

# TOWN OF GEORGETOWN FACADE, SIGN AND AWNING IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

## **Introduction**

Georgetown is undertaking an ambitious downtown renewal plan in an effort to draw more people back to the East Market Street Business District. The appearance of the downtown structures will factor heavily into the success of the downtown renewal effort. Currently, the downtown has been distinguished by the charm of its buildings and pedestrian scale. Unfortunately, many of these structures have unmet maintenance needs that are hastening the decline of their facades.

The Georgetown Facade, Sign and Awning Improvement Grant Program seeks to address the maintenance and rehabilitation needs of building facades in the East Market Street Business District by offering 50/50 matching grants to interested, qualified building and business owners.



The Mayor and Town Council believe this program is in the public interest and that the Town has a responsibility to preserve and protect the unique local resources found in the historic East Market Street Business District. The Mayor and Town Council also believe that by investing public resources in the downtown, more private entities will find the downtown to be an attractive place to invest.

## **Financing Terms**

Grants may be awarded for up to 50 percent of the total cost of qualified facade rehabilitation, repair or restoration project, sign or awnings with a maximum grant award of \$500.00. The annual amount set aside for this program is \$3,000.00, funded from Real Estate Transfer Tax revenues.

The applicant must match the grant with cash. "Sweat equity" labor provided by the applicant, the owner, or any other non-skilled laborer cannot be charged against this grant.

Grants will be awarded on a reimbursement basis only after the applicant demonstrates full compliance with the grant award.

Each eligible facade, sign or awning improvement may be phased over two fiscal years in order to maximize grant assistance. Each phase shall involve facade, sign or awning improvements not included in any other phase of the project. Reimbursement may then be approved for each phase.

This grant may be treated as income subject to Federal Income Tax provisions. The Town of Georgetown is not liable for any tax implications resulting from the grant. Applicants should consult a tax advisor for clarification.

## **Eligible Improvements**

The Facade, Sign and Awning Improvement Grant Program seeks to encourage facade improvements ranging from minor projects to complete facade renovation. The Grant Program will not fund projects that constitute routine maintenance.

The following list illustrates the types of projects that may be funded by this grant program.

1. Exterior walls of building, with priority given to street-facing facades.
2. Exterior renovation, restoration, or reconstruction, including but not limited to the following:
  - a. Facade washing/Brick cleaning
  - b. Removal of historically inappropriate materials from facades
  - c. Sign repair if sign is integral to building facade
  - d. New signs if the proposed sign is a high-quality representation of signs displayed in the historic era generally found along East Market Street
  - e. Lighting
  - f. Awnings/canopies
  - g. Window restoration and replacement
  - h. Painting
  - i. Door replacement
  - j. Restoration of original architectural features
  - k. Window display area remodeling
  - l. Exterior lighting
  - m. Parapet repair
3. Architectural design fees up to \$500, on a reimbursement basis, upon project completion.
4. Landscaping immediately adjacent to the building.
5. Exterior improvements must comply with Town ordinances.

Grants will not be awarded for projects that may damage to the building facade. Specifically, sandblasting of brick will not be funded under the program nor will the program participate in projects that include sandblasting of brick. In general, grant funds may not be used for improvements completed or in progress prior to notification of grant approval; however, the Town Council may waive this requirement on a case-by-case basis.

Restoration projects that accurately replicate historic architectural elements shall be given funding priority. Preference will be given to structures of architectural or historic significance as determined by the Town. Properties lacking architectural or historic significance may be deemed eligible for the program if proposed changes will create a facade typical of the architectural periods predominantly represented in downtown Georgetown.

Grant funds will be disbursed only upon completion of the project and submission of lien waivers from all laborers and material suppliers.

Exterior improvements must comply with Town of Georgetown, Town Code and with all other applicable Federal, State and County codes and regulations.

## **Eligible Participants**

Owners and tenants (with permission from the building owner) of commercial or mixed commercial-residential property located in the East Market Street District may apply for funds. Tenants must have at least a two-year lease at the location in order to qualify for the grant program.

Commercial buildings are those buildings with commercial uses on the first floor. Residential uses are allowed above the main floor.

Only structurally sound buildings with safely functioning mechanical/electrical/plumbing systems will be considered for grants. In addition, building Owner must show evidence of insurance on the property and name the Town an additional insured to the extent of any grant funds awarded.

## **Additional Grant Provisions**

The Town is not liable for damage to the building or personal injury that occurs during the project. All contractors and subcontractors used for work funded by this grant must be licensed if required by law and must be able to demonstrate qualifications.

No Town officer, employee, spouse, or dependent of the same shall be interested directly or indirectly in any facade grant.

No grant funds shall be assigned or pledged to any third party, nor be used for any purpose other than reimbursement of project costs as approved by the Planning Department.

