

Downtown Woburn Storefront Façade Loan and Signage Grant Improvement Program

Guidelines and Funding Application Forms

2018

*This program is administered by the Woburn Redevelopment Authority
with funding provided by the Woburn Development and Financial Corporation.*

INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Woburn Storefront Façade and Signage Improvement Program is administered by the Woburn Redevelopment Authority (WRA) and funded by the Woburn Development and Financial Corporation (WDFC). The program provides funding to property owners and business tenants seeking to renovate their building facades/storefronts or signs. The main purposes of this program are to improve building facades that are visible to the public and to encourage merchants and commercial property owners in downtown Woburn to install attractive, quality commercial signage in accordance with the City of Woburn's Sign Ordinance.

The program will provide matching grants of up to \$2,000 for signage improvements and matching loans of up to \$15,000 for façade improvements. Properties must be located within the Downtown (B-D) Business District (the "District") (see attached map) and the property owner or business tenant must contribute \$1 for every sign grant or façade loan dollar requested. Grants and loans will be distributed on a rolling basis until funds are no longer available.

Eligible work includes, but is not limited to, the fabrication and installation of new signage and/or awnings; repair of existing signage and/or awnings; painting of exterior building facades and trim; repointing/cleaning of brick or stone work; refurbishment of storefront lighting; and replacement of doors and windows. The WRA's grant/loan program will not fund any improvements made prior to a formal vote of the WRA to fund the project (in the case of sign grants) or prior to receiving a loan commitment letter from the WRA (in the case of façade loans).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following criteria will be considered by the WRA when awarding funding for either façade work or signage:

1. Preference will be given to small business owners located in the District who are not required by contractual arrangement to maintain standardized décor, architectural, signage or similar features. Notwithstanding the preference, funding may be awarded to owners with such contractual arrangements.
2. Non-profits, charitable groups, and community organizations located in the District will also be considered for funding under this program.
3. The property to be awarded funding must be located in the District;
4. Tenants must have written approval from their property owners in order to apply for and receive funding.
5. The owner of the property which is the subject of the application must be up to date on all municipal financial obligations at the time of application submission. Such obligations include real estate and personal property taxes, and water and sewer charges.
6. Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permitting, Building Code and zoning requirements.

DESIGN GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

Any alteration, purchase or improvement made prior to receiving from the WRA written approval (in the case of a sign grant) or a written loan commitment letter (in the case of a façade loan) will not be eligible for funding through this Program.

Signage

The program provides for matching (1:1) grants of up to \$2,000 per eligible establishment. Applications for funding must be approved by a majority of WRA which consists of five (5) members.

The colors of a new sign must be a combination of one or more of the following: Silver, black, white, or gold. Up to three (3) of these colors can be used.

An awning must have a black background, and the text/symbols must be white, gold, or silver. The awning must be made of woven acrylic fabric and treated with a water-resistant solution.

Signs and awnings must be aesthetically appropriate for the building in terms of color, design, and style.

The WRA will give funding preference to the following types of signs:

- Replacement of a sign which was installed before the current Sign Regulations (Section 13 of the Woburn Zoning Ordinance or “WZO”) was adopted.
- Replacement of a non-conforming sign with a sign that conforms to the WZO.
- A sign installation which is part of an overall storefront facade restoration.
- A sign designed to complement or enhance the architectural features of a building.

The following are sign-related eligible grant costs:

- The removal and disposal of a non-compliant or obsolete sign, including the disposal of any hazardous or other materials used in the sign which require special handling.
- The sign design, if design is by a licensed architect or engineer.
- The fabrication of the sign by a qualified sign company.
- The installation of the sign, including minor repairs needed to the sign field or other building element.

Facades

The program provides for matching (1:1) loans of up to \$15,000 per building. Loans will be interest-free and due and payable ten (10) years from the date of the loan commitment letter or upon sale or transfer of ownership of the property, whichever occurs earlier.

