



façade improvement program

*A Town Center Area Plan
Implementation Project*

08 July, 2005

What is the Façade Improvement Program?

The Façade Improvement Program assists property and business owners located within the identified Town Center Area Plan (TCAP) boundary to undertake storefront or building front improvements. These improvements can range from minor repairs and painting to substantial façade renovations on buildings used for commercial or office uses.

The goal of the program is to

1. encourage well-designed improvements;
2. restore significant architectural elements of the structure, and
3. coordinate the important features of a commercial or office storefront into a more visually attractive package.

These goals, in turn, are designed to increase the attractiveness of the downtown, increase patronage for the downtown businesses, and provide the impetus for further private investment in the Town Center Area.

The program is funded through the Town of Cary's Federal Community Development Block Grant and will be administered by the Planning Department. This is a multi year grant and is designed to promote economic development. However, it is also designed to provide incentives for more private investment in the downtown.

How does the Program Work?

Approved property owners or business operators with owner approval who undertake at least \$4,000 of improvements to the exteriors of their existing businesses will receive a deferred loan equal to one-half (1/2) of the total cost of the work, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per storefront. Corner lots with significant or double façade exposure may qualify for an additional \$5,000.

For example, if an applicant is approved for the program and undertakes \$5,000 of improvements, the amount of assistance made available would be for \$2,500. To receive the maximum assistance of \$10,000 the building owner would need to invest at least \$20,000 in improvements.

The deferred loan will be provided in the form of a reimbursement of eligible costs incurred and paid utilizing a construction draw process, once the improvements have been completed, inspected, and approved by the Planning Department staff. The deferred loan will be in effect for a minimum of three years. The principal and interest on the loan will be deferred each of the three years. Should the structure be significantly changed, demolished, or rebuilt during that three year period, then a prorated monthly portion of the deferred loan will be paid back to the town. If no changes are made at the end of the three year period, the loan will be forgiven.

Access to the façade assistance program will be on a first come, first served basis in answer to an advertised notice. Applications will be selected by the Planning Department staff and must be based on meeting the objectives of the program. Selected eligible applicants must complete the façade improvement project within a consecutive six (6) month (180 days) period following project approval.

Additionally, the Town will provide façade design assistance to owners or business operators of eligible properties who retain the services of a professional architect or designer. This assistance is limited to 10% of the total eligible façade improvement costs. For example, if an applicant undertakes \$10,000 in façade improvements, they may also receive an additional \$1,000 (10% of \$10,000) in design assistance over and above the matching amount of \$5,000. This assistance is provided by the Town to help ensure that the façade improvements are functional and compatible with surrounding structures. Should the façade improvements require structural engineering design, those costs would be the sole responsibility of the applicant. Architectural and design grants will also be made as a reimbursement of the total cost package. All new façade designs will be reviewed by the town to insure compatibility with the surrounding structures and buildings.

Who can Apply for Funding?

Any property/building owner, or business operator with written authorization from the owner can apply for funding assistance. The project site must be located within the Town Center Area Plan boundary (see map). Business operators must have a minimum of two years remaining on their lease or have an option to renew. Façade assistance may be made available to applicants based on phased boundaries of the downtown. That is, different sections of the downtown will be offered the assistance at different times according to the funding availability.

What Type of Improvements are Eligible for Funding?

Improvements must be on the façade of the building facing the primary street orientation or if on a corner lot, the façades facing the two streets of primary orientation. Examples of **eligible** improvements include:

- Replacement or repairing of brickwork, plaster or wood siding, including painting, cleaning and repointing.
- Replacing, repairing, or relocating storefronts, doors, windows, parapets or cornices, including the removal of extraneous elements or inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes or materials.
- Change of exterior lighting, or additional lighting
- Repairs, addition or installation of awnings
- Installation or improvement of permanently installed signage as part of a renovation activity. In other words, signage may not be the only activity undertaken with the façade improvement grant. Also, signage must be a permanent installed feature of the façade and may not be portable or removable.
- Addition of a patio or an outdoor eating space (including permanently installed furniture)
- Landscaping and fencing along the front public right of way to a depth not to exceed 30 feet
- Pavement improvements to areas along the front public right of way to a depth not to exceed 30 feet (except for routine parking lot repairs and resurfacing).

