



Town of Fort Mill Façade Improvement Grant Program Guidelines

Program Overview

The Town of Fort Mill has developed and implemented a Façade Improvement Grant Program to encourage reinvestment in, and revitalization of, the downtown commercial district. This program provides reimbursable matching grants of up to \$5,000 to help offset the cost of exterior improvements to a property owner or tenant's commercial building. The Façade Improvement Grant Program requires a minimum match equal to, or greater than, the total grant amount. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis until all available funding for the current fiscal year has been committed. Individuals and business owners who wish to be considered for a grant must complete and submit a formal application.

Purpose

The Town of Fort Mill's Façade Improvement Grant Program provides financial and technical assistance to eligible commercial property owners and tenants in the downtown commercial district. Funds may only be used for qualified facade improvements, as defined within these guidelines.

The primary objectives of the Façade Improvement Grant Program are to: 1) Encourage the revitalization of existing commercial buildings and districts by incentivizing private sector investment; 2) Expand the town's commercial tax base by attracting and retaining businesses within the downtown area; 3) Enhance property values in the downtown area by improving the visual aesthetic and functionality of existing buildings; 4) Preserve the integrity of the town's historic resources; and 5) Promote the general health, safety and welfare of the community.

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants include owners of commercial properties and commercial tenants located in within a designated commercial area, as defined below. Commercial tenants who are leasing a building for which improvements are proposed must submit an *Owner Consent Form* with their completed application. Only businesses whose current or proposed use is permitted (either by-right or conditional) by the town's zoning ordinance are eligible for funding through the Façade Improvement Grant Program. The town reserves the right to deny funding to any applicant with delinquent taxes, fines or fees.

Eligible Buildings: For the purpose of this program, an eligible building must be used, either exclusively or primarily, for commercial use. Eligible buildings must have a commercial use located at street level. Mixed use buildings, including those with second-floor apartments, shall be eligible to apply for a Façade Improvement Grant, provided the area used for residential use(s) does not exceed 50% of the total building square footage.

Designated Commercial Areas: The Façade Improvement Grant Program is open to eligible applicants located within the town's Historic Preservation Overlay District. (See below for district map)

In Fiscal Years 2016-17 and 2017-18, priority shall be given to façade improvement projects for buildings located between 100 and 241 Main Street.

Historic Preservation Overlay District (HPOD) Map



Expenditure Requirements

Eligible Expenditures: For the purpose of this program, the following types of expenditures shall be deemed eligible for reimbursement:

- Exterior building improvements (cosmetic and/or structural), signage, lighting and landscaping, which are visible from a public street, alley, sidewalk, or parking area. Examples include, but are not limited to: storefront enhancements, storefront restorations, exterior painting or surface treatment, decorative awnings, window and door replacements, landscaping, irrigation, streetscape, outdoor patios and decks, exterior wall lighting, decorative post lighting and architectural features. *Priority shall be given to projects which maintain, enhance and/or restore a building's significant architectural features to the greatest extent feasible.*

- Fees for architects, engineers or other design consultants, as well as fees related to town plan review and permitting, which are directly related to the façade improvement project.
- All exterior improvements and modifications must be consistent with the town’s Historic District Design Guidelines Manual. To qualify for reimbursement, a Certificate of Appropriateness must be issued by the town’s Historic Review Board prior to the commencement of any exterior work.
- All work must be completed by licensed contractors, legally operating in the Town of Fort Mill. The applicant is responsible for obtaining any necessary permits. Applicants should contact the town’s Planning and Building Departments for assistance with the permitting process.

Ineligible Expenditures: The following types of expenditures are not eligible for reimbursement:

- Interior renovations to a building or structure.
- Repair or replacement of any electrical, mechanical, plumbing, security or telecommunication system, unless such repair or replacement is a critical component of the façade improvement.
- Work that is generally considered ordinary repair and maintenance. Ordinary repair and maintenance is defined as “any work, the purpose and effect of which is to correct or prevent any deterioration or decay of, or damage to, a structure, site or any part thereof and to restore the structure or site, as nearly as may be practicable, to its condition prior to such deterioration, decay or damage using materials which are of a design, color and outer appearance as close as practicable to the original.” For the purpose of this program, roof repair and replacement shall be considered ordinary repair and maintenance.
- Improvements that are required as a result of a code violation or citation; however, improvements that are the result of voluntary compliance and the applicant’s desire to bring a property into conformance with the town’s current design standards will be considered.
- Site furnishings, amenities, non-permanent structures and movable equipment.
- Any work which has not been reviewed and approved by the town’s Historic Review Board.
- Any work completed without obtaining necessary permits from the town.

Grant Awards

Maximum Award: The Façade Improvement Grant program provides for a one-time matching grant of up to \$5,000 per property for eligible façade improvements. The town will match, dollar-for-dollar, all funds expended by the applicant for projects up to \$10,000 in value. For projects under \$10,000 in value, the applicant shall be eligible for a 50% reimbursement. Any expenses over the \$10,000 threshold shall be the responsibility of the applicant. All funds shall be disbursed to the applicant on a reimbursement basis.

Minimum Award: The minimum grant award shall be \$500, for projects with a minimum value of \$1,000.

