



CITY OF DANBURY

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION ZONE FACADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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City of Danbury
155 Deer Hill Avenue
Danbury, Connecticut 06810**

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City of Danbury Downtown Revitalization Zone (“DRZ”)

Facade Improvement Grant Program (“Program”) Guidelines

I. Grant Program Objective

The City of Danbury seeks to encourage economic development and increase opportunities for revitalization, preservation and improvement of buildings in the DRZ to renew its historic position as a thriving mixed-use city center. The intent of this Program is to improve the physical appearance of structures in the DRZ which will help to achieve the Visions as expressed in both the *Downtown Danbury Issues & Recommendations 2010 Report* by the Main Street Renaissance Task Force and the 2019 City of Danbury *Downtown Danbury Transit Oriented Development Study* as noted below. This Program is aimed at encouraging property owners and tenants of commercial buildings in the DRZ to improve the attractiveness of the building facades to increase the draw of new customers, stabilize and increase property values, and to complement and support public investment in this targeted area of the City’s downtown.

VISION STATEMENTS

The downtown will be the primary focus of City life, with a diversity of activities and thriving businesses, high quality housing, exceptional urban design, preservation of historic buildings, varied entertainment, and a vibrant street life.
Excerpt from 2010 Main Street Renaissance Task Force Report

By capitalizing on its great places and multi-modal transit connections, transform Downtown Danbury into a more vibrant, densely developed center of urban life where businesses thrive, mixed-use neighborhoods develop and strengthen, and opportunities for diverse cultural experiences continue to grow.
Excerpt from 2019 Downtown Danbury TOD Study

To meet the Program objective, the City is offering grants to eligible property owners and/or tenants of commercial buildings in the DRZ to be used for facade improvement activities that meet specified eligibility requirements. The City of Danbury has allocated funds for this Program in its Capital Improvement Program. Facade improvement activities include improvements to the physical appearance of an existing structure and are intended to reinforce a strong sense of identity, attract business, and renew commitment within the defined DRZ in downtown Danbury. Restoring or substantially beautifying a building facade enhances its value beyond aesthetics as it represents a commitment to maintaining the physical integrity of the exterior of the structure as well as promoting interior uses.

A facade is defined as a separate face of the building including parapet walls. An eligible facade under this Program must be visible from the public street (the rear of the building and portions of the sides of the building not visible from the public street are excluded). A storefront is that portion of a ground floor building occupied by the ground floor use, which is separate from adjoining buildings and has an entrance onto the public street.

II. Eligibility

A. Eligible Property Area

The Program only applies to eligible activities on buildings located within the DRZ as identified in Section 7.F of the City of Danbury Zoning Regulations. The boundaries of the DRZ are identified in Figure 1.

There shall be no exceptions to the boundary restrictions under this Program.

FIGURE 1
DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION ZONE
Excerpt from City of Danbury Zoning Regulations Section 7.F., eligible area is shaded



B. Eligible Applicants

The following are considered eligible applicants in the eligible property area:

- 1) Property owners of occupied commercial buildings.
- 2) Tenants of a commercial building owner provided the owner of the building has given written approval of the proposed work and has signed the application.
- 3) Prospective purchasers of eligible buildings provided the current property owner of the building has signed the application and said prospective purchaser acknowledges that the grant agreement will not be executed until after the closing.

- 4) Property owners of vacant buildings if the owner's purpose is to rehabilitate the building to attract a use allowed in accordance with the City of Danbury Zoning Regulations.

Notwithstanding the eligible applicants identified above, applications shall not be accepted or grants awarded for a facade improvement on a property that has an outstanding municipal debt, including, but not limited to, City taxes, utility fees, and/or other municipal liens. Failure to disclose any and all pending and/or threatened litigation with the City of Danbury may render an applicant ineligible to receive grant funds.

C. Eligible First Floor Building Use and Frontage

All applications for a Program grant must be for eligible buildings with a non-residential use on the first floor that front on, or have direct access from, a public street or right-of-way.

