

## City of Lowell Façade Improvement Guidelines and Grant Program

### Objective and Purpose

As a result of a strong measure of public input, the City of Lowell has adopted as a primary goal the improvement of the appearance and livability of Downtown Lowell. As part of that effort, the City and the Lowell Citizen's Master Planning Committee have developed these Façade Improvement Guidelines to provide direction to Downtown business and property owners in maintaining and improving the appearance of building facades in the downtown area.

The rehabilitation of structures in Downtown Lowell should respect and reflect the architectural integrity and history of the entire building and retain those elements that enhance the building. Facades should be in harmony with the character of the Downtown and in coordination with the color and design of adjacent structures.

As a means of encouraging the maintenance and improvement of Downtown building facades, the City of Lowell may consider appropriating funds from time to time to a structured competitive grant program to provide financial assistance to owners of buildings in the area designated as Downtown Lowell. Awards through the City funded grant program shall comply with the following provisions, requirements and guidelines.

The purposes of the program are to:

- Promote storefront rehabilitation in the downtown area;
- Preserve the unique character of the downtown's historic buildings;
- Encourage aesthetic compatibility for improvements to facades of non-historic structures;
- Encourage the use of quality materials, good design, and workmanship in the rehabilitation of downtown properties;
- Make improvements that make a highly visible contribution to Downtown Lowell.

### Guidelines

1. All rehabilitation funded through grant awards under this program must be performed in accordance with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* (Exhibit A), the City of Lowell's Unified Development Ordinance, and these guidelines in making façade improvements under this program.
2. Approved types of rehabilitation include:
  - a. Safe cleaning of brick/stone fronts or wall surfaces (chemical stripping, water wash, or scraping – no sand blasting is allowed)
  - b. Masonry repair, mortar joint repair, re-pointing of brick.
  - c. Re-painting and patching of façade walls.
  - d. Repair/replacement of windows and/or doors.
  - e. Removal of siding and exterior false facades and metal canopies.
  - f. Repair, reconstruction, and/or replacement of original architectural details.
  - g. Installations of canvas-type awnings.
  - h. Structural and cornice repair and/or replacement.
  - i. Railings, ironwork repair or addition.

- j. Historic reconstructions, rehabilitation or compatible reconstruction of a store front.
  - k. Landscaping including sidewalks and plantings.
  - l. Murals.
  - m. Installation/replacement/repair of exterior lighting and appropriate signage including structures or frames that contain or hold sign, if performed in conjunction with a full façade rehabilitation.
3. Ineligible projects include:
- a. Improvements made prior to grant approval.
  - b. Interior rehabilitation/improvements
  - c. Construction of false fronts.
  - d. Blocking up of windows or installing storm/vinyl windows and doors.
  - e. Demolition of historic features.
  - f. Roof and chimney repair and construction of mansard roof.
  - g. Installation of any type of veneer – aluminum, vinyl, stone, stucco or any other inappropriate materials that interferes with the historic integrity of the building.
  - h. Materials that are inappropriate to the original structure or nearby structures.

### **Priorities**

1. Priority in funding will be given to rehabilitations projects that notably and visibly improve downtown facades.
2. This program is to aid substantial investments to improve the aesthetic qualities of a building as well as protect to for the future.
3. Colors used should be compatible with other buildings and that are true to the style and age of the structure.
4. The City reserves the right to withhold approval of grant application if color, design, sign design or other façade component is not deemed appropriate to the historic integrity of the structure and/or the Downtown as a whole.

### **Eligibility**

1. A façade is defined as an individual storefront or commercial building side which faces a public right-of-way or is otherwise visible to the general public.
2. Commercial buildings must be located within the designated Main Street Project Area – (see attached map).
3. Owner or tenants of buildings are eligible to apply; however, the owner must sign the application.
4. If there is a building with multiple public-facing facades (corner building), both public-facing sides must be rehabilitated and grant eligibility will be twice the amount as for a building with only one public-facing façade.
5. While in some situations rear facades can be seen from public streets, at this time only front and corner facades will be considered for funding.
6. Only established businesses (those that have been in operation for more than two years) are eligible for a grant that includes new signage.

### **Grant Award**

1. Grant awards and amounts are at the discretion of the City Council.

2. Decisions may be based upon such factors to include size and scope of project, potential positive impact on the appearance of the downtown area, project costs, and the availability of funds.
3. Qualifying projects are eligible for a grant at a minimum of \$500 and a maximum of \$1,500 per façade, on a 50/50 matching, reimbursement basis.
4. Any single façade with more than fifty lineal feet of public frontage is eligible for an additional amount for twenty five dollars per lineal feet above fifty feet.
5. At least two project cost estimates must be submitted with the application. If both estimates are deemed equal in regards to quality of materials used, etc., only fifty percent of the lowest estimate will be considered in the amount of the award, regardless of which bid is accepted by the building owner.
6. The grant amount shall be determined at the time of application approval and paid when the project is completed.
7. The work must be completed within four months of application approval, but the owner may request one extension for two additional months based upon compelling reasons for the delay.
8. The façade improvements must remain in place for three full years from the date of completion. If not, the grant amount for that project must be repaid in full.

