

STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The purpose of the Storefront Improvement Program is to encourage businesses and property owners within commercial corridors to improve the front exterior of their commercial properties, making these areas more attractive to shoppers and growing their vitality and economic performance.

City of Norwalk property owners or tenants can access financial resources to renovate or restore commercial building exterior facades through the Storefront Improvement Program. A total of \$50,000 of grant funding will be available each program year which begins on July 1st of each respective year.

The program works as a matching grant where the applicant covers 25% of the costs and the grant matches 75% of that cost. For example, if the project costs \$10,000, the grant will pay \$7,500 and the applicant would be responsible for \$2,500. The maximum amount available for any business is a \$20,000 project total (\$15,000 in grant funding) within any 4-year period.

The program is a first-come, first-serve model.

— APPLICATION PROCESS —

Step One – Is your project eligible? Are there funds available?

1. Email across@norwalkct.gov or call 203-854-7948, to find out if your project is eligible and if funding is still available.
2. If it is eligible and there are available funds, you may move on to step two.

Step Two – Apply

1. Once you are ready to apply you will need:
 - Color, digital photographs of your storefront and immediate surroundings
 - Illustrations showing the proposed improvements (if applicable)
 - Contractor estimates
 - Letter granting permission from property owner if different from the applicant
 - Building, zoning, and Redevelopment Agency permits/approvals (if needed, see Page 2)
 - Completed application
2. Send your application by email to Alex Cross at across@norwalkct.gov or bring it to 125 East Avenue, Room 122.
3. Applications will be reviewed for completeness and design (if applicable). **The City has full discretion on all applications. Application review usually takes 2-4 weeks.** You will be notified that the application has been received and whether anything is missing. Incomplete applications will not be considered. You **MUST** wait for approval before beginning work or purchasing goods.

Step Three – Begin work and purchase goods

1. Receive approval letter then sign and return W-9 and Reimbursement Requirements forms
2. Get quotes and estimates from at least 3 contractors or retailers if the ask is \$10,000 or more, 2 if over \$1,000 but less than \$10,000, and 1 if less than \$1,000.
3. Hire a contractor (if needed) or purchase goods (planters, seating, etc.)
4. Approved applicants have up to six (6) months to complete proposed improvements
5. Complete installation/improvements

Step Four – Receive funds

1. Submit completion documents:
 - Copies of final invoices from contractors showing payment in full
 - Proof of payment in the form of copies of cancelled checks (front & back), credit card statements, or money orders. If you pay your contractor in cash, we will be unable to reimburse you.
 - Copies of any required permits
 - Color photographs of the completed work
2. **Allow 2-4 weeks for your reimbursement check to arrive**

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— STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROPOSAL —

Describe your proposed improvements in the box below. Improvements must be made to the exterior and visible to the public and preserve and enhance the historic and architectural integrity of buildings. Typical projects include:

- Masonry/Brick pointing
- Cornices
- Exterior painting
- Windows/glazing
- Benches or seating
- Exterior doors
- Exterior façade lighting
- Planters
- Art Installations
- See-through security grills
- Signage and awnings

Design Review (if applicable) – If an applicant’s proposed storefront improvement project is located within the Wall Street-West Avenue or South Norwalk area, the work may require approval by the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency to ensure that the project complies with applicable Design Guidelines. To determine whether or not your project must undergo Design Review through the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, please contact redvelopment@norwalkct.gov to provide them with the address of your proposed project and to notify them that you are applying for the Storefront Improvement Program.

Historic District Requirements – Projects within areas with special design controls or within historic districts must comply with those requirements.

Ineligible Improvements – Program funding cannot be used for new construction or on work already completed. Projects which use solid security grates, vinyl awnings, reduce the size of masonry openings/eliminate windows, or cover previously uncovered masonry (e.g., brick, stone, limestone, etc.) with paint, stucco, siding, etc. are NOT eligible.

— APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS —

Checklist – Please attach the following:

1. Color digital photographs of your building sent via email clearly showing the following:
 - Areas that will be improved;
 - The entire front facade of your building; and
 - The views down the block to the right and left of your building.
2. An illustration of the work you would like to do. Any of the following are acceptable:
 - A hand drawn sketch of the front of your building OR
 - a printed-out digital picture with written notes OR
 - a photo with post-it notes attached OR
 - an architect’s rendering

NOTE: if your project includes signs or awnings, please ask your contractor to prepare a picture of the new sign or awning showing all dimensions, materials, colors, and lettering.
3. Estimates from at least 3 contractors or retailers if the ask is \$10,000 or more, 2 if over \$1,000 but less than \$10,000, and 1 if less than \$1,000 are required.
4. Letter from building owner (if different from applicant) granting permission for the proposed work is also required.

Additional Program Requirements

- Applications submitted after construction has begun will not be considered.
- The amount that this program is able to approve for reimbursement will not always be equal to 50% of the eligible costs or the maximum amount due to availability of funds and restrictions in how program funds can be spent.
- Improvements to buildings occupied by or owned by churches, schools, colleges and universities, government offices, and elected officials are not eligible.