

Town of Wendell

DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

Wendell, NC was settled in the 1850's and later incorporated in 1903. The Town was named after the poet Oliver Wendell Holmes. Historically, the town has primarily been an agrarian community which focused on tobacco farming. The rich soils of eastern Wake County brought new residents to the area and new economic opportunities. Soon after the town's incorporation, Main Street was created, and the downtown area began to grow. Since this time, business and commerce has been concentrated within the downtown area.

The town has witnessed unprecedented growth over the past several years as new residents flock to Wake County due to jobs, access to health care, and amenities. The investment in Wendell has primarily occurred along Wendell Falls Parkway and along Wendell Boulevard. However, the downtown has also seen increased investment during this same time. A healthy downtown is essential to a town's economic, social, and cultural vitality.

The Downtown Façade Improvement Grant promotes the principles of a healthy community. The purpose of the facade grant is to encourage property owners and/or tenants to improve the buildings downtown and to provide ways to activate the built environment. Moreover, the Town wishes to encourage private investment by providing access to no-interest and no-repayment funds. These funds are to be used only for private property. The recently expanded program focuses on preservation, artistry, and placemaking. Additionally, the facade grant strives to promote a vibrant, charming, and unique experience in downtown Wendell.

Eligible Exterior Improvements:

For the purposes of the Town's façade grant policy, a building's exterior shall be defined as any exterior wall which fronts on a public right-of-way. Furthermore, the definition of a façade are the eligible sides of a building using a single address. Separate addresses within a single building may qualify as separate facades if the tenants are different.

Grant recipients may use Town funds for specified exterior building improvements for the following and not limited to:

1. exterior lighting;
2. repair or purchase of new awnings (removable signage is allowed, but funds cannot be used for the sign);
3. exterior painting;
4. storefronts or facades repair;
5. door replacement or repair;
6. window repair or replacement;
7. masonry repair;
8. transom glass repair/replacement of architectural details or materials,
9. handicap accessibility improvements;
10. gutters and downspouts repair or replacement;
11. and relocation of electrical wiring;

Mural and Public Art- Murals and some types of public art are also eligible for the grant. Businesses must adhere to certain design guidelines and must have all the necessary permits or approvals to be eligible. All proposals must meet all Town Codes and follow all related processes.

NOTE: Project cannot be completed prior to application approval; however, it can be started prior to application approval for larger projects.

Who Can Apply:

1. Property Owners; and/or
2. Commercial Tenants with the Property Owner's written permission
3. Only properties within the DMX Zoning District (see attached map)

Grant Deadline:

The grant will operate on a quarterly basis and the deadline for the application submittals are listed below. It is important to note that all applications must go through a staff review, Appearance Commission review, and ultimately Town Board approval.

Application Submission Deadlines:

February 1, 2021

May 3, 2021

August 2, 2021

November 1, 2021

An applicant/business may apply for a property up to twice a year. If awarded, the applicant/business cannot reapply for two years for the same property for which they were previously awarded a façade grant. This provision shall not prohibit a new business owner from applying for a façade grant for the same property within the two-year period.

Grant Amount:

The grant amount is up to \$5,000 per downtown façade (or as otherwise provided), based on 50-50 match. Once grant funds expire for the fiscal year, applications shall continue to be forwarded for consideration to the approval entity pending any additional funds allocated by the Board of Commissioners for the Downtown Façade Grant Program. Grant amounts will be based on allocated funds available in the budget.

Application:**Items Required for Application Review**

- Facade Grant Application must be completed with all required signatures.
 - o Signature of property owner and business owner
- Only emailed digital copies will be accepted. Faxed or mailed copies of application will not be accepted.
 - o PDFs of the proposed work and documentation should be submitted prior to each deadline noted above.
- A project narrative is required to describe the project in detail and the requested funding. Submittal must include a cost estimate break-down of each project item.
 - o Cost estimates should include the scope of work, materials, and labor.
 - o Two (2) cost estimates from a contractor or a qualified professional should be provided in the package.
- Plans and/or Elevations of work are required from a contractor, architect, or professional.
 - o In the absence of plans or elevations, a picture of the existing facade with improvement areas called out is acceptable, if specification sheets of items are included with the application package. For facade work, paint samples/ examples will be required if applicable.
 - o Photos should be provided that note the current state of the building.
- All permits, encroachments, and Certificate of Appropriateness must be acquired before submittal – this documentation shall be included in the application package.
- Mural and Public Art applicants must submit a conceptual rendering of the proposed work.
 - o The location and orientation of the mural related to the façade should be clearly shown
 - o Applicants should provide past work examples and project references of the artist for review.

- Artist fees, Labor costs, equipment rental, construction and material costs should be included

Application Review Process:

1. Planning Department Staff (completeness review)
2. Appearance Commission (recommendation to Board of Commissioners)
3. Board of Commissioners (final review and approval)

Upon completion of work, copies of applicants canceled checks and contractors paid statements must be sent to Planning Department. Inspectors will ensure work is in conformance with all applicable plans and ordinances. Completed paperwork is then forwarded to the Finance Department for grant disbursement and a check will subsequently be mailed to the applicant.

Decision Factors for Grant Approval:

1. Project Review Checklist:
 - a. Completed application by deadline
 - b. Project proposes eligible exterior improvement(s)
 - c. new commercial businesses;
 - d. removal of metal awnings and/or replacement of fabric awnings
 - e. recently expanded businesses or seeking renovation; and/or
 - f. Projects that are creative or offer enhanced improvements or aesthetic appeal or translates to increase customer visitation or experiences in a neighborhood.
2. Narrative and associated scope of work;
3. Project costs;
4. Available program funds.
5. Grants previously awarded to property.

Overall Guidelines:

1. General maintenance expenses may not be included in the grant application.
2. All improvements not listed under eligible improvements shall be considered ineligible improvements.
3. Projects must begin work no later than 90 days after notification of approval of the grant.
4. All work shall be completed within one year of grant approval or if a valid building permit is open.
5. Work shall conform to all applicable ordinances and building codes.
6. Applicants are required to secure any required permits prior to any work.
7. All work must be in keeping with the specifications approved as part of the grant application.
8. Approval or denial of all applications by the town shall be submitted in writing to applicants.