Examples of *ineligible* activities include:

- Alarm systems.
- New building construction
- Electrical work that involves more than providing service to the façade.
- Any interior work.
- Roof repairs, except those portions that directly abut to a new or renovated façade.
- Any items that are not allowed by the NC State Building Code or the Town of Cary Code of Ordinances
- Parking lots and parking lot striping
- Application Fees, permit fees, inspection fees

Are There any Design Guidelines?

Projects must conform to the Town of Cary Land Development Ordinance (LDO), Building Code Ordinance, Minor Alterations, Community Appearance Manual, and be consistent with the overall Town Center Area Plan and guidelines. Projects must also meet the Town Center Review Committee (TCRC) guidelines. The Town of Cary Planning Department will provide information on materials, signage, awnings, façade improvements and other aspects of commercial design. The Planning staff will assist applicants with these requirements at their convenience and by appointment. Incompatible design features with the surrounding structures and buildings will be determined by the Town staff.

How does the Application Process Work?

First, applicants must meet with the Town Planning Staff. At this preliminary stage, Town staff will explain the program requirements as well as discuss the scope of the renovation project with the applicant. Also at this stage the preliminary eligibility for the program will also be determined.

The preliminary stage will be followed by the submission of a formal Application for Assistance (See attached). Along with the application, the applicant will provide an architectural or building design plan of the improvements in sufficient detail to determine program compliance; at least two contractor bids or quotes for the work to be performed; demonstration of financial capability to meet the total project cost including a letter of commitment from the lender if necessary; adequate insurance, and legal documents showing ownership of the property or permission from the owner permitting the improvements.

The Façade Improvement Planning Committee will review the application and approve or deny funding for the application within 30 days. If approved, the applicant will receive a Letter of Commitment (see attached) from the Town of Cary for the specified amount with information on any other requirements. The applicant can then proceed with necessary permitting and city review processes. If the total project cost is over \$2,000, the project may be subject to the requirements of the federal Davis-Bacon prevailing wage law for contractors and sub-contractors. Project cost overruns due to miscalculations, undiscovered construction requirements, or other justifiable reasons may be added to the overall cost of the façade project and be eligible for one half matching funds with approval from the Planning Staff. However, the maximum overall project matching amount will still remain at \$10,000. Each project should contain a 10 % contingency line item to insure against valid cost over runs.

What Happens after a Project is Selected for Funding?

Work selected for a matching grant must be completed within 6 consecutive months (180 days) of approval of the application, unless extended by the Town of Cary. The applicant is responsible for obtaining all building permits and any other required permits for the work to be done. The applicant is responsible for conforming with all applicable safety standards and conditions. When all work is completed, the Town Planning staff will inspect the work and if approved, will issue a Certificate of Completion. Reimbursement for eligible work will be paid to the applicant within thirty days upon presentation of project invoices.

The applicant also agrees to maintain the property and improvements for the three year period of the deferred loan.

The owner of a selected project will agree to allow the Town of Cary to promote an approved project including, but not limited to, displaying a sign at the site during and after construction and using photographs and descriptions of the project in future Town marketing materials.

TOWN OF CARY
DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
Application For Assistance

Date:

Name(s) of Applicant:

Applicant Address:

Applicant Email Address:

Applicant Phone Number(s):

Note: Business Operators with at least two (2) years remaining on their lease or an option to renew their lease, must have the property owner of record sign the permission form authorizing and approving such façade improvements.

Property Address:

Existing Use of Property:

Use of Property After Improvements:

Property Legal Description:

Contractor's Name:

Contractor's Address:

Contractor's Phone Number(s):

Contractor's Email:

General Description of Improvements, include types of materials and colors (attach photo or architectural drawing):

Approved by (date):

Estimated Cost of Entire Improvements: _____

Estimated Cost of Façade Improvement (Total): _____

Design/Architect Fee: _____

Construction Cost: _____

Contingency (10%): _____

Attach:

- Building Façade Plans or Sketch
- At least 2 itemized cost estimates, for entire improvement project and the façade improvements for which you wish to be reimbursed (submit final bid documents when available)
- Proof of ownership (deed or minimum 2 year lease with owner permission)
- Proof of Insurance

Estimated Start Date:

Estimated Completion Date:

Applicant Signature:

Date:

OWNER AFFIDAVIT OF ACCEPTANCE AND PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKEN IMPROVEMENTS

I certify that I, the trustee and/or owner of record of the property at _____ give the signed applicant authority to implement the above described improvements as may be allowed under the Town of Cary's Façade Improvement Program.

Property Owner Name

Property Owner Signature (Date)

Applicant (lessee) Name

Applicant (lessee) Signature (Date)
