

# WRCRF PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE FACADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT GUIDELINES

## INTRODUCTION

The WRCRF Physical Improvements Committee Facade Improvement Grant Program provides grants of up to \$2,500 available to commercial property owners or business owners with property owner approval to encourage restoration of building facades and enhance the appearance of storefronts in the Borough. The facade improvement grants are intended to stimulate private investment in the overall look and image of our downtown architecture and to foster image-making improvements to the Borough's commercial properties.

An attractive image is of critical importance to the success of any commercial area. Facade and storefront improvements are proven to be one of the most effective approaches to enhancing a commercial area's image and economic vitality. A businesses store front is their calling card every single day and often times a customer will either choose to go in or not go into a business. Today, as retail competes with the internet for sales, store fronts need to be more entertaining and engaging in order to drive sales.

## ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

-All grant applications will be accepted for any commercial property within the corporate limits of the Borough of West Reading. However, priority consideration will be given to commercial properties located within the designated target area, West Reading Borough's Core Commercial District.

## ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

-Major maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, restoration and creative renovations of commercial storefronts and facades are eligible activities.

Projects must achieve visible results that enhance the commercial image, marketability and economic vitality, while presenting the building in its most appealing form.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

Project activities must conform to The West Reading Borough Zoning Ordinance

## TO APPLY

Applications may be obtained at the office of the Borough of West Reading, 500 Chestnut Street, West Reading, PA, 19611. Applications are also available online at [www.VisitWestReading.org](http://www.VisitWestReading.org).

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Funding and Administration of the Façade Improvement Grant Program is made possible by the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation. Grants are awarded in accordance with the WRCRF Physical Improvements Committee policies outlined herein and must be in conformance with all applicable state and local requirements.

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The WRCRF Physical Improvements Committee Façade Improvement Grant Program is intended to stimulate private investment in the Borough. The program seeks to restore and enhance our business facades and to foster image-making improvements to all commercial properties. Projects must achieve visible results that enhance West Reading Borough's image, marketability and economic vitality. Façade Improvement Grants have the following specific objectives.

- Enhance the visual appeal of businesses.
- Assist with the preservation of commercial buildings.
- Reduce or eliminate vacancies in West Reading Borough while promoting adaptive reuse of commercial buildings.

## ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Any person(s) or legal entity that owns or leases commercial buildings is eligible to apply. Applications by lessees/tenants require the consent of the property owner.

## PROGRAM GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES

All grant applications will be accepted for any commercial property within the corporate limits of the Borough of West Reading. However, priority consideration will be given to commercial properties located within the designated target area, West Reading Borough's Commercial and Core Commercial District.

**DEFINITION OF FAÇADE** For the purposes of these guidelines, the façade of a building is generally the front of a structure.

**ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES** A variety of commercial property improvements, including major maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, restoration and creative renovations of storefronts and facades are eligible activities. Eligible grant activities include:

- Signage – Maintenance, repair, removal and replacement. Signs must conform to the Borough of West Reading Building Code and the Zoning Ordinances for the Borough of West Reading.
- Types of signs recommended and their definitions are as follows:  
Flush Signs are meant to be viewed from a distance. They are visible when you are directly facing a structure's façade or from across the street. Flush signs should be placed on vacant panels above doors or display windows.  
Blade Signs are meant to attract the attention of pedestrians as they hang over the sidewalk. This type of sign is most effective on buildings abutting a sidewalk.

Freestanding Signs are appropriate when a structure is set back ten or more feet from the sidewalk. They alert people of a business when its structure may be partially hidden from pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

Window signs are applied on the inside of display windows or doors.

- Placement of signs should exhibit the following characteristics:

Use of display windows for creative signage.

Placement of signs and awnings may not cover or overwhelm architectural details such as cornices, trim, windows, decorative brickwork or other unique architectural features.

Orientation of signs should be geared to sidewalk pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Avoid extraneous information on signs and scale them to attract attention of vehicular traffic.

Limited signs on storefront display windows and doors. Signs should be sized and scaled to balance and should not hide or overwhelm the structure.

- Construction and Design guidelines for signs are as follows:

Sign material and design should be creative and show the character of the business. Backlit signs like strip malls use are discouraged.

Colors of signs and awnings should complement the overall color scheme of the building's façade and downtown streetscape.

Use artisan-crafted signs & quality sign materials manufactured specifically by the sign industry.

Use graphic elements and details of the building and architectural motifs as part of the sign design when feasible.

- Lettering should be kept to a minimum. The message should be brief and to the point. A logo or illustration can be substituted or included to communicate the nature of the business.

Multiple signs are to be avoided when one sign is sufficient so as to avoid confusion and distraction. Small secondary signs used for direction purposes are acceptable so long as they maintain the same design elements of the main identification sign. Freestanding sandwich signs advertising daily specials or events are acceptable so long as they maintain the same design elements of the main identification sign.

- Lighting for signs should adhere to the following:

They are to utilize external lighting fixtures rather than internally lit plastic features.

The use of flashing lights is not permitted.

Sign lighting should be directed to the sign itself and not used to light the surrounding area. Separate fixtures should be used for area lighting.

Lighting fixture design, if visible, should be consistent across the façade and compliment the architectural period of the building.

- Awnings – Installation, repair, and maintenance of fabric awnings in connection with real property improvements. Characteristics of approved awnings are as follows:

- Both fixed position and retractable awnings are acceptable.

- The name and nature of the business may be displayed on the front face and/or side facings so long as simple lettering designs are used and the message is brief.

