



# Façade Improvement Grant Program Application Policies and Procedures

*Revised February 21, 2020*  
*Revised September 16, 2020*

City of Abilene  
Planning and Development Services Department  
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## **A. Background**

On April 25, 2019 the Abilene City Council adopted Resolution Number 93-2019 creating the Abilene Façade Improvement Grant Program. The intent of the program is to provide technical and financial assistance to property owners seeking to renovate or restore their exterior building facades. The program is designed to have a positive impact on properties in need of revitalization, resulting in the overall improvement of the appearance and aesthetics of commercial buildings within the Central Business District. It is important to note that the program is reimbursement-based. Further, it is not the intent of the program to subsidize necessary improvements resulting from building code violations. If awarded a Façade Improvement Program Grant, any deviation from the approved project may result in the total or partial withdrawal of grant funding.

The Façade Improvement Grant Program provides fifty percent (50%) matching grants not to exceed \$15,000.00 per application. Grant funds awarded through the program focus on exterior work on buildings and storefronts within the Central Business District that are visible to the public. No grants will be awarded for previously performed work. All proposed work will be reviewed based upon the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and review criteria that may include, but not be limited to, compatibility, architectural design, and consistency with other façade improvement projects within the immediate area. Proposed projects may include the restoration of architectural details, upgraded windows and doors, signage, and lighting. Applicants will be responsible for hiring licensed professionals to prepare conceptual and final project designs.

## **B. Definitions**

The following definitions shall apply to the terms used in these guidelines:

Applicant: The property owner or authorized agent signing the application for a Façade Improvement Grant.

Central Business District: The area located between North 10<sup>th</sup> Street and South 7<sup>th</sup> Street, having an eastern border of Treadaway Boulevard and a western border of Grape and Butternut Streets.

Construction Costs: The cost of construction materials and installation labor. All other associated costs are deemed excluded, including but not exclusively, the following costs: design, construction document preparation, bidding, sweat equity and construction financing.

Eligible Improvements: The improvements identified as eligible in Section D herein.

Façade: The portion of the building parallel to the primary right-of-way as determined by the Planning and Development Services Department.

Landmarks Commission: The advisory board for grant applications associated with buildings designated as historic and/or those located within historic overlay zoning districts.

Notice to Proceed: A written notice from the Planning and Development Services Department authorizing the applicant to begin construction.

Property: The physical lot and/or building to which improvements are being made.

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) Number 2: A reinvestment zone created by the City of Abilene pursuant to Chapter 311 of the Texas Tax Code, as amended. The purpose of the zone is to promote development or redevelopment within the zone.

**C. Eligibility Criteria**

The following criteria must be met in order to participate in the Façade Improvement Grant Program:

1. Applicants must be owners of buildings located within the TIRZ boundary of the Central Business District;
2. Applicants must be current on all municipal taxes at the time of application;
3. Applicants must not have any City liens filed against any property owned by the Applicant, including but not limited to code enforcement liens or tax liens;
4. Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code, and zoning requirements;
5. Applicants must understand that the overall objective of the program is to improve the exterior appearance, visibility, and presentation of a property. The City has the discretion to decline acceptance of an application and suggest enhancements/improvements that may improve chances of future approval;
6. Buildings proposed for grant funding cannot be new construction. Eligibility of site improvements associated with new construction may be determined by the Director of Planning and Development Services. Historic buildings will be given priority when deciding grant funding allocation.

## D. Design Principles and Guidelines

Improvements to be funded by the program must be compatible with the character and architecture of the individual building as well as meeting City standards with regards to latest construction and design trends. Buildings with historically-significant architectural qualities are strongly encouraged to restore and maintain these features. Improvements for buildings not having such architectural features should be carefully considered and be seen as an opportunity to substantially enhance the appearance of the buildings and their associated streetscapes. The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* should be used as a guide when considering any work on a historically-significant structure.

