



City of Laredo

Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program



The Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program packet includes all necessary information and procedures for application of a grant. Please carefully read all materials contained in this packet. Failure to submit necessary information or the submission of an application with blanks will delay the review of your application.

Application Package Contains:

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II. Phase 1 Application Procedures

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- A. Budget

V. Maps

- A. Laredo Main Street District
- B. Central Business District
- C. Arts & Entertainment District

For more information please contact Laredo Main Street Office:

1000 Zaragoza, Laredo, TX 78040 | Phone (956) 523-8817 | Fax 523-8814 | laredo.mainstreet@att.net

City of Laredo Community Development Department:

1301 Farragut, Laredo TX 78040 | Phone (956) 795-2675 | Fax 795-2689 | www.ci.laredo.tx.us/CommDev



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I. Program Description

Downtown Laredo was historically the heart of our city. It was a thriving business, entertainment, and government center that drew the residents of Laredo. Over time, our city has grown in all directions and the downtown area has experienced a slow decline. Through the cooperation of the City of Laredo and Laredo Main Street, the Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program was created to rekindle interest in Downtown Laredo. The City of Laredo will provide up to \$25,000 in funds through this grant opportunity to commercial property owners and business owners in the Laredo Main Street District, Arts and Entertainment District, and Central Business District to encourage restoration of building facades and to enhance the buildings overall exterior appearance. A maximum of \$15,000 is available for use on the front/main façade and for corner properties an additional \$10,000 for a total grant amount of \$25,000. Business owners will only be required to match up to \$500 investment.

The grants are funded by the City of Laredo Community Development Department (CD) using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The funding is made possible through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Provision of the assistance is contingent upon the creation and/or retention of jobs, compliance with design guidelines, and private sector matching funds.

The purpose of the Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program is to

- Reverse the deterioration of the commercial structures in the targeted areas.
- Enhance efforts to market downtown properties and attract new businesses.
- Stimulate new, private investment and economic growth.
- Promote consistency in design and create a fresh and aesthetically pleasing environment.
- Assist property owners with the appropriate exterior rehabilitation of their buildings and bring them up to code.
- Invest in historic preservation and rehabilitation.

II. Phase 1 Application Procedures

1. Property or business owners must apply for grant before restoration or renovation work has begun. No grants will be awarded for work that has already been completed or for work that is covered by insurance.
2. If the applicant is not the building owner, the applicant must submit a signed form from the building owner approving the project and stating the length of the current lease on the building prior to review.
3. All façade improvements must adhere to the current Urban Design Guidelines. (The Urban Design Guidelines are currently being amended into Urban Design Standards; when approved, the new Standards will supersede the Guidelines.)
4. Applicants will be required to complete a Texas Main Street Request for Design Assistance form if they are located within the Main Street District.
5. Projects must be approved by the Historic District/Landmark Board, as applicable.



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6. All projects will also undergo an Environmental review process to meet HUD requirements.
7. Grants will be administered on a first come first serve basis until funds are depleted. Submission of an incomplete grant application will delay the approval process.
8. The applicant and contractor will be required to meet the current building standards and codes, as well as meet any needed building permit requirements.

A. Application

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- Application
- Design Assistance Form
- Design Plans
- Drawings and/or schematics
- Historical photographs
- Contractor and material cost estimates
- Owner approval letter (if needed)

B. Owner Approval letter

If the applicant is not the building owner, the applicant must submit a signed form from the building owner approving the project and stating the length of the current lease on the building prior to review.

C. Grant Agreement

Once the completed application is approved, business owners will be required to sign a grant agreement that stipulates the program requirements including, but not limited to:

- The creation of a job within 6 months of construction completion and the position filled for 1 year
- Compliance with design guidelines
- Business owners will only be required to match up to \$500 investment.
- Construction to be completed within 90 days from the grant agreement. Extensions can be provided, on a case-by-case basis depending on circumstances.



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III. Phase 2 Approval Process

A. Improvements

Eligible Areas

Grant applications will be accepted for any commercial property within the designated target areas of the Laredo Main Street, Arts and Entertainment District, and the Central Business District. Please refer the attached maps.

Non Eligible Areas

Commercial and retail businesses located outside of the Main Street District but within the Arts and Entertainment and Central Business Districts are not eligible to participate in the Design Assistance Program from Laredo Main Street. However they may still apply for a Façade Improvement Grant. Please refer to the attached map.

Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted for commercial properties, by either owners or tenants. Mixed use buildings with retail/commercial and residential uses may also apply. Tenants must have a signed lease and the property owner's signed approval.

