

Forest City Main Street Façade Improvement Program Policies and Procedures



For program information or questions please contact:

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FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Forest City Borough has targeted funds from their American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 allotment to improve commercial facades along its Main Street. The goal of this Façade Improvement Program is to stimulate private investment to attract visitors and more economic activity in Forest City.

The program is consistent with Forest City's Outdoor Town initiative to develop the borough in a way that attracts recreation users, especially those using the D&H Rail-Trail, to explore the local community. The initiative's Action Team, which developed a plan to develop Forest City as a fun and welcoming place with easy access to trails and recreation, included façade improvement as one its action items.

Forest City Borough will support private investment in commercial properties on Main Street through a reimbursement process. For every dollar an owner pays for approved exterior improvements, the borough will reimburse the property owner 50 cents, not exceed \$5,000 for each property.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Façade Improvement Program is to provide an incentive for commercial property owners to invest in exterior improvements to their properties. The funds are intended to foster image-making improvements to attract visitors and residents to Forest City's Main Street businesses. The funding should encourage property owners to bring buildings into compliance with basic health, safety, and building codes, and support the preservation, rehabilitation, and reuse of buildings consistent with the historic character of the street. Completed projects should achieve visible results that contribute to Main Street's marketability and economic vitality consistent with the Outdoor Town initiative.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Any person(s) or other legal entity owning commercial property along Main Street in Forest City, from South to North Main Street within the borough's border, are eligible to apply. Priority consideration will be given to locally-owned businesses. Only external improvements are eligible. The funding cannot be used to pay for work that is currently in progress or completed. Projects will be evaluated in terms of quality, design compatibility and level of visual impact.

In cases where more than one façade or storefront exists within the same property, each storefront or façade can receive its own funding for eligible activities but the total amount awarded to the property cannot exceed \$5,000. A storefront or facade shall be defined as

having its own unique entrance and interior space. The facade is the front part of the building facing the street and has its address on that street. However, for the purposes of this funding opportunity, the façade will include the entirety of the face of the building from the ground up and other portions of the building visible from the street.

A property owner who owns more than one property may improve multiple properties as long as the total does not exceed \$5,000 per building. A tenant can apply for the funding with the consent of the property owner.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Major maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of facades and storefronts are eligible activities. These activities must enhance the front of the building and conform to local zoning ordinances.

Examples of eligible activities are:

Brick and Stone Masonry – Structural repairs, cleaning, re-pointing and re-painting (only if currently painted).

Architectural Metals – Repair, cleaning, refinishing, painting, duplication, and restoration of exterior building components, e.g. cast iron, pressed tin.

Doors and Windows - Maintenance, repairs, replacement, and restoration of window sashes, exterior doors, shutters, and installation of storm windows in conjunction with other significant facade improvements.

Exterior Trim and Siding – Maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of sills, windows and doorframes, clapboards, bulkheads, storefront and roof cornices, window hoods, decorative moldings.

Storefronts – Removal of inappropriate coverings (sidings) and additions, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of display and transom windows and lighting.

Signage – Construction, maintenance, repair, removal, and replacement in connection with real property improvements.

Painting – Surface preparation, cleaning, painting.

Awnings – Installation, repair, and maintenance of fabric awnings in connection with real property improvements.

Lighting – External lighting fixtures both for signage and building lighting.

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Landscaping, new fences, retaining walls, site improvements, paving, parking lots, roofs, and sandblasting are not eligible activities.

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Applicants can use the services of design professionals where applicable. A Design Committee will be established to evaluate proposals, facilitate compliance with applicable design standards, and provide technical and design assistance to funding applicants. The Design Committee will work with an architect as needed, and determine whether design services can be provided through this project.

Owners of historic buildings should review the U.S. Department of the Interior’s “Rehabilitation Standards and Guidelines” at

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation.htm>, summarized below.

CHARACTER – Each building should be presented in its most appealing form and the original character of the building should be preserved and enhanced where appropriate. A property should be used for its characteristic purpose, or be placed in a new use that requires reasonable changes to the defining properties of the exterior of the building and its site and environment.

PRESERVATION - Any existing or historical character of a property should be retained and preserved to the extent that it is feasible. The removal of historical materials or alterations of features and spaces that characterize a property should be avoided.

DETAILS – Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property should be treated with respect.

REPAIRS – Features that have made a property unique and recognizable should be repaired when they have deteriorated, rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature should match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, material.

SURFACE CLEANING – Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials are not favored. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, should be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

ALTERATIONS – New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction should not destroy any historic materials that characterize a property. The new work shall be compatible with the size, scale and architectural features that protect the characteristic integrity of the property and its environment.