### 1. Eligible Façade Improvements:

- a. Restoration of architectural details in historically-contributing or historically-significant buildings, and the removal of elements which cover architectural details.
- b. Window replacement and window framing visible from the street which is appropriately scaled to the building.
- c. New signage, including monument, wall, and awning signage. All signage must comply with Chapter 4, Article 2, Division 8, Sign Regulations of the Land Development Code.
- d. Lighting which illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of the building façade.
- e. Awnings or canopies.
- f. Curbing, irrigation, approved landscaping or other landscaping features attached to the building where appropriate.
- g. Cleaning, painting or re-siding of the building.
- h. Resurfacing and/or re-stripping of parking lots visible from the street.
- i. New storefront construction, appropriately scaled within an existing building.
- j. Other items which may not be listed above that would improve the building façade.

### 2. Ineligible Improvements/Expenses:

- a. Exterior improvements located on the sides or rear of the building not visible from a public right-of-way
- b. Interior improvements
- c. Roofing
- d. Playground or recreational equipment
- e. Structural changes
- f. Burglar bars
- g. Security Alarm System
- h. "Sweat Equity"

- i. Furniture
- j. Architectural or other professional fees
- k. Asbestos testing, removal, abatement, or remediation
- l. Improvements for which insurance funds are received
- m. Prior Improvements: Alterations and improvements made prior to receiving a “Notice to Proceed” are not eligible for reimbursement

**E. Financial Assistance**

Funding offered is in the form of a matching grant in which the City of Abilene reimburses the applicant fifty percent (50%) of the total construction costs, up to a \$15,000.00 maximum match award. Architectural design fees may not be included in the total cost of eligible improvements. In addition, the City of Abilene agrees to waive building permits fees on approved façade improvement projects undertaken through this program.

Matching funds may be in the form of other financial aid (grant or loan) received from other agencies and/or banks, but may not be “in-kind”. The City of Abilene will only provide reimbursement after the applicant submits all required documentation indicating payment has been made for the work performed.

No applicant, applicant agent, representative, or tenant shall be entitled to receive grant approval on the same property if requested within five (5) years from the date a previous grant was awarded. No more than \$15,000.00 per property will be awarded within a five (5) year period.

**F. Procedures**

All prospective applicants must follow the procedures in the order outlined below:

1. All applicants are encouraged to meet with Planning and Development Services Department staff for an initial pre-application submittal conference.
2. Applicant must submit a completed application and all required attachments and supporting materials to Planning and Development Department Services staff for processing.
3. If proposed project involves an historic building or one included in an historic overlay zoning district, the application will be forwarded to the Abilene Landmarks Commission for review and recommendation.
4. After the application has been submitted to the Planning and Development Services Department, a meeting will be held with the applicant on-site at the subject property to review the application and discuss the project.

5. As a condition of the grant application and in consideration of the opportunity to apply for a grant, the applicant consents and shall allow the City of Abilene to perform inspections to determine that the grant, if awarded, will not be used for construction to any building that is not in compliance with City of Abilene Building Codes and related ordinances which are applicable to the construction proposed in the application.
6. The application will then be reviewed and action to either approve or deny the application will be made by the Director of Planning and Development Services. In addition to using the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, other review criteria may include, but not be limited to, compatibility, architectural design, and consistency with other façade improvement projects within the immediate area.
7. In the event an application is denied, the applicant will not be allowed to re-apply for the same project for a period of one (1) year from the date of the original application. An applicant that submitted an application that was denied grant funding may appeal the denial to the City Manager within fourteen (14) days of the date of application denial.
8. Upon application approval, the City will require that the applicant sign an Applicant Agreement and Certification.
9. Upon execution of the agreement, the City will send the applicant a written "Notice to Proceed." Any work completed prior to receiving the "Notice to Proceed" will not be reimbursed through the program by the City.
10. An applicant has thirty (30) days from the date of the Notice to Proceed to initiate construction of approved improvements. The applicant must provide Planning and Development Services Department staff with copies of all building permits and certifications associated with the facade project.
11. On the application, the applicant must provide the dates of when the contractor will begin and complete the project. The project must be completed within six (6) months of receiving the Notice to Proceed. If the project is delayed by weather or unforeseen circumstances, extra time may be requested and submitted to the Planning and Development Services Department for approval.
12. The contractor shall construct project improvements as specified in the approved application. Any changes to designs and construction plans approved as part of the application must be reviewed and approved by Planning and Development Services Department staff.