Eligible Improvements

Use of funds will be focused on exterior (façade) work on store fronts of commercial buildings. Improvements may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Complete façade rehabilitation of up to two sides of building in located on a corner
- Repair/replacement of windows and doors
- Repair/replacement of worn awnings or canopies
- Removal of materials to expose original materials
- Scraping, priming, and painting of window frames, cornice and store front
- Repair/replacement of signage and brackets
- Repair/replacement of façade tile, brick, and woodwork
- Rehabilitation of the upper façade and display areas of side walls of a building may also be eligible if incidental to the overall façade appearance
- Installation of exterior lighting
- Other minor exterior repairs when incidental to overall façade such as sidewalk repairs

Ineligible Improvements

The following improvements are not eligible for funding:

- Improvements which do not conform to the adopted design guidelines
- New construction
- Parking lots
- Burglar bars
- Roof repair when not incidental to façade
- Blank walls unless the blank wall is a side wall facing the street
- Work which has been placed under contract prior to approval of an application



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B. Overview of Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines provide a common basis for making informed, consistent architectural design decisions affecting individual historic properties, historic properties within historic districts, and properties within the AE (Arts and Entertainment) zoning districts. The Standards are derived from the unique architectural features of downtown Laredo. Conformance with the Standards will enhance and/or preserve the character of the physical environment.

C. Request for Design Assistance from Laredo Main Street

Program Background

Laredo Main Street, formally known as The Streets of Laredo Urban Mall, was founded in 1997 to promote improvements, maintenance and security for downtown Laredo, to protect and enhance the value and usage of downtown properties, to encourage and assist private-public developments in the downtown area, and to promote while enhancing business and economic opportunities. LMS is committed to working with the local government and the community in improving and making the downtown area the destination to shop, work, live and play.

Design Assistance

The Main Street Manager will meet with potential clients to assist owners in filling out information on the assistance request form and discuss the proposed project parameters and objectives. They will assist with locating historic photos, and any other available building documentation such as copies of Sanborn Map, deeds, site plans, etc. Once all necessary information is gathered, the Manager will submit the assistance request to the Texas Main Street Program.

The Texas Main Street Program Design office will open dialogue with the owner and the Laredo Main Street Office regarding the necessity of a site visit for consultation with building/business representative and renderings and design report. The Manager will assist client with permit requirement, codes and local regulations as well as compliance with Texas Department of License and Regulation mandated requirements. The Manager can also assist client as needed in selecting contractors for bidding procedures. The TMSP design office can assist with locating appropriate construction materials and services.

IV. Phase 3 Construction

1. Once an application has been approved a pre-construction meeting will be held with the applicant, contractor, and staff as a final step prior to work commencing.
2. Work must be performed by a skilled and licensed contractor. The business owner shall provide the Department of Community Development with a firm construction bid specifying the work to be



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accomplished and the total contract value. All contractors must be approved by the Department of Community Development prior to work commencing.

3. Grants will be awarded up to \$15,000 for a single façade and up to \$25,000 (\$15,000 front/\$10,000 side) for corner buildings with two facades. Payment will be made payable to both the business owner and contractor. Business owners will be required to match \$500 of the project expenses. The CD Department's approval is required for any request for payments.
4. As per HUD regulation 24 CFR § 570.202 (3): Commercial or industrial building rehabilitation is limited to improvements to the exterior of the building, abatement of asbestos hazards, lead-based paint hazard evaluation and reduction, and the correction of code violations. Therefore up to \$5,000 of grant funds may be used for code issues related to the façade only. However, please note the entire building must be brought up to code.
5. As per HUD regulation, grant recipients must meet current code compliance for their entire building. Grant funds, up to \$5,000 may be used for code issues related to the façade only.
6. Improvements funded by the façade grant will be subject to periodic review or inspection by the City of Laredo and/or the Historic District/Landmark Board Committee to ensure compliance with established Design Guidelines.
7. The Department of Community Development will disperse funds upon completion of work that has been verified by staff as compliant with the plans proposed in the approved application and receipts are submitted for work completed. Any deviation from the approved grant project may result in the total or partial withdrawal of the grant. The expense of any interior work will not be credited as part of the match. Payment checks shall be made out to the business owner and contractor.
8. Projects exceeding \$2,000 must comply with the Davis Bacon Wage Act. The act requires contractors to pay their employees a specific minimum wage determined by the Department of Labor to be prevailing for the area. Contractors must submit weekly payroll reports. Contracts may use the Department of Labor form that includes employee name, work classification, days and hours worked, rate of pay, and gross amount earned. The applicant is responsible for the full compliance of all contractors and workers hired for the project. The CD Department will conduct employee interviews at each job site to ensure wage compliance. The wage decision for construction work to a building in Webb County and other relevant documents will be provided.
9. All exterior façade renovations must be completed within 90 days from the date of the grant agreement. The grant award will expire and no grant money will be paid if the project is not completed within 90 days.
10. No money shall be paid by the City upon any claim, debt, demand or account whatsoever, to any person, firm or corporation who is in arrears to the City of Laredo for taxes.



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A. Budget

Please fill out as completely as possible. The budget may be adjusted once contractor estimates have been received. Attach exact color samples, model numbers, type of materials to be used, color photos, and design plans. Please include as much detail as possible.

Category	Vendor's Name	Description	Quantity	Cost
Facade Cleaning and Repair				
Window & Door Repair/Replacement				
Painting				
Awnings/Signs repair or restoration				
Landscaping				
Total Amount				