Applications for funding must be approved by a majority of WRA members. Formal design fees associated with a façade improvement project may be included in the project cost up to a maximum of \$3,000, for purposes of determining the project cost-sharing match.

All proposed façade work, whether funded with a loan from this program or by the owner/tenant, must be compatible, to the extent appropriate, with the character and architecture of the building as well as with other buildings on the street.

Owners/tenants of buildings with significant architectural details and features are strongly encouraged to restore and maintain these features as part of the proposed work.

Elements of work to be funded by the program must be visible from either a public way or a public parking lot. The following are examples of façade-related work that is eligible for inclusion in the loan program (other tasks may also be eligible for funding):

- Restoration of architectural details on an historic building and/or removal of elements which cover architectural details.
- Window and door replacement.
- Cleaning, repainting or re-siding of building facades.
- Replacement of storefront and signage lighting that is energy-conserving and visually appealing.
- Installation of street grade entrances where none exist or the removal of architectural barriers to public accessibility.
- Other improvements, if they are deemed in keeping with the objectives of the Program and approved by vote of the WRA before being undertaken.

Participants in the loan program for facades may be required to sign a Commercial Promissory Note and a Security Agreement. Awardees will be responsible for maintaining the work completed as presentable and in good condition until the loan is repaid.

APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCEDURES

All prospective participants must follow the procedures outlined below:

- In cases where the applicant is the tenant and not the building owner, applicant must obtain the property owner's permission to apply for funding and to perform the work included in the application to be submitted.
- Applicant must consult with the Inspectional Services and Planning Departments to confirm the proposed sign(s) or construction will meet local zoning regulations and Building Code requirements, where applicable.
- Applicant files a completed application packet (attached) including all required forms and attachments.
- The application is reviewed by the WRA and approved/disapproved within thirty (30) days of submission. If the application is approved, the WRA will forward either an approval letter (sign grants) or a loan commitment letter (in the case of façade projects) to the applicant. Any work undertaken before receiving a formal approval letter (signs) or loan commitment letter (facades) is ineligible for funding.
- Applicant has the sign installed or has the façade work completed.
- WRA staff inspects the completed installation/work.
- The applicant submits (a) a letter indicating satisfaction with the completed work; (b) the vendor's (vendors') invoice(s) and (c) proof from the vendor(s) that the applicant has paid at least one-half of the amount due. (The program requires a dollar for dollar match by the applicant, so the total amount of invoices submitted to the WRA Office as proof of completion of work/request for payment should total at least twice the amount of the approved loan/grant.)

- The WRA reviews the request for payment and documentation and formally votes to approve payment.

An applicant's right to submit documentation for reimbursement under this program is not assignable. The WRA will not accept invoices or requests for payment directly from vendors.

CHANGES AFTER INSTALLATION/CONSTRUCTION

The applicant must keep the sign/awning or façade improvements in place for a period of at least ten (10) years from the date of the formally-executed loan agreement, otherwise full repayment of the grant will be required immediately. Any request to change or remove the approved work, or sign or awning before the expiration of the ten (10) year period will require prior permission from the WRA. The request must be made to the WRA in writing prior to any modification or removal. In the event that a business relocates or closes, the applicant must consult with the WRA before removing the sign or any façade improvements.

PERIODIC REVISIONS TO PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The WRA reserves the right, without further notice, to amend by majority vote of its members, the program's policies, guidelines or terms, to establish priority or waiting lists, or to suspend program operations or deny applications when deemed in the interest of the program and/or the WRA or WDFC.

APPLICATION AND INFORMATION

Applicants wishing to participate in this program or those who would like additional information should contact WRA staff member Dan Orr at (781) 897-5817. Applications should be submitted by regular mail or hand-delivery (no fax or emailed applications will be accepted) to:

Woburn Redevelopment Authority
Woburn City Hall
10 Common Street
Woburn, MA 01801