13. Upon project completion, the applicant will notify Planning and Development Services Department staff within thirty (30) days that the project is complete. City staff will then conduct all necessary inspections to ensure improvements comply with the approved application and all necessary building and zoning codes.
14. When the entire project has been satisfactorily completed and reviewed, the applicant shall provide the Planning and Development Services Department with copies of all paid invoices for a single payment reimbursement of the approved funding.
15. In order to receive reimbursement under the program, all receipts for work must be submitted to the Planning and Development Services Department within thirty (30) days of completing the project.

**G. Termination**

The City of Abilene has the right to terminate any agreement under the grant program if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines in accordance with the Façade Improvement Grant Agreement.

# Facade Improvement Grant Program Application

*Please complete and return along with all required attachments to the Planning and Development Services Department, City Hall, 555 Walnut Street, Suite 100*

Applicant Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Building Owner (If different from applicant) \_\_\_\_\_

Building Name \_\_\_\_\_ Building Address \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Work (check all that apply)

    Façade \_\_\_\_ Signage \_\_\_\_ Awnings \_\_\_\_ Parking/Lighting \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_

Summary of Planned Improvements for Façade Improvement Grant (please provide a separate one (1) page narrative describing in detail the proposed work/modifications)

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List Contractor Proposals and Total Amounts (please attach original proposals):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL COST OF PROPOSED FAÇADE PROJECT:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**AMOUNT OF FAÇADE GRANT REQUESTED:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Not to exceed 50% of total cost up to \$10,000.00)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant/Owner Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Applicant/Owner Name



## Required Attachments

Proof of ownership: Warranty deed or legal occupancy, such as a lease

Notarized statement from property owner allowing participation in the program (*applicable to business owners who are not the property owners*)

Driver's license

Proof of insurance on the property

Proof of property tax payment

Color photographs of existing structure

Two (2) contractor bids

Proposed scope of work:

- One (1) page narrative describing in detail the proposed work/modifications
- Printed and digital set of architectural drawings
- Product information
- Color samples
- Other material(s) that would make it helpful to understand your project

## Applicant Agreement & Certification

- I have read and fully understand the *Façade Improvement Grant Program Application Policies and Procedures*.
- I understand that any false or misleading information provided at any time during the application process may lead to program ineligibility.
- I understand that any deviation from the requirements set forth in the agreement may result in the ineligibility of reimbursement from the City of Abilene.
- I agree to start the project within thirty (30) days of receiving the Notice to Proceed.
- I agree to complete the project within six (6) months of receiving the Notice to Proceed.
- I agree to submit all receipts of expenditures for the work specified on the application within thirty (30) days of project completion.
- I agree to indemnify and hold harmless the City of Abilene and its employees, directors, officials, and other duly authorized agents from any and all claims and liabilities arising out of or connected to my participation in this program and the ensuing façade improvement work, including any personal injuries or damages to any person(s) or property, loss to or interruption of business by the program participant and participant’s tenants and neighbors. This agreement extends to the program participant’s employees, duly authorized agents and successors.

The undersigned hereby represents and certified to the best of his/her knowledge and belief that the information contained in this statement and any exhibits or attachments hereto are true and complete and accurately describe the proposed project, and the undersigned agrees to promptly inform the City of Abilene of any changes in the proposed project which may occur.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date