DOWNTOWN STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

Downtown offers something residents can't find anywhere else in Hillsboro: historic architecture, a human-scaled street grid, and unique locally-owned businesses.

The Downtown Storefront Improvement Grant Program is a program designed to complement these strengths by providing assistance and incentives for commercial property owners to enhance the design and appearance of their storefront façades.

Purpose: Improve the appearance and curb appeal of commercial buildings in Downtown Hillsboro to stimulate economic performance, attract new investment and inspire community pride.

Method: Provide grants to businesses and commercial property owners on Main Street and along 10the Avenue within the Storefront Improvement Program Boundary for rehabilitating or renovating their storefront façades.

Maximum Grant Amount and Required Match: For each individual building structure, the maximum possible City grant award is $40,000. All project grants require a $1 to $1 match from the property or business owner, equaling at least 50% of the total project costs.

Grant Eligible Improvements: Commercial and mixed-use building exterior improvements only, including but not limited to: exterior rehabilitation and renovation, painting, pointing, brick, masonry, wood, metal, and stucco repair, architectural and retractable awnings (except those with tenant/business names as part of the awning); business signs and graphics, exterior and decorative lighting, windows, and architectural design.

Ineligible Projects: Any improvements not visible from the street or sidewalk, projects outside the program boundary, non-façade improvements, in-kind labor, business operation costs.

Grant Application Cycle: The City of Hillsboro Storefront Improvement Grant Program will accept and consider applications in the order they are received, on a year-round basis, until total grant funds are expended for the fiscal year.

DESIGN ELEMENTS, APPROACHES AND CRITERIA FOR GRANT AWARDS

Mushroom Farm, Seattle, Washington

The storefront is usually the most prominent feature of a downtown commercial building, playing a crucial role in a store's advertising and merchandising strategy. Although a storefront normally does not extend beyond the first story, the rest of the building is often related to it visually through a unity of form and detail. Storefront façade improvements should consider the entire building - window patterns on the upper floors, cornice elements, and other decorative features should be carefully considered, in addition to the storefront itself.

Design Elements Encouraged:

Main Entries and Façades: Storefronts should have street-oriented main entries and consider the entire façade in design.

Windows - Vision Glass, Display and Transoms: Street oriented building façades should be composed primarily of windows and display areas.

Lighting - Architectural and Decorative: Architectural or display lighting used to create visual interest or emphasize building features.

Visibility: Clear glass - visual street engagement, retractable awnings, internally lit, recessed entries, complimentary colors and signage.

Art and Signage: Signage is a critical component of successful storefront design. If possible, signage improvements should be included in grant proposals.

Awnings and Canopies: Retractable awnings and permanent architectural canopies.

Repairs: Painting, wood, metal, and masonry pointing.

Entryway Pavers: Recessed entry improvements.

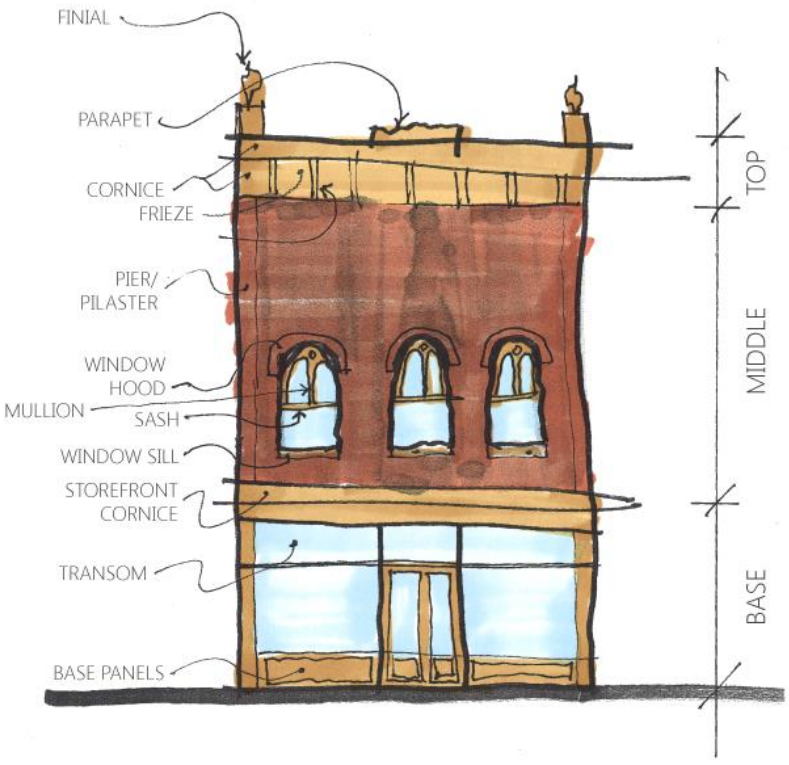
People Oriented Storefronts:

The basic idea is that good storefront design contributes to the aesthetics and the activity of downtown. What's happening inside the businesses is visible from, and "part of", the streetscape and shopping areas.

Two Approaches: Rehabilitation or Renovation

The following Design Criteria will help an owner decide how a storefront project is defined when considering improvements, and how to approach design. Storefront Improvement Grant Projects will be generally broken into two approaches: Rehabilitation or Renovation.

Not all structures within the Storefront Improvement Grant Program Boundary are over 50 years old, and therefore are not technically eligible for designation as “historic”. Some are composed of storefront facades that have been completely lost over successive renovations. Some facades have been renovated recently and are more contemporary in their design and construction. Others may have been originally designed and constructed without regard to storefront character. All of these examples are eligible for consideration of grant funding.



REHABILITATION

The rehabilitation approach addresses the Design Elements with existing or documented historical characteristics of the building façade as a priority, and seeks to preserve or enhance them.

The Venetian is a great example of the value of Rehabilitation. The project actually comprises a historic rehabilitation based on photo records for the theater side, and a re-interpretation of the original storefront and façade of what is now the restaurant.

Rehabilitation Criteria:

Apply to existing façades 50 years old or older with historic characteristics.

Recommended:

Repairing storefronts by reinforcing the historic materials, which includes the limited replacement of extensively deteriorated or missing parts of storefronts with in kind or compatible substitute materials. This applies to buildings where there are surviving prototypes such as large display and transom windows, plinths or projected windowsills, kick plates, pilasters, or signs. Also important as contributing will be vertically oriented windows in the upper stories, and use of pilasters creating a façade hierarchy of Base, Middle, and Top using changes in material, cornices, lintels and parapets (see diagram on previous page).

Not Recommended:

Replacing an entire storefront when repair or limited replacement of its parts are appropriate.

RENOVATION

The renovation approach addresses the Design Elements with a focus on new ideas. This could mean new windows, doors, new lighting, new colors, and new materials. Renovation Designs should still be context sensitive: the context of streetscape and building facades surrounding a storefront project are often the only cues a designer will have when considering a client's design goals. A lack of any inspiring context will sometimes lead to colorful and creative new ideas.

Renovation Criteria:

Apply to new interpretive design ideas, including complimentary and contemporary new designs.

Recommended:

Designing and constructing a new storefront when the historic storefront is completely missing or nonexistent. New design that is compatible with the size, scale, material, and colors of adjacent facades *as a contemporary interpretation of these elements* is encouraged. Designing with *contrast* to surrounding existing storefronts is also an option, and will be reviewed based on location and context.

Not Recommended:

Creating a false historical appearance because the replaced storefront is based on insufficient historical, pictorial, and physical documentation, or introducing a new design that is incompatible in size, scale, material, and color, especially if they destroy remaining character-defining features of an historic building.

Grant Application Process:

1. Submit a letter (or email) of interest to City of Hillsboro Economic Development Department describing your proposed storefront improvement project.