SIGNAGE – Signs play an important role in how both a business and business district is perceived. Signage should project an atmosphere that is welcoming and inviting to members of the community and visitors. Consistent signage adds to the character of the area in which it is placed, and should be considered to be a unifying factor in a town. Lighting should be external, using spotlights directed onto the sign.

TERMS OF REIMBURSEMENT AWARDS

Total reimbursement will not exceed 50% of the total project cost up to a maximum of \$5,000.

Reimbursement awards are dependent on the Design Committee approval and available funding from the Forest City Borough. There is no certainty that funds will be available at any given time.

Forest City Borough will make reimbursements following a process of application, design, review, approval, and construction. Receipt of reimbursements is contingent upon submittal of construction cost invoices from bona fide contractors or tradesmen. Work completed by property owners will be for materials only. The applicant must submit documentation to the Design Committee that substantiates the total and final cost of the work and documentation that substantiates the work is complete in order to receive a rebate check. The final check will be issued by the Forest City Borough, according to their procedures and timelines.

All work must be completed within twelve months from the Notice to Proceed, otherwise the application will be forfeited. Applicants may request an extension in writing through the Design Committee who will have the ultimate discretion to extend the time for project completion.

Approved applicants will be required to enter into a Reimbursement Agreement with Forest City Borough. The Reimbursement Agreement will be based upon the Scope of Work submitted as part of the Formal Application. Any and all Project Change Orders must be requested in writing to the Design Committee. Approval by the Design Committee must be obtained prior to conducting activities that in any way modify the agreed to scope or cost of said activities. Failure to obtain approval from the Design Committee before the commencement of work relieves Forest City Borough from any obligation to make any payments to the approved applicant.

The Design Committee has ultimate discretion for approving and distributing Façade Improvement Program funds. Any expenditure made by the Applicant which is not in accordance with the terms of the Reimbursement Agreement may be disapproved, and payment to the applicant adjusted accordingly.

Payment will be made by the Forest City Borough based on recommended approval from the Design Committee once all required documentation has been submitted.

STATE AND LOCAL REGULATIONS

All work must conform to local and state ordinances: permits from the Forest City Borough and/or permission from the property owner will be required in writing, if applicable.

All rehabilitation work financed in connection with the Façade Improvement Program must conform to the applicable requirements of the Forest City Borough codes and regulations. Questions about Forest City Borough codes and regulations should be referred to the Permits office at 570-785-3326 or <https://forestcityborough.com/permits>.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL

All Façade Improvement Program applications and completed projects are subject to review and approval by the Design Committee. This committee will review applications and determine eligibility using the Façade Improvement Program Policies and Procedures and Evaluation Criteria. (See Attachment A for Evaluation Criteria).

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

All applications will be due on a scheduled date in order to be eligible for funding from the program. The Design Committee will rank all applications submitted by that scheduled date, using the below criteria, and prioritize funding based on each applicant's score. Not all applications may be recommended for funding. If all funds are not allocated after the review of applications, the application process may be reopened for an additional round of applications. The program has four phases:

I. Program Outreach and Education

The major steps include:

- Forest City Borough will publish a Special Meeting Notice about the program.
- Valley In Motion will conduct a required educational workshop to
 - Present general program information
 - Distribute Intent to Participate Form

- Discuss Design Guidelines
- Applicants will submit Intent to Participate Form
 - The Intent to Participate Form will be due ten (10) business days after the workshop has been held within the community.
- The Design Committee will review Intent to Participate Forms.
 - The Design Committee will review the forms to verify eligibility, review what types of projects have been submitted, and determine who is in need of design assistance.
 - After review of the Intent to Participate Forms the due date will be established for all formal applications. All applicants will be notified in writing of the due date.

II. Project Design and Formal Application

If determined necessary by the Design Committee, applicants will design projects using the services of a design professional. The Design Committee will arrange for design assistance for applicants who do not have access to a design consultant. Allocations of design assistance will be determined by the Design Committee based on criteria that it establishes.

The major steps include:

- The applicant will obtain rendering/sketch of proposed improvements and scope of work for bidding purposes
- The applicant will obtain at least one bid from a licensed contractor, as applicable.
- The applicant will submit Formal Application for Façade Improvement Program to Design Committee with scope of work, bid from a licensed contractor, photo of existing building, project narrative (summary of work to be done, impact on property and neighborhood, and additional comments about the value of this project) and matching fund verification by advertised application date. (Date will be set after all Intent to Participate Forms have been submitted and reviewed and the length of time required to provide the necessary design assistance is determined. All applicants will be notified in writing.)
- The Design Committee will review Formal Applications and notify applicants in writing of Committee decision to approve or deny allocation of reimbursement funds.

