



Empowering Business. Creating Jobs.

GROW MONMOUTH FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Program Goal and Description

The Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders has established the Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program to provide businesses with funds to assist with the improvement of business facades and the replacement of deteriorated or poor quality commercial signs and awnings.

Grants for façade improvements are intended to fund 100% of the project cost up to a maximum of \$1,850.00. Total project costs cannot exceed this amount and cannot be part of a larger building facade improvement project.

The program is managed through the efforts of the Grow Monmouth Committee, a committee designated specifically for this program, comprised of staff from the Monmouth County Department of Economic Development and the Monmouth County Division of Planning (Office of Community Development). The Grow Monmouth Committee will convene to evaluate applications to determine eligibility and make grant awards to those proposed projects that are determined to meet the program criteria by remedying substandard commercial building facades, storefronts and improve the overall streetscape in a community. Grant awards will be made on a first come, first serve basis.

Program Funding

The Façade Improvement Program is funded through the Monmouth County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

Eligibility Criteria

Based on 2000 Federal census data, the following municipalities contain designated areas of low and moderate income populations which the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has identified as eligible for assistance through the Monmouth County Community Development Program. A business must be located within the municipality's designated area to qualify for the Façade Improvement Program:

- Aberdeen
- Atlantic Highlands
- Belmar
- Bradley Beach
- Deal
- Eatontown
- Farmingdale
- Freehold Borough
- Freehold Township
- Hazlet
- Highlands
- Howell
- Keansburg
- Keyport
- Lake Como
- Manalapan
- Matawan
- Neptune City
- Neptune Township
- Ocean Township
- Red Bank
- Shrewsbury Twp
- Tinton Falls
- Union Beach
- West Long Branch

Eligible areas within each of these municipalities can be located on the maps either attached in Appendix A or found on the Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement website (www.visitmonmouth.com).

Non-profit owned or occupied non-residential buildings and improvement are NOT eligible per U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Guidelines for Community Development Block Grant Program Activities, Title 24, Part 570, Section 570.201 (c).



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Specific Objectives in Targeted Area

- Encourage the visual improvement of storefronts, commercial building facades, signs and awnings;
- Enhance the appearance of the streetscape;
- Reduce vacancies in commercial buildings and storefronts;
- Expand worker and shopper populations in commercial business districts;
- Strengthen or restore the original character of historic buildings;
- Provide a catalyst for others to improve their buildings, signs and awnings.

Eligibility for Façade Improvement Program

- Eligible projects include improvements to commercial buildings and storefronts such as:
 - Exterior elements that improve the aesthetics of the building
 - Exterior painting
 - Removing inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes and materials (false fronts, such as aluminum panels)
 - Restoring exterior finishes and materials
 - Installation of safety glass
 - Recessing/reconfiguring of existing doors and entrances
 - Repairing or replacing existing storefront window systems
 - Signs attached to buildings (new, repair, replace and/or remove)
 - Exterior building and sign lighting, exterior lighting fixture, display area lighting
 - Awning; new, repairs or replacement of existing
- The grant applicant must be a building owner and/or business owner leasing the property and have a Business Registration Certificate with the State of New Jersey;
- Tenants must have the property owner's signed approval for proposed projects;
- Tenants must have at least two (2) years remaining in lease at location of proposed project and/or option to renew for at least two years.
- The grant applicant must owe no outstanding property taxes, fees, judgments, or liens to the State of New Jersey, Monmouth County or municipality in which the structure is located and shall provide certification for the same;
- The property being improved must have no outstanding code violations other than those remedied by participation in this program;
- The proposed project must receive all necessary local approvals and permits;
- A Letter of Consistency from the local municipal official (zoning or code enforcement officer) stating that the proposed application meets all local zoning ordinance and design guidelines;
- Completion of necessary historic and environmental reviews (assistance provided by the Monmouth County Office of Community Development);

Ineligible Project Activities

- Interior repairs not integral to the exterior façade improvement;
- New building construction or additions;
- Purchase of property/equipment;
- Roof improvements, replacement, or repair;
- Lighting elements not associated with new light fixtures or repaired fixture;
- Removal of architecturally important features;
- Sidewalk repair or curb cuts;
- Planting, landscaping, street trees or street furniture;
- Parking;
- Design only projects.