D. Eligible Activities/Use of Grant Funds

All proposed building facade improvements must be designed by an architect registered in the State of Connecticut. Improvements to historic buildings must be designed by a certified historic architect registered in the State of Connecticut. All proposed work must be undertaken by a licensed contractor. Eligible activities may consist of:

- 1) Repair, restoration, or installation of exterior masonry and siding materials;
- 2) Repair, replacement, and installation of awnings, windows, trim, doors, gutters, downspouts, stone or brick, or other architectural details;
- 3) Repair or replacement of exterior lighting attached to a building or illuminating a sign and designed in accordance with City regulations and codes;
- 4) Repair or construction of entryways onto the public street;
- 5) Repair, preparation, and painting of exterior walls and trim in conformance with an approved color palette;
- 6) ADA handicap accessibility improvements in conjunction with an eligible facade improvement activity;
- 7) Renovation or rehabilitation of architectural or historic building details;
- 8) Removal, replacement, or repair of an exterior wall, or a freestanding or projecting sign;
- 9) Power washing of the elevation of the building(s) visible from the public right-of-way in conjunction with any of the above-listed activities #1-8.
- 10) Landscape improvements in conjunction with any of the above-listed activities.

For all eligible activities, applicants must sign an affidavit certifying that they are current on all City tax obligations, including but not limited to, real estate taxes, personal property taxes, and utility fees.

Facade improvement activities must meet Program objectives to preserve and improve building facades to promote economic development and investment in buildings within the DRZ. Work shall be in compliance with all codes and regulations of the City of Danbury and all state and federal requirements as applicable. See additional regulatory requirements below.

All buildings must be deemed safe and capable of occupancy by the City of Danbury Building Official, or his/her designee, prior to reimbursement.

Expenses incurred for any eligible activity prior to the date of application submittal, review and grant approval by the City of Danbury are not eligible expenses.

III. Additional Regulatory Requirements

In addition to specific eligibility requirements of this Program, all requirements of the City of Danbury Zoning Regulations and all other applicable City, state and federal requirements shall apply.

It should be noted that within the DRZ is located the Main Street Historic Overlay Zone, see also Section 7.E of the City of Danbury Zoning Regulations. The Main Street Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. All changes to the exterior of the existing historic buildings or sites contributing to historic and/or architectural themes listed within the Main Street Historic District shall be consistent with Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, as amended. These Standards can be found online at <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation.htm>. All proposed changes to historic buildings shall include a certification of compliance with these standards by an historic architect certified by the State of Connecticut. Such certification shall be submitted with the Program grant application.

IV. Ineligible Activities

Program grant funds may not be used for:

- A. Businesses or buildings which are exempt from property taxes.
- B. Adult business uses or building(s) containing adult businesses uses.
- C. Roof repairs.
- D. Operating maintenance activities.
- E. Properties which are expected to undergo demolition.
- F. Expenses incurred prior to Program application submittal and approval.
- G. Property acquisition/mortgages.
- H. The cost of borrowing.
- I. Permit fees (NOTE: Permit fees are reduced in the DRZ, see Section 10.B.2 of the City of Danbury Zoning Regulations).
- J. Reimbursement for a facade improvement if other aspects of the facade condition are deteriorated or in disrepair (e.g., funds will not be approved for facade painting if broken doors and windows are not repaired/replaced).
- K. Improvements to buildings/properties in litigation proceedings with the City.
- L. Facade improvements to buildings used exclusively for residential purposes.

V. General Program Grant Conditions

Funds are awarded as reimbursement grants on a first-come basis as funding is available from the City of Danbury. The maximum amount of any grant is \$10,000.00 (maximum of \$50,000.00 per property), or 50% of the total facade improvement costs, whichever is less. Grants awards are at the sole discretion of the City of Danbury. Multiple applications on the

same property may, at the discretion of the Committee, have less weight in the determination of a grant award than the consideration of new projects on other eligible sites.

Applicants shall obtain all required permits to conduct the approved eligible activity and inspections and certification verifying said facade improvement work was completed in accordance with approved plans and any applicable City, state and federal permits and requirements.