III. Project Completion

Applicants for approved projects are responsible for securing all necessary permits required for construction. When all required permits have been obtained, the applicant must enter into a simple but formal Reimbursement Agreement with the Forest City Borough that states all work must be completed per the approved application. Copies of all obtained permits must be submitted to the Design Committee prior to the execution of the Reimbursement Agreement.

Upon execution of the Reimbursement Agreement, the applicant will receive final instructions and a written Notice to Proceed from the Design Committee. Work performed prior to receiving a written Notice to Proceed will not be eligible for reimbursement. Any unapproved deviations from the approved application will make the project ineligible for reimbursement.

The applicant will have twelve months from the date of receiving the written Notice to Proceed to complete the project. Applicants may request an extension through the Design Committee who will have the ultimate discretion to extend the time for project completion.

The major steps include:

- Applicant obtains all required permits and submits copies to the Design Committee.
- Applicant signs Reimbursement Agreement.
- Applicant receives final instructions and written Notice to Proceed.
- Applicant's contractor constructs project.

IV. Project Reimbursement

In order to receive reimbursement after project completion the applicant must submit documentation to the Design Committee that substantiates the total and final cost of the work. The applicant must also provide documentation that substantiates the work is complete, including invoices from the contractor, a copy of the canceled check to verify that payment has been paid in full, and a current photo of the property. In lieu of a cancelled check showing payment in full, the applicant can submit a signed statement from the contractor agreeing to wait for full payment until applicant receives reimbursement from Forest City Borough. Upon receipt and review of the aforementioned documentation a member of the Design Committee will visit the property to certify that the work has been completed in accordance with the approved application. The Design Committee will then recommend that reimbursement be made. Forest City Borough will then release the funding in the form of a rebate check to the applicant. The process from the time project completion documentation is submitted until the time applicant receives the reimbursement check will take a minimum of 60 to 90 days.

The major steps include:

- Applicant submits cost and completion documentation (including invoice, canceled check or signed statement from contractor and photo) to the Design Committee.
- Design Committee reviews documentation.
- Member of Design Committee certifies satisfactory work completion.
- Design Committee submits recommendation for reimbursement to Forest City Borough.

- Forest City Borough approves reimbursement request.
- Design Committee distributes rebate check to applicant.

For questions regarding the Forest City Façade Improvement Program, please contact:

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ATTACHMENT A

Façade Improvement Program Evaluation Criteria

The Design Committee will evaluate Formal Applications for the Façade Improvement Program according to the following criteria:

Occupancy Status (25%): Is business property owned locally, and occupied by owner?

Impact on Project Area (25%): Will façade improvement contribute to Main Street's image, marketability and/or economic vitality?

Historical/Architectural Significance (25%): Will façade improvement preserve or enhance the historical or architectural features of the property?

Documentation of Costs (25%): Are construction costs and timelines fully documented in the application and appear reasonable and consistent with industry standards?

Intent to Participate in Façade Improvement Program Form

Questions regarding the completion of this application or the eligibility of your project should be directed to Gus Fahey, Valley In Motion, 570-346-0600.

Applicant's Address			
Business Name (if applicable)			
Property Address			
Applicant's Mailing Address (if different)			
Phone/E-mail			

Are you the property owner? ___ Yes ___ No

If No, provide Owner Name, Address, and Contact Information

Please provide a description of the project for which you intend to apply for funding.

Form is due by August 5, 2022

Applicant's signature

Date

Formal Application for Façade Improvement Program

Questions regarding the completion of this application or the eligibility of your project should be directed to Gus Fahey, Valley In Motion, 570-346-0600.

Applicant's Address			
Business Name (if applicable)			
Property Address			
Applicant's Mailing Address (if different)			
Phone/E-mail			

Are you the property owner? ___ Yes ___ No

If No, provide Owner Name, Address, and Contact Information

Please attach to application a bid from a licensed contractor (as appropriate), photo of existing building, and other documentation of proposed work.

ESTIMATED TOTAL COST OF PROJECT:

(Fill out reverse side)

Please provide a description of the project, including costs, for which you are applying for the funding. Include a basic outline of the project's components, timeline, goals, and impact on property and neighborhood. Attach another sheet if necessary.

Application is due by (date).

Applicant's signature Date

Property Owner's signature (if necessary) Date

This section for use by Design Committee

Date received: _____

By: _____

For Design Committee

_____ Approved _____ Not Approved

Date _____