2. Meet with City Urban Designer for consultation to discuss and review the proposed project and determine eligibility. A preliminary design sketch may be generated to assist applicant with approaching a design professional/architect.

3. Design assistance up to $2500 may be available upon receipt of design product and completed application. City reviews project description and design proposal and determines if a grant for design assistance is appropriate.

4. If applicable, Applicant contracts with an Architect and/or Design Professional for design assistance and a project cost estimate.

5. Applicant submits Storefront Improvement Grant application packet to Economic Development Staff for review coordination. Please use these items as a checklist of required information:
    - ✓ A completed Hillsboro Storefront Improvement Program Grant Application.
    - ✓ A detailed written description of the proposed improvement project.
    - ✓ A depiction of the proposed improvements, ie. a photo with marked revisions, or hand drawing.
    - ✓ A materials spec. board or detailed description of materials and colors.
    - ✓ Project budget estimate.
    - ✓ Evidence of ownership of property or written authorization from property owner.
    - ✓ A statement on source of project funding that includes the required match, plus a 10% contingency. This could include a letter from bank or lender, account balance statement, or other as approved.

6. When a complete application package is received, City staff will have a minimum of 30 days to:
    - ✓ Review application for completeness.
    - ✓ Schedule and conduct a site visit for the Storefront Improvement Review Committee.
    - ✓ Conduct a Storefront Improvement Grant Committee meeting to consider grant award.

7. Authorization and funding of a grant will be determined by design criteria and subject to the following conditions:
    - ✓ All projects must comply with City of Hillsboro Municipal Code, Building and Community Development codes, area plans and all other City, State and Federal regulations.
    - ✓ Land Use and Building Permit Approvals (if necessary).
    - ✓ For projects requiring building permits, drawings from a licensed Architect.
    - ✓ Cultural Resource Alteration Approval (if necessary).
    - ✓ Copy of City of Hillsboro Business License (if applicable).
    - ✓ A certificate of insurance showing adequate coverage and naming the City as additional insured with respect to the work proposed.
    - ✓ Applicants signed acceptance of the Letter of Approval and Grant Agreement with City of Hillsboro.
    - ✓ Applicant posting grant information sign – City to provide.
    - ✓ Copy of contracts between the business/property owner and contractor. All contractors are to be licensed, registered and bonded.

    If grant application is approved, Grant Committee will notify the applicant to proceed with Development Review Application (if applicable).

Grant Application Process Cont'd:

Grant Period:

Projects will have one (1) year from the date of grant approval to be completed. Applicants receiving funding through this program are not eligible to apply the following fiscal year. If a grant is awarded and the building is sold during the grant period, the grant award is not transferrable to the new owner.

General Conditions:

The following general conditions will apply to all projects:

- ✓ All applications are subject to available funding and shall be processed on a first come, first served basis.
- ✓ City staff may waive any requirement or condition on an application at its discretion.
- ✓ Improvements funded by the grant must be maintained in good order for a period of at least five (5) years.

Applications will be considered and awarded or denied by the Storefront Improvement Review Committee as determined by the City of Hillsboro. The City reserves the right to withdraw any grant awards at any time or for any reason. Applicants shall be notified in writing.

Disbursement of Funds:

Downtown Hillsboro Storefront Improvement Grant funds will only be disbursed to property owners or businesses upon receipt of a contractor invoice(s) and satisfactory progress observed on the completed work. In-kind work performed by the applicant will not be eligible for reimbursement.

All work must be consistent with the approved grant application and the City must approve any changes in work scope or materials in advance of that work being performed.

Criteria for Nonperformance:

If a project is not complete one year after grant award date, the applicant will only be reimbursed for expenses that occurred up to that date.

Qualified Architects & Designers

Please contact the City of Hillsboro for an updated list of architects and/or design professionals that have demonstrated storefront façade improvement design experience in Oregon.

City can also provide information on other grant programs available for storefront improvement projects.

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our Grant Program

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