Applicants approved for work on historic structures or sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places or within the Main Street Historic District must submit a final certification that the work undertaken was performed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Building*, as amended.

By accepting grant funds from the City of Danbury, applicants commit to properly maintain all improvements and the non-residential ground floor use of the building(s), as well as sides and back of the building(s), in a clean and presentable manner for a minimum of ten (10) years from the date of completion of all work and issuance of the certificate of zoning compliance. Any damage to the facade is to be repaired immediately by the applicant so that the building remains in good condition and positively contributes to the downtown area. Failure to correct any damage may be subject to the provisions of Chapter 6 of the City of Danbury Code of Ordinances and associated fines and any other relevant provisions of said Code.

Work must be completed within eight (8) months of the date of project approval by the Committee. If work is not completed, the Committee reserves the right to de-obligate the facade improvement grant and "return" the grant amount to the Program fund balance. Applicants will be notified in writing of any de-obligation of funds.

VI. Program Administration

A. Grant Program Committee ("Committee")

The Program shall be administered by a Committee. The Committee shall consist of (7) members including the City of Danbury Business Advocate, Director of Planning, Director of the Office of Project Excellence, Finance Director and/or his designee, a designee from the Downtown Danbury Special Services Tax District (aka "CityCenter Danbury"), and two (2) additional members appointed by the Mayor, one of whom has design experience in historic architecture. A representative from the Office of the Corporation Counsel shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Committee as needed. The Committee will meet as needed to review and act on applications.

Each grant application will be evaluated for consistency with the Program guidelines, economic feasibility of the request, and availability of Program funds.

No member of the Committee can benefit directly or indirectly from this Program.

The City of Danbury reserves the right to amend these Program regulations as may be necessary at any time and in its sole discretion.

B. Application Process

- 1) Completed applications shall be submitted to the Permit Center for transmittal to the Office of the Business Advocate for Committee review. The Committee shall convene to review and act on an application within two (2) weeks of the application submission.
- 2) All applications shall include the following information for consideration by the Committee:
 - Color photographs of the existing/current building facade;
 - Color rendering and design plans for proposed facade improvements prepared by an architect registered in the State of Connecticut, including a certified historic architect as may be required. Plans must note address and license of the architect;
 - Current Tax Assessor Card;
 - Affidavit Re: Tax Payments, Code Violations, Litigation with the City of Danbury;
 - Deeds certifying ownership of the property or any lease agreement;
 - If the Applicant is not the legal owner of the property, written consent from the property owner to undertake all proposed activities;
 - Detailed description for use of the grant funds;
 - Certification that proposed facade improvements comply with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, as amended, as may be applicable.
 - Submission of a minimum of two bids by a licensed contractor for the proposed work; and
 - Copy of the Certificate of Insurance with a minimum coverage in the amount of \$1,000,000 (one million dollars) comprehensive general liability and \$1,000,000 (one million dollars) excess liability. The City of Danbury shall be named as an additional insured. The City may in its discretion modify said insurance requirements.
- 3) Applications will be reviewed for completeness and compliance with eligibility requirements, planned scope of work, and the extent to which completed improvements will improve the appearance of the building, preserve and/or enhance the architectural integrity of the building, leverage economic activity in the DRZ, further the general goals of the Program, and financial ability of applicant to complete the proposed work prior to reimbursement.
- 4) The Committee may invite the applicant to a meeting to discuss the use of the grant funds if necessary.
- 5) The Committee retains the right to evaluate all applications to ensure eligible uses meet Program objectives. Should an applicant not meet all the eligibility requirements or an application contain a request for use of funds for an activity(ies) not listed above in Section II., the Committee may still approve such application for the use of funds so specified, provided the Committee has determined Program objectives will be met.