No grant recipient may engage in unlawful discrimination nor contract with any person or entity that engages in unlawful discrimination, as defined by Delaware Code.

The successful applicant agrees to maintain the property and improvements, including, but not limited to, promptly removing graffiti, sweeping and shoveling in front of the property. The applicant agrees to return a pro-rated amount of the grant money received if the sign or awning improvement is removed within two years.

## **Grant Approval Process**

1. The applicant must submit a Facade, Sign or Awning Improvement Grant application to the Town.
2. Town staff will review the application with the applicant and will then forward the application with a recommendation regarding the grant to members of the Town Council before the next regularly scheduled meeting.
3. The Town Council will act upon the application and provide written notice of their decision within seven (7) business days of their meeting.
4. The Town Council reserves the right to deny any grant application or make changes in conditions of the Facade, Sign or Awning Improvement Program as warranted.

**Media Release**

With the submittal of an application for a Facade, Sign or Awning Improvement Grant, the applicant gives permission to notify the media regarding the award of these grants. The applicant acknowledges that representatives from the Town may provide the media with photographs of the applicant and the project completed with grant funds.

**Submit completed applications to:**

Facade, Sign or Awning Improvement Grant  
c/o Town Manager  
39 The Circle  
Georgetown, DE 19947  
(302) 856-7391



# FACADE, SIGN OR AWNING GRANT APPLICATION

The Town of Georgetown will fund up to \$500.00 of the cost for facade, sign or awning improvements for properties located within the East Market Street Business District (The Circle to Layton Avenue). The maximum grant is not to exceed \$500.00 for façade, sign or awning improvements, funding permitting. The grant applies to the front facades only. Grants will only be awarded to projects that are approved by the Georgetown Town Council prior to the start of work. A written confirmation from the Town Council and Building Permit must be provided prior to construction or installation. Please see the attached materials for further details.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Cost of Project: \_\_\_\_\_  
Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address of Business: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address, If Different Than Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_  
Proposed Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Anticipated Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of Understanding

- 1. The Applicant agrees to comply with the guidelines and procedures of the Town of Georgetown Facade, Sign or Awning Improvement Grant Program.
- 2. The Applicant understands that he/she must submit detailed cost documentation, copies of building/sign permits, bids, contracts, and invoices and contractors' final waivers of lien upon completion of the approved improvements.
- 3. The Applicant agrees to hold harmless the Town of Georgetown for any damage to the building or personal injury that may occur as a result of work funded by this grant.
- 4. Recipients of any facade grant funds must agree to observe all applicable federal, state, and local law pertaining to the use of grant funds.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Signature Date

If the Applicant is other than the owner of the building, the following line must be completed:

I certify that I, the owner of the property, do authorize the Applicant to apply for a grant under the Facade, Sign or Awning Improvement Grant Program and undertake the approved improvements.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Owner Signature Date

Describe the scope of the proposed facade, sign or awning improvements.

**Please provide:**

- A picture of the existing façade
- Facade plans drawn to ¼ inch scale
- Elevation detailing changes to be made
- Estimated cost breakdown
- Materials specifications
- Elevation showing immediately adjacent buildings

**FACADE, SIGN OR AWNING GRANT GUIDELINES**

**Facade improvements (outside front) that qualify for the Facade, Sign or Awning Grant Program:**

- Removal of fake facades, old signs or dilapidated awnings
- Removal of window air conditioners, grills and /or signs that are historically inappropriate for the building
- Masonry cleaning and/or repair
- Historic element restoration
- Repairs to siding, windows, doors, signs, awnings, light fixtures
- Replacement of siding, windows, doors, signs, awnings, light fixtures
- Painting
- Shutters, planters or other design elements
- Facade elements of second floor additions
- Installation of new signs or awnings

**Rules:**

- Project must adhere to all Town and State codes.
- Project must be in compliance with all Town of Georgetown requirements
- Information required at time of application:
  - A picture of the existing façade
  - Facade plans drawn to ¼ inch scale
  - Elevation detailing changes to be made
  - Estimated cost breakdown
  - Materials specifications
- Application form must have all required information completed.
- The project must commence within ninety (90) days of approval and be completed within 12 months to ensure timely utilization of funds.
- All deadlines must be adhered to.
- Approved applicants must agree to have a sign posted during the project stating that the project is funded in part by the Town of Georgetown.

**Application Process:**

1. Contact the Planning Office for a Facade Grant Application (302-856-7391).
2. Complete the application and return it to Planning Office along with the required plans and detailed information. Consult with Town staff in preparation of the application.
3. Written notification will be provided within seven (7) business days of the Town Council decision.
4. Approved applicants will be reimbursed for the grant amount after completion of the project and when paid receipts are submitted to the Town.

The Town reserves the right to deny any application due to incomplete information or any application that is inconsistent with Town of Georgetown requirements.