



COMMERCIAL FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM (C-FIP)

GUIDELINES

Grant Program – Purpose

The Commercial Facade Improvement Grant Program (C-FIP) is intended to promote reinvestment in Village of Oak Park (Village”) commercial buildings, with a focus on supporting historic preservation practices. The C-FIP is intended to assist both property owners and licensed business tenants in the rehabilitation and restoration of the visible exterior (façade fronting right-of- way) of existing commercial buildings.

Grants will be made available to qualified commercial property owners or licensed business commercial tenants who have documented permission from the property owner. Grants are being made available by the Village in recognition of the positive impact that new façade improvements can have on the appearance and vitality of the community.

Grant Program – Eligibility and Reimbursement

Eligibility - Commercial building owners or licensed business tenants must either currently be able to document that retail sales comprise at least 51% of the first-floor businesses gross revenues or that the business generates significant combined municipal sales tax and home-rule sales tax that equals at least \$15,000 a year and over.

There is an exception to this eligibility requirement. If the commercial building is located on Roosevelt Road or North Avenue, the requirement that the licensed business tenant must be able to document that retail sales comprise at least 51% of the first-floor businesses gross revenues does not apply. In other words, Commercial building owners or licensed business tenants located on Roosevelt Road or North Avenue can apply for C-FIP grant funding even if the first-floor licensed business generates limited or no sales tax.

Additionally, during the year 2025 only, if the commercial building is located within the Hemingway Business District, as defined by the Village, the requirement that the licensed business tenant must be able to document that retail sales comprise at least 51% of the first-floor businesses gross revenues does not apply. In other words, Commercial building owners or licensed business tenants located in the Hemingway Business District can apply for C-FIP grant funding even if the first-floor licensed business generates limited or no sales tax.

Façade Definition - A façade is defined as the span along the front side of a building facing a public street, measured along the building wall, generally parallel to the right-of-way line. Therefore, a commercial property on the corner of two public streets would have two facades.

Reimbursement – This 50/50 façade grant program is reimbursement based. As an example, the property owner or tenant must pay their architect, contractors, suppliers, etc., prior to being reimbursed by the Village for the qualified and approved work.

The minimum façade improvement investment, by the property owner or tenant, is **\$1,000** **\$2,000**. The maximum façade grant amount that a property owner or tenant can receive from the Village is \$5,000 per façade. For illustrative purposes, a reimbursement chart, with various scenarios, is provided below.

Total Façade Renovation (Cost Per façade)	Owner/Tenant Cost	Potential Grant Reimbursement
\$1,000	\$500	\$500
\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
\$5,000	\$2,500	\$2,500
\$7,500	\$3,750	\$3,750
\$10,000	\$5,000	\$5,000 (2)

(1) Minimum owner/tenant **overall façade renovation cost investment** is **\$2,000** **\$1,000**

(2) Maximum Village payout per facade is \$5,000

Grant Program – Examples of Grant Eligible Improvements

Building improvements, including the following:

- Exterior restoration that will improve the historic integrity of a building;
- Restoration of historic or replacement or installation of appropriate new storefront systems, doors, windows and trim materials;
- Exterior lighting that meets Village code;
- **Exterior tuckpointing;**
- Removal of architecturally inappropriate features on buildings (including removal of synthetic surface materials and other non-historic elements); and
- Replacement or installation of approved signs and awnings.

Historic structural or maintenance improvements, utilizing Historic Preservation best practices, including the following:

- Repair or restoration of historic features, particularly on street elevations where non-historic elements have been added;
- Replacement of deteriorated historic features with like materials or appropriate new materials that are similar in size, shape, color, and texture;
- Re-roof or repair of visible roof surfaces with non-standard materials where used historically (such as wood shake, slate, or other decorative non-standard materials);
- Extensive restoration/repair of historic masonry materials using appropriate historic preservation methods (see the Oak Park Architectural Review Guidelines and the National Park Service Preservation Briefs 1 and 2); and
- Painting of exterior surfaces where the surface preparation includes removal of worn/failing paint and intensive surface preparation prior to painting.

Improvements that are not specifically listed as eligible are subject to review by the Village. For buildings within a Historic District, the project will be subject to the Village's Historic Preservation Commission review process.

Grant Program - Terms and Conditions

- Grant applications will be considered in the order they are received. In the event that the total amount of the potential reimbursement grants exceeds the amount budgeted for the program year, the applications will be carried over for consideration during the following program year.
- Applicants shall agree to report to the Village, if requested, the property's first-floor gross taxable sales.
- ~~Applicants shall report to the Village the number of full time employee equivalents employed by the first floor retail business.~~
- Not more than one grant shall be approved for a **building business** in any program year. A grant request shall not be approved if a grant was made for the same façade of the building within the previous two years.
- The maximum amount of a reimbursement grant for a specific property will be set forth in a Commercial Façade Improvement Agreement between the Village and the property owner or tenant. If the actual costs of the improvements exceed the original final estimates that were submitted with the grant application and used to determine the final amount of reimbursement, the property owner or tenant will be responsible for the full amount of the excess. The Village cannot reimburse more than the total amount specified in the approved Agreement.
- Reimbursement grants are subject to federal and state taxes, and are reported to the Internal Revenue Service on Form 1099. A property owner or tenant is required to provide their taxpayer identification number or social security number as part of the Commercial Façade Improvement Agreement. Property owners and tenants should consult their tax advisor for tax liability information.
- A copy of the contractor estimate for the proposed work shall accompany the Façade Improvement application.
- Work that has been initiated prior to the execution of the Commercial Façade Improvement Agreement is NOT eligible for grant reimbursement, **unless approved by the DS Director**.
- All improvements must be completed within **six (6) to** twelve (12) months from the date of Agreement execution. If the work is not complete within the **twelve (12) month designated** period, the Village's obligation to reimburse the owner or tenant for the project terminates.
- The commercial property owner and tenant shall be responsible for maintaining the facade improvements, without alteration, for three (3) years unless the Village agrees to a lesser time.
- Any project changes must be approved by the Village.
- As a reminder, the 50/50 Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program is reimbursement based. As an example, the property owner or tenant must pay their architect, contractors, suppliers, etc., prior to being reimbursed by the Village for the qualified and approved work. No reimbursement occurs until the entire improvement project, as approved, is completed.
- No interior finishes, fixtures or remodeling qualifies for C-FIP funding.

