



Buffalo Housing & Redevelopment Authority Downtown Façade Improvement Program Overview

Program Intent

Recognizing the importance of a strong and visually appealing downtown, the City of Buffalo has developed a Downtown Façade Improvement Program to support commercial/retail property-owners improve their respective buildings and enhance civic vitality. In coordination with the City's Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA), this program will provide both loan and grant assistance to eligible property-owners located within the general boundaries of 1st Avenue NW to the West, 5th St NE to the North, 3rd Ave NE to the East, and 2nd St S to the South.

Objectives

The program has the following objectives:

1. To renovate or rehabilitate retail and commercial properties, so as to prevent or eliminate the existence of blight and deteriorating conditions.
2. To attract and retain businesses downtown.
3. To retain jobs and bring additional employment opportunities to downtown Buffalo.
4. To make use of funds the City's HRA has available for the enhancement of the city's downtown.
5. To spur activity and vitality in downtown Buffalo, which will provide return to the City by way of physical improvements that may not otherwise have occurred.

Program Terms and Conditions

The total allocation from the HRA for the funding of this program will be an initial investment of **\$25,000**- with the Community & Economic Development Director to request additional funding as this initial amount is depleted. A formal evaluation of the Downtown Façade Improvement Program's success will be undertaken prior to the distribution of funds for future programming.

All loans will be distributed with a 5-year amortization, with 20% of the principal due annually at 2% interest. There will be a \$7,500 loan limit per application.

All grants will be in the form of a 50% match and made available in the form of a rebate, with a \$7,500 limit on grants per application.

Program Requirements

The program has the following requirements:

1. Projects shall occur within the designated area.
2. Projects must commence within three (3) months of approval and shall be completed within six (6) months of the loan or grant approval date. The City reserves the right to eliminate project funding if not completed within the specified time and is not obligated to grant time extensions.
3. All grants will be matching and distributed in the form of a rebate after work is completed within the timeframe above.
4. Only the property owner of a building may submit an application, or an owner and tenant may apply jointly. Only one application may be submitted for each façade.
5. An eligible property does not need to be occupied at the time of application submission.
6. Projects shall comply with all applicable City building and zoning standards and requirements.
7. An eligible property must have all City bills paid (property taxes, utility bills, etc.) and the applicant must not be a party to a legal dispute with the City.
8. Preference will be given to projects that are performed by a contractor located within the city of Buffalo.
9. Only exterior façade renovations as described below are eligible for this program.

Eligible Improvements

Eligible improvements include:

1. Exterior painting or re-siding
2. Restoration of exterior finishes and materials
3. Masonry repairs and tuck pointing
4. Removal of architecturally inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes and materials
5. Restoration of architectural details or removal of materials that cover architectural details

6. Repair, replacement, or installment of windows and doors (replacements must be architecturally compatible)
7. Window and cornice flashing and repair
8. Canopy or awning installation or repair
9. Installation or repair of exterior signage
10. Removal of barriers to access the building from the outside for people with disabilities
11. Exterior lighting
12. Wall and hanging signs advertising the business name and identity
13. Additional improvements as deemed sufficient by the HRA at time of application.

Priority consideration will be given to proposals that make highly visible and significant design contributions; contribute to preserving the architectural, historic, and commercial character of Buffalo; and use materials and design features listed in Section 3.8 of the 2040 Downtown Visions Plan.

Ineligible Improvements

Ineligible improvements include:

1. Improvements that have been completed before January 1st, 2022
2. Routine maintenance that is not part of an eligible façade improvement project
3. Billboards
4. Roofing
5. Mechanicals and HVAC systems
6. Interior work
7. New construction
8. Pylon, temporary, or roof signs
9. Interior window displays
10. Murals
11. Security systems (including metal roll down gates, window bars, cameras)
12. Fire suppression / sprinkler systems
13. Trash and mechanical enclosures
14. Fencing
15. Landscaping
16. Parking areas
17. Improvement to a building interior, rear, or side not visible from the street
18. Purchase of property

Building Maintenance Requirements

Buildings receiving improvements from this program must receive proactive maintenance to ensure that the City of Buffalo's investment is protected and provides for the intended outcome of this program.

Maintenance activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Upkeep and/or painting of trim if peeling, fading, or flaking conditions exist
2. Staining of wood surfaces if fading
3. Tuck pointing may be required if loose mortar or brick exists
4. Stucco repair may be required if cracked, falling, or discolored conditions exist
5. Awning replacement or removal may be required if faded, torn or otherwise in disrepair
6. Windows should be in good repair, caulked and sealed as necessary

Failure to adequately maintain the building and its associated improvements and to promptly respond to lawfully-issued citations will result in termination of a Façade Improvement loan, and the balance of the loan must be repaid by the property owner.

Application Checklist

The following documents must accompany a Façade Improvement Program application for it to be deemed complete:

- Completed and signed Façade Improvement Program Application
- Evidence of occupancy in Buffalo (e.g., that you own the building seeking improvement). Example documentation includes copy of mortgage statement, property tax statement or other document to show proof of occupancy within City of Buffalo
- Proof of eligible expenses to be paid with funds (receipts)
- At least one contractor proposal or estimate. It is suggested, however, that the applicant obtain multiple proposals or estimates if available. The City does not assume liability for the work of any contractor that is chosen by the applicant
- Detailed drawings and specifications for proposed improvements. All plans must include (when applicable):

- Detailed site plan using adequate scale to be easily and clearly understood
- Each plan should include notations of proposed materials, color, finishes and details. The drawing should clearly show proposed signage (if any)
- Current condition photos to provide adequate “before and after” comparison
- Construction/reconstruction time schedule, noting start and completion date

Please do not submit any original documents, only copies. The HRA is not responsible for returning any original documents submitted. The HRA may request additional documentation as deemed necessary from the applicant.

Application Process and Deadlines

All applications submitted will be reviewed on a rolling basis until funding is depleted, and applicants must go before the City of Buffalo HRA to discuss their proposed improvements. Applications must include all supporting documentation listed in the checklist above to be considered.

The application process will follow the steps outlined below:

1. **Application Submission:** Interested applicant submits a Façade Improvement Program Application and relevant documentation to the City of Buffalo Planning Department.
2. **Application Review:** Application is reviewed by Community & Economic Development Director and City staff to determine eligibility for program.
3. **Notification of Project Eligibility:** Upon an application being deemed eligible, applicant will go before the City of Buffalo HRA for application acceptance. If assistance is in the form of a loan, funding will be dispersed prior to work commencing; if grant, funding will be dispersed upon project completion.
4. **Improvement:** Applicant begins improvement within 3 months of project acceptance.
5. **Project Completion:** Upon completion of improvements, applicant requests inspection by City of Buffalo staff.
6. **Submission of Invoices:** Upon project certification by City staff, applicant will submit receipts and invoices to receive reimbursement if funded by a grant.
7. **Reimbursement of Funds:** City of Buffalo reimburses 50% of project costs for applicant if a grant application was accepted or will expect 20% of funding returned for loans at end of year 1.

Submit applications via email to David Kelly, Community and Economic Development Director at David.Kelly@ci.buffalo.mn.us or mail / drop-off applications to:

Buffalo Housing & Redevelopment Authority
Attn: David Kelly, Community and Economic Development Director
212 Central Ave
Buffalo, MN 55313

For any questions regarding Façade Improvement Program Application, please contact:
David Kelly –763-684-5407 or 763-682-1181 | David.Kelly@ci.buffalo.mn.us