- Awnings may be used on street level and upper stories so long as they are appropriate to and maintain the architectural style of the façade.
- Weather-treated canvas or natural looking materials are to be selected. Plastic or aluminum awnings are not appropriate.
- An awning should not be oversized; it should fit within the storefront.
- Brick and Stone Masonry – Structural repairs, cleaning, repointing, and painting.
- Architectural Metals – Repair, cleaning, refinishing, painting, duplication and restoration of exterior doors and installation of storm windows in conjunction with other significant façade improvements.
- Doors and Upper-Story Windows – Maintenance, repairs, replacement, and restoration of window sashes, exterior doors and installation of storm windows in conjunction with other significant façade improvements.
- Exterior Woodwork – Maintenance, repair, rehabilitation and restoration of sills, window and door frames, bulkheads, storefront and roof cornices, window hoods, decorative moldings.
- Storefronts – Removal of inappropriate coverings and additions, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of display and transom windows, lighting.
- Painting – Surface preparation, cleaning, painting.
- Design Assistance – Architectural, historic preservation, and graphic design services (note: professional design fees are reimbursable through the grant for up to 10% of eligible project costs).

Eligible activities will be evaluated based on appropriateness of design, impact on the program area and objectives.

#### INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- General and/or minor Maintenance Projects
- Plastic Signage and Electronic Digital Signage (e.g., LED and LCD signs)
- Roofing or Siding Repairs
- Sidewalks, Driveways, Parking Lot Repairs
- New Building Construction

## TERMS OF GRANT AWARD

The West Reading Borough Economic Revitalization Committee Façade Improvement Grants are part of a broader planned effort to restore the Borough's commercial image and character. Grant awards are calculated as follows: 50% funding of expenses up to \$5,000. The maximum Façade Improvement Grant that may be awarded is \$2,500 for projects costing \$5,000 or more. Grants are made on a cost reimbursement basis, following a process of application, design review and approval, and satisfactory construction completion in accordance with the program requirements.

- All Borough financial obligations must be met before applicant is eligible for approval of funds.
- Receipt of grant awards is contingent upon submission of construction cost invoices from bona fide contractors or tradesmen.
- A joint façade improvement project (with 2 or more properties that share a common wall) is eligible for grants per deeded property.
- One grant per storefront will be considered for tenant/leaseholder/owner applicants.
- All work must conform to local and state ordinances: permits from the Borough of West Reading and/or permission from the property owner will be required, if applicable.
- All work must be completed in a manner consistent with the work described in the approved Façade Improvement Grant application. Reimbursement will be made upon completion of the project. Proof of payment must be provided in order for the reimbursement to be issued.
- The applicant must submit to the Economic Development Committee documentation that substantiates the work is complete.
- All work must be completed within 3 months of the grant approval date; otherwise the grant may be forfeited. Extensions may be granted at the Committee's approval.
- Project costs are inclusive of appropriate Pennsylvania sales taxes.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

Project activities must conform to the West Reading Borough Code and Zoning Ordinances and Guidelines.

-Obtain a WRCRF Physical Improvements Committee Façade Improvement Grant Application. Applications are available at the Municipal Office of West Reading Borough, 500 Chestnut St, West Reading, PA, 19611 and online at [www.VisitWestReading.org](http://www.VisitWestReading.org).

-Submit to the above address the completed Application inclusive of the following:

- 1.Applicant identification and contact information.
- 2.Property owner identification if different from applicant.
- 3.Property location.
- 4.Written project description, design plan, drawing, schematics, photographs, etc. Professional design consultation is recommended to assure compliance with the Program Design Standards.
- 5.Matching funding verification. Must include a minimum of 2 written cost proposals from bona-fide tradespeople, contractors and/or suppliers. For projects being completed by the property owner, a written cost proposal along with a list of 1 contractor and their price quote must be submitted.
- 6.Signature of the applicant and property owner (if different from applicant).

-WRCRF Physical Improvements Committee reviews the application for completeness and conformance to Program design standards within 30 days of receipt. •All applications are subject to approval by the WRCRF Physical Improvements Committee as a condition of the grant award.

APPLICATION FOR MAIN STREET FAÇADE GRANT 2021

Applicant name:

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Business

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Address:

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Mailing Address:

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Reimbursement check is written out to:

● Business? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

○ If yes, please provide Tax ID# \_\_\_\_\_

● Applicant? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

○ If yes, please provide SS # \_\_\_\_\_

Building owner's name and contact information if different from above:

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**BUILDING INFORMATION**

Building's Primary Use

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Current Tenants, if Owner:

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Is Building Fully Occupied? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Lease Expiration Date, if Tenant: \_\_\_\_\_

Application is for:

\_\_\_\_ Signage (Please indicate sign type)

\_\_\_\_ blade (projecting) with lighting

\_\_\_\_ blade without lighting

\_\_\_\_ painted window sign with lighting

\_\_\_\_ painted window sign without lighting

\_\_\_\_ awning or canopy with lettering

\_\_\_\_ flat, wall or fascia

\_\_\_\_ Exterior improvement

\_\_\_\_ painting

\_\_\_\_ windows

\_\_\_\_ doors

\_\_\_\_ gutters / visible roof

\_\_\_\_ repointing

\_\_\_\_ sidewalk improvement / replacement

\_\_\_\_ other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Code compliance/ADA compliance \_\_\_\_\_ Professional design services

2.) How long has this business been in operation?

\_\_\_\_ 10 or more years

\_\_\_\_ between 3 and 10 years

\_\_\_\_ less than 3 years

3.) Was a design professional consulted on this project?

If yes, please provide contact information:

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Proposed Dollar Amount for completed project:

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Timetable for Completion:

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Do you plan improvements in addition to those that will be covered by the grant? If yes, please explain:

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I acknowledge that I have read the complete Grant Guidelines and Application Process and have retained a copy for my records.

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Signature Date