month. Concurrent applications for the Facade Improvement and Rehabilitation Grant Programs require a review by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) prior to the Village Board. Typically scheduling for the HPC occurs within 30 days, upon receipt of completed submittals. The HPC meets the second and fourth Thursday of each month.

Upon Village approval, the applicant and Village enter into a formal agreement, called a Facade Improvement Agreement, establishing the scope of work and approved reimbursement amount. The Agreement is signed by the Village and the applicant, after the Village Board has approved the project. Grant project work may commence after the Facade Improvement Agreement is signed and necessary building permits are obtained.

GRANT REIMBURSEMENT

If costs exceed the original estimates, the property owner or tenant will be responsible for the full amount of the excess. The Village cannot reimburse more than the total amount specified in the Agreement. Any work commenced prior to Village Board approval **and** signing of the Facade Improvement Agreement will not be eligible for reimbursement funding, unless after-the-fact approval is granted by the Village Board. No assurance is given that after-the-fact approval will be granted. The applicant has one year to complete the work from the date of approval. Owners or lessees may request a six-month extension provided there is a demonstrated hardship.

Grant reimbursement will occur upon completion of the improvements and after proof of payment has been received. If the applicant is doing his/her own labor, funding will be reimbursed only for material costs. The Village may enlist the services of an architect or construction manager to provide an independent review of the construction costs to provide an opinion as to whether the costs are commensurate with prevailing construction costs and consistent with the contractor bids. These expenses would be incurred by the Village and paid from the TIF District.

Grants will be structured as an interest-free loan which will be forgiven in equal increments over a three-year period, provided the façade improvements completed pursuant to the grant are completed and maintained during the three-year loan period. In the event the improvements are not maintained, the Village could require re-payment of the outstanding amount or an amount

necessary to restore the improvements, or alternatively, the Village could place a lien on the property for said amount.

Once completed, the applicant must maintain, and may not alter or change the improvements for a period of five years unless a request for modification is presented to the Village Board and approved prior to commencing such work. The Village will not reimburse for repair, replacement, or other alteration to work completed through the façade improvement program for a period of seven (7) years.

Reimbursement grants are subject to Federal and State taxes, and are reported to the Internal Revenue Service on Form 1099. Property owners and tenants should consult their tax advisor for tax liability information.

ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

A list of the eligible and ineligible improvements is provided on the following page. Contact Planning Staff at (815) 439-2824 with inquiries or to schedule a pre-application meeting.