- 6) The applicant will be notified in writing of the grant approval or denial. In the case of awarded projects, the following steps are taken:
- 7) The applicant will execute a contract with the City of Danbury for the Program reimbursement fund amount subject to compliance with Program terms.
- 8) Upon completion of construction of facade improvement activities in accordance with the approved plans, permits and Programs terms, and payment in full to contractor which such proof of payment must be submitted to the Committee, the Committee will authorize reimbursement to the applicant of the grant award. The City will not contract to perform any of the work, but will reimburse the applicant for approved expenses related to eligible activities. For reimbursement, applicants shall submit a W-9 and any other required forms.

VII. General Program Guidelines

Proposed improvements shall be in compliance with all applicable City regulations, codes and ordinances, in harmony with the character of development patterns in the downtown, preserve distinguishing architectural features and qualities of the building, and contribute to the aesthetic value of the building and surrounding area. Additional specific guidelines are noted below.

- A. Sign materials shall be consistent with the character of the building, in a complimentary style, and appropriately sized and scaled for the location. Wiring, junction boxes and other sign appurtenances shall not be exposed. Signage location shall not obscure architectural features of the building. Attachment to a building shall not irreversibly damage the historic character of the building.
- B. Building overlay material shall not detract from the character of the existing building or be in stark contrast from the surrounding buildings. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. If replacement is required, the new material should match the material being replaced in terms of composition, design, color, texture, or other visual quality. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Masonry repair shall be done using recognized methods. Creation of false historic appearance and painting of unpainted masonry is highly discouraged. Building materials used in repairs and construction should be based on historic, pictorial, and physical documentation so that work is compatible with existing materials or with other materials used on structures in the surrounding area.
- C. New windows and doors shall be typical of the size, location, material, profile, exposure, detail and dimension of the style and period of the structure. Upper story windows shall be maintained and repaired. Recessed entries shall be maintained. Repair or replacement of existing deteriorated windows and doors shall be guided by physical evidence of the overall form and detailing of the building.
- D. Awnings and canopies shall be made of material that compliments the color and material of the building to which it is attached. The primary material shall be canvas. Vinyl and plastic material shall not be acceptable. All such awnings or

canopies shall meet the requirements of Section 8.E. of the City of Danbury Zoning Regulations. The size and color of canopies and awnings shall not detract from the character of the building or surrounding area nor obscure windows or doors.

- E. Exterior materials shall be prepared for painting properly by removing loose paint by the gentlest means possible. All new paints should contain the lowest volatile organic compounds necessary to minimize contributions to air pollution or other related air quality impacts. Historically unpainted brick or masonry shall not be painted.
- F. Lighting shall be mounted to a building in an inconspicuous and non-destructive manner. All lighting must comply with the requirements of the City of Danbury Zoning Regulations including but not limited to the requirements in Sections 7.E. and F. and Section 8.E. Consideration shall be given to the use of high efficiency fixtures, cut-off (shielding) components and photocell switches in the design of the lighting plan. Lighting shall be arranged so that all direct rays from any fixtures fall entirely within the boundaries of the lot with no glare onto adjacent properties. No LED lighting is permitted inside windows or door frames or on any exterior facade of the building facing a public right-of-way.
- G. Landscaping shall be a component of an improvement program to be acceptable. Native species shall be utilized in landscape design. Stormwater management practices shall be incorporated. All plans shall meet the requirements of the City of Danbury.
- H. All changes to the exterior of the existing historic buildings or site contributing to historic and/or architectural themes listed within the Main Street Historic District or listed separately on the National Register of Historic shall be consistent with Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, as amended.
- I. Construction of a new building or building addition shall be designed to be compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding buildings.
- J. All design projects shall consider materials, methods and practices that are environmentally sustainable and improve energy efficiency.

VII. Additional Information

Grant applications are available in the Permit Center located on the first floor of Danbury City Hall at 155 Deer Hill Avenue, Danbury, CT or online at <https://www.danbury-ct.gov/government/departments/permit-center/>.

If there are specific questions regarding any aspect of this Program or application process, interested parties may contact Roger Palanzo, City of Danbury Office of the Business Advocate, 155 Deer Hill Avenue, Danbury, CT, 06810 at (203) 796-1649.