### **Decision Making Process**

1. Prospective applicant are urged to meet early in the process with City Staff to ensure the completeness and competitiveness of the application by the application deadline.
3. After the submittal deadline has passed, all applications that have been received and determined to be complete will be forwarded to the Design Work Group of the Master Planning Committee for review and evaluation. Applications determined by staff to be incomplete will be returned to the applicant. In such cases City Staff will work with the unsuccessful applicants to help ensure a complete application for the next application period or grant cycle.
4. The Design Work Group will meet with applicants to receive input regarding the application. Once all applicant meetings have been concluded the Work Group will rank applications and reach consensus on the award of available funds.
5. If an application that is complete in all respects is not approved, city staff will meet with the applicant to help ensure a successful application for the next application period or grant cycle.
6. Contact will be made with all successful applicants notifying them of the potential grant award.
7. For approved applications, an agreement must be approved between the City, the applicant and the owner before work may begin.
8. Applicants must obtain necessary zoning and building permits if applicable.
9. Upon completion of work, applicant must submit adequate documentation that all contractors have been paid for work performed and that no outstanding issues of any kind remain regarding the project.
10. When the City is satisfied that all work has been completed in accordance with the approved application and that all expenses have been paid by the owner or applicant, the City will reimburse the applicant for one half of the actual project cost or the amount of the grant award, whichever is less.

Attachment A

~~Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation~~

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

# City of Lowell

## Façade Grant Application

*Please fill out this application completely and legibly, and return to City of Lowell.*

Property Information	Business Name	Telephone
	Physical Address	Email

Applicant Information	Full Name	Telephone
	Mailing Address	Fax
	Email	Federal Tax ID Number

Owner Information (if other than applicant)	Full Name	Telephone
	Mailing Address	Fax
	Email	Federal Tax ID Number

Proposed Façade Improvements (please specify)
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Scope of Proposed Project (include a summary of the building's current condition, areas to be improved and how, as well as any proposed materials or colors)

Required Documentation (these items must be submitted with the signed Application)

- Photos, plans, or sketches of proposed improvements.
- Quotes, fee proposal, and any other back up that supports the proposed budget.
- Owner's permission, if necessary.

I agree to comply with the guidelines and standards of the City of Lowell Façade Grant Program and I understand that this is a voluntary program, under which the City has the right to approve or deny any project or proposal or portions thereof.

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(if other than applicant)

Submit the completed Application with all required documentation attached:

- by email to [kkrouse@lowellnc.com](mailto:kkrouse@lowellnc.com)
- by mail to Kevin Krouse, City of Lowell, Street, Lowell NC 28098
- or in person to Kevin Krouse, City Hall, 101 West First Street

City of Lowell

Façade Grant Agreement

THIS AGREEMENT is entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, by and between the CITY OF Lowell (City) and \_\_\_\_\_ (Grantee), whose address is \_\_\_\_\_.

WHEREAS the City has approved a façade improvement grant to Grantee subject to the execution of this Agreement, and Grantee desires to accept the grant and to abide by the terms of this Agreement, and

WHEREAS the City has approved a grant in an amount not to exceed one Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$1,500.00) for façade improvements at \_\_\_\_\_, Lowell, North Carolina,

NOW THEREFORE, the parties agree as follows:

1. Grantee reaffirms that all information provided to the City in its Façade Grant Application is correct and accurate.

2. Grantee has read and agrees to abide by the provisions and requirements of the City of Lowell Façade Grant Program.

3. All work performed by Grantee will be consistent with the approval by the City. If Grantee desires to make any changes in the project, Grantee will obtain written approval from the City before implementing such changes. Grantee understands that the City is not required to approve any changes.

4. Grantee agrees to complete the improvements within six (6) months from the date of this Agreement and understands that failure to complete the improvements within such period will result in forfeiture of the grant.

5. Grantee understands that the grant will be paid to Grantee only upon completion of the work, submission of all dated statements or invoices to the City, and approval by the City of the completed work.

6. Grantee will notify the City immediately if Grantee's interest in the subject property changes in any way. This Agreement is not assignable by Grantee without prior written approval of the City, which will not be unreasonably withheld.

7. Grantee hereby grants to the City the right to use pictures, renderings, or descriptions of the work for any and all promotional purposes desired by the City.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties have signed this Agreement on the day and year first written above.

WITNESSES FOR THE CITY

CITY OF LOWELL

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
By: Al Greene, City Manager

WITNESSES FOR THE GRANTEE

GRANTEE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
By: \_\_\_\_\_

WITNESSES FOR OWNER

OWNER (if other than Grantee)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
By: \_\_\_\_\_

**DRAFT**