Application Review Criteria

The Grow Monmouth Committee will evaluate applications for eligibility and determine how well a submission satisfies the program criteria. It is anticipated that there may be more demand than available funds. Funding will be provided on a first come, first serve, rolling basis until all grant funds are expended.

Specifically, a project application will be evaluated on the following program criteria:

- A. Degree of visual improvement the proposed project will bring to the business, storefront and the streetscape;
- B. Visual prominence of the project building and its location;
- C. Design Consistency/Compatibility with the municipal design standards/guidelines;
- D. Consistency with municipal master plans, district improvement plans, redevelopment areas, and/or local economic development initiatives;
- E. Businesses that employ and/or serve the needs of low and moderate-income residents in the community in which the business resides.

Submission Requirements

Applicants must submit an application with required attachments (see checklist) to:

**Monmouth County Department of Economic Development
Hall of Records Annex
1 East Main Street
Freehold, NJ 07728**

Applications will be considered only if they are filled out completely and include the following:

- 1) A brief statement about the project and how it satisfies the program criteria;
- 2) Explanation of the specific facade improvements that you want to restore, rehabilitate, modify or replace;
- 3) Close up photograph of the building in its current condition, another photo of the entire building façade including the buildings on each side of it and a photo that shows the street scape (street view) depicting the neighborhood;
- 4) A preliminary sketch of the proposed improvements would be helpful but is not required;
- 5) Submission of necessary documentation identified on the checklist.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Monmouth County Department of Economic Development at 732-431-7470 to discuss their projects prior to submitting an application.

Informational Workshop

Informational workshops will be scheduled for those wishing to learn more about program eligibility, information required in the application, and the criteria that will be used to evaluate applications. There will also be time for questions.

Process for Reviewing Applications

Upon receipt of the application, the Grow Monmouth Committee will review each application for eligibility and determine its feasibility. The County will offer project agreements to applicants who satisfactorily meet the review criteria. Projects that fail to meet the specific criteria will be given the opportunity to resubmit a revised application upon receipt of a letter from the Grow Monmouth Committee. The applicant has one year to complete the project from the date project agreement is executed.

Conditions for Participation

Each applicant accepted for participation in the Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program will be informed of the grant award via a letter from the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders. The applicant will be required to sign a project agreement with Monmouth County to the effect that the conditions of the Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program are understood and will be abided by.

Project Approvals: Commercial building façade and storefront improvement projects must comply with all applicable state and local permits. Some projects may also require local Historic Preservation Committee review or Zoning/Planning Board approval. Projects in applicable areas may be required to receive historic preservation approval from the State Historic Preservation Office as well as all necessary environmental reviews per federal regulation 24 CFR 58 requirements. **(Note: The Monmouth County Office of Community Development will provide grant recipients assistance with compliance for historic and environmental reviews. Please contact them at 732-431-7460).**

- **Pre-Construction Meeting:** The applicant may request a meeting with the Grow Monmouth Committee prior to executing the project agreement.
- **Security Interest:** If the building being improved is sold or substantially altered within two (2) years from the date the improvements are completed, per the project agreement, the County may require partial repayment of the grant funds on a pro rata basis.
- **Improvement Protection:** Signs and awnings must remain in place and unaltered for two (2) years from the date the improvements are completed, per the project agreement. The County may require partial repayment of the grant funds on a pro rata basis.
- **Reimbursement:** Grant funds will not be paid in advance of work being performed. Grantees will be reimbursed upon completion of work in accordance with the project agreement and invoice review and approval. The County will not pay contractors or subcontractors directly for work or services performed.
- **Invoice Review and Approval:** Prior to payment of any invoice for completed work, the invoice must be submitted to the Grow Monmouth Committee for review and signed approval that work was completed per the project agreement. Without this prior approval, grant funds will not be made available for a project. The final invoice will be paid after a Grow Monmouth Committee member has conducted a final inspection and signed off that all work has been satisfactorily completed. Grant payments are made directly to the grantee as reimbursement for costs incurred from the project. The County will not pay contractors or subcontractors directly for work or services performed.
- **Project Cost :** Total project cost cannot exceed \$1,850.00 and must not be part of a larger building facade improvement project. Any project, in part or total, that exceeds this amount will be ineligible for any amount of reimbursement.
- **One Year Completion:** The project must be completed within one (1) year from the date the executed

program agreement.

The Façade Program is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant. All relevant federal regulation applies.

Please note that grant funds will not pay for expenses incurred prior to the grant award and prior to approval of invoices.