

**FORT COLLINS URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY
NORTH COLLEGE STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

**PROGRAM GUIDELINES
(June 18, 2013)**

Program Overview and Purpose

The purpose of the Storefront Improvement Program (Program) is to encourage the voluntary rehabilitation of commercial buildings, improvements and conditions within the North College Urban Renewal Area by offering financial assistance to property owners and/or business tenants seeking to renovate or restore their commercial storefronts and/or building facades. Improvements to commercial storefronts and building facades helps to address and remedy conditions in the area that impair or arrest the sound growth of the City and promotes the implementation of the Comprehensive plan and its related elements. Approved participants of the program are eligible for reimbursement, upon the completion their approved project. While the program provides financial assistance to property owners and/or business tenants, the fundamental purpose of the grant is to further the goals and objectives identified in the North College Urban Renewal Plan and the City's Comprehensive plan. The Program is managed and administered by Staff in the Fort Collins Urban Renewal Authority.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible participants include property owners of commercial buildings and tenants of ground floor commercial buildings with an active sales tax license located within the North College Urban Renewal Area. A business owner who is leasing space must have:

- A current lease with a minimum of five (5) years remaining from the date of Application, or provide evidence that the business has operated in Fort Collins for over five (5) years; and,
- Written approval from the property owner to participate in the Program and a Façade Easement, signed by owner, which will be recorded upon project completion.

Ineligible participants of the program include:

- Businesses that are required by contractual arrangement to maintain standardized décor, architecture, signs, or similar features.
- Occupants or owners of buildings not current with property taxes, water bills; or properties possessing any sort of non-mortgage liens (i.e. mechanics lien, etc.).
- Occupants or owners of buildings that have active code enforcement complaints against the subject property.

Eligible Improvements

Eligible improvements include improvements that contribute to the visual enhancement of the property as viewed from the public right-of-way. Eligible improvements are intended to result

in the rehabilitation of the area in a manner which is compatible with and complementary to unique circumstances in the area. Improvements must be comprehensive, incorporating enhancements/additions to several components of the existing façade.

Examples of eligible improvements include:

- Painting and masonry cleaning/restoration
- Exterior lighting
- Trim
- Window enhancements
- Cornices
- Gutters and downspouts
- Signs
- Canopies and awnings
- Limited

Ineligible improvements include:

- Roofs
- Structural foundations
- Billboards
- Security systems
- Non-permanent fixtures
- Interior window coverings
- Vinyl awnings
- Personal property and equipment
- Soft Costs (architectural drawings, engineering, etc.)
- Any improvements not visible from the public right-of-way.
- Landscaping
- Parking lot improvements

Program Administration

The Program provides participants the opportunity to receive reimbursement of up to 50% of the total project cost, up to a maximum URA contribution of \$5,000 per storefront. The owner/tenant must use private, non-URA funds to match the URA grant.

Property owners will be required to record a façade easement with the Larimer County Clerk and Recorder that will expire within five years of the date of completion. The easement requires the owner to maintain the façade, to get URA approval of subsequent changes, and it gives the URA the ability to make repairs and lien the property if the façade is not maintained.

After work has been completed, property owner/tenant will be required to display a sign (provided by the URA) indicating participation in the Storefront Improvement Program. The sign will be displayed either on the exterior or in the front window of the building for a period of thirty (30) days.

Funds are paid by the URA on a reimbursement basis only after:

- The applicant has paid his/her vendor(s) in full;
- The façade easement is recorded;

- A Letter of Completion is obtained from the City;
- The project is determined to have been completed in accordance with the Plan approved by the URA; and
- Proof of matching funds has been provided and approved by the URA.

Design Guidelines

The use of real or authentic building materials in the construction of the façade is highly encouraged. For example, real stone not faux stone, real brick masonry, and true cementitious stucco, not an EIFS-type system. Although green building practices may not always have much application in a storefront improvement program, the City of Fort Collins encourages these practices wherever possible. All projects must comply with the City of Fort Collins Land Use Code.

Program Steps

Step 1: Pre-Application. Applicants must meet with URA staff prior to submitting formal application to review program guidelines and application process. The pre-application meeting provides an opportunity for review of the program requirements, approval process, and terms and conditions of the facade easement.

Step 2: Application Submission. The following information must be submitted as part of application process:

1. A completed “Storefront Improvement Program” application. The application form is attached to this document.
2. A brief narrative describing the project. The narrative should address the following topics:
 - A brief history of the site/building.
 - A description of the work proposed.
 - The amount of funding requested from the URA.
3. Current photo(s) of the property.
4. Color façade elevation drawings with proposed materials called-out/labeled. These must be developed by a licensed professional architect.
5. A detailed cost breakdown of the proposed improvements prepared by the design architect and/or contractor. “Eligible costs” refer only to costs associated with work proposed on the façade(s).
6. A minimum of three (3) bids from competitive, licensed contractors to do the work on the façade.

Step 3: Project Approval. If the URA approves the project, the applicant will be provided with a Project Agreement. The Project Agreement is valid for one calendar year from the date of approval. The Façade Easement is required to be signed by the property owner at the time of

Project Agreement, and will be recorded only upon project completion. Once the applicant receives the Project Agreement from the URA, the following steps can be followed:

- Prepare final plans and obtain all necessary City permits to commence construction. Submit a copy of these permits to the URA.
- Construction of improvements must begin within ninety (90) days from the date that the URA approves the commitment otherwise financial award expires.
- Begin and complete construction on the project.
- Keep all billing documents (checks, invoices, contractors' lien waivers) for reimbursement purposes.

Step 4: Project Completion/Reimbursement. Upon completion of the project a Façade Easement will be recorded with the Larimer County Clerk and Recorder. Once the easement has been recorded, the applicant submits all receipts for completed, eligible work to URA. Staff will review all documentation for accuracy, and final funding is dispersed 15 business days after sufficient reimbursement documentation is approved by the URA.

Step 5: Program Monitoring. Under this program, properties are inspected every other year to determine if the maintenance obligations of the building owners or tenants are being met, if changes have been made to the facades without URA approval and to create a benchmark for future monitoring.