Multiple Buildings/Parcels: Improvements made to multiple buildings on a single parcel, multiple storefronts on a single building, or a single building located on multiple parcels (under the same ownership) shall be subject to the \$5,000 maximum award.

Future Grant Awards: Any applicant who receives a Façade Improvement Grant award shall not be eligible to apply for a subsequent grant award for at least thirty-six (36) months.

Application and Selection Process

Pre-Application Meeting (Recommended): Applicants are encouraged to contact the Fort Mill Planning Department to review the proposed project prior to submitting a Façade Improvement Grant application.

Application: All applicants must submit a formal grant application, using an official form prepared and distributed by the Planning Department. All applicants must submit the following information to be considered for a Façade Improvement Grant:

- Completed Façade Improvement Grant application form
- Owner Consent Form (if applicable)
- Photographs of all existing façades, including front, rear and side (if applicable)
- Color plans, drawings and/or elevations of all proposed improvements
- List and/or description of materials to be used
- Detailed cost estimates/bids for proposed improvements
- IRS W-9 Form (available at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>)

The deadline for first review of applications shall be November 30th. Additional applications may be considered after the deadline if program funding is still available.

Committee Review and Recommendation: Applications for Façade Improvement Grants will be evaluated and ranked by a three (3) member Façade Improvement Grant Committee. The committee shall be made up of the town’s Planning Director, Assistant Planner, and Building Official.

The committee shall evaluate and rank applications based on the following criteria:

Review Criteria	Points
The proposed project is consistent with the Town of Fort Mill’s Historic District Design Guidelines Manual	20
The proposed project will maintain, enhance and/or restore a building’s significant architectural features to the greatest extent feasible	20
The proposed project will significantly improve the visual aesthetic of the existing building	20
The proposed project will positively impact the town’s effort to revitalize the downtown commercial district	20
The proposed project budget is reasonable for the work to be performed	10
The application is complete and provides all necessary documentation	10
Total	100
Bonus: The project is located between 100 and 240 Main Street <i>Applicable in FY 2016-17 and FY 2017-18 Only</i>	10 (Bonus)

The committee shall have the authority to request modifications to a proposed design to ensure that the project will be compatible with the town's Historic District Design Guidelines Manual. The committee also reserves the right to request further information from the applicant (including applicant interviews), and to visit the applicant's property in an effort to evaluate the merit of a proposed facade improvement.

The committee shall make its funding recommendations to Town Council no later than December 31st. The committee may consider additional requests during the course of the year if program funding is still available following the first review of applications.

Grant Awards: Façade Improvement Grants shall be awarded by Fort Mill Town Council, upon recommendation of the Façade Improvement Grant Committee. All funding decisions will be made on or before January 31st. The Fort Mill Planning Director will notify applicants in writing regarding the status of their application within five business days following Town Council's decision.

Grant Agreements: All projects receiving a Façade Improvement Grant from the Town of Fort Mill shall be subject to a written grant agreement between the town and the applicant. This agreement shall specify the purpose of the grant, stipulate the eligible and non-eligible expenditures, establish a timeline for completing the work, and outline the reimbursement process. Any applicant who fails to execute a grant agreement within sixty (60) days following the date a Façade Improvement Grant has been awarded by Town Council shall be deemed to have forfeited his or her grant award.

Reimbursement Process

Completion of Work: The applicant shall obtain at least three (3) bids prior to commencing any improvements. The applicant shall have one hundred and eighty (180) days from the date the grant agreement is executed during which to complete the work; provided, however, the Planning Director may authorize a one-time extension of up to sixty (60) days. Any substantive modifications to the scope of work must be reviewed and approved by the Façade Improvement Grant Committee and the Fort Mill Historic Review Board. Non-permitted modifications shall not be eligible for reimbursement.

Reimbursement Requests: Applicants must document all expenditures and provide the Planning Director with proof of payment (receipts, paid invoices, etc.) for all eligible improvements within thirty (30) days of completion. Once the improvements are completed, the Planning Director and Building Official will inspect the property to ensure that the work is consistent with approved plans and all appropriate building codes. The applicant will then be provided with a one-time reimbursement for the approved amount. Reimbursement checks will be issued by the Finance Director.

Additional Notes

Combination of Façade Improvement Grants with Other Town Incentives: The Town of Fort Mill has adopted a special tax incentive to encourage the rehabilitation of historic structures (aka the "Bailey Bill"). Any building which is at least fifty (50) years old and located within the town's Historic Preservation Overlay District may qualify for a 20-year special assessment (based on the building's pre-rehabilitation value) if the property owner invests a minimum of 20% of the building's fair market value into eligible rehabilitation expenses. Any funds received from the Façade Improvement Grant program may count toward the 20% minimum investment threshold. For more information, please contact the Fort Mill Planning Department at (803) 547-2034 ext. 1160.

Historic District Design Guidelines Manual: All exterior modifications and improvements must be consistent with the town’s Historic District Design Guidelines Manual. A copy of the manual may be accessed on the town website by clicking the following link: [Historic District Design Guidelines Manual](#)

For More Information

For more information about the Town of Fort Mill’s Façade Improvement Grant Program, please contact the Penelope G. Karagounis by phone at (803) 547-2034 ext. 1160, or by email at pkaragounis@fortmillsc.gov.