

CITY OF CARSON

**CITYWIDE FAÇADE
IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**



PROGRAM GUIDELINES

APPLICATION

The Citywide Façade Improvement Program (“Program”) provides financial assistance to eligible property owners for the renovation of commercial buildings and structures within the City of Carson Commercial Areas (collectively “Target Areas”).

The goal of this project is to facilitate commercial revitalization, stimulate private investment, preserve and beautify the commercial corridors, upgrade the physical image of the city, and to generate shopping, tourism, and a pleasant walking environment by improving the visual aesthetics of the Target Areas with enhancements in design, color schemes and building façades through the use of the City of Carson (“City”) Funds.

The program objective is to provide financial assistance to property owners to perform eligible façade improvements and correct certain code violations to commercial buildings located within the Target Area, and to revitalize the City's commercial building stock. These Program Guidelines and Implementation Procedures include step-by-step actions to be taken with the applicant from the initial application to the recordation of the Notice of Completion and the payment of the Façade Grant. The Program will be implemented in accordance with the Program Guidelines. The City of Carson Community Development Department and its designee(s) (collectively “Program staff” or “staff”) are responsible for program implementation in accordance with the Program Policy. The Director of Community Development of the Carson Community Development Department will be responsible for Program oversight.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Applicants will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, age, family or marital status, handicap or disability, or any other arbitrary basis. In addition, applicants may not discriminate in the use, occupancy, and awarding of contracts with respect to the property to be rehabilitated with the assistance from the Program.

SECTION I - BACKGROUND AND LEGAL GUIDELINES

Background

The City of Carson Charter, Section 206, authorizes a comprehensive set of economic development incentives and programs to promote development given the unique environmental constraints in the City of Carson, to create jobs and to preserve the sound fiscal basis of the City. The City's Charter powers include the authority to enter into agreements, and to loan, grant, fund, or finance projects which will provide public benefit and protect the public health, safety and welfare of the community, which programs may be carried out singly or in combination in a manner to promote the economic development objectives set forth in Section 206 of the Charter. Government Code Section 53803 authorizes the City to provide financial incentives to businesses to promote economic activity, including the assistance with commercial revitalization.

This Citywide Façade Improvement Program ("Program") establishes a variety of specific goals for commercial development of the City of Carson as part of a citywide economic development strategy. These goals frame the near term economic development objectives for the city during a period of tremendous transformation.

Many commercial corridors in Carson have lagged the progress recently made in the city's core. Over the past 30 years, the City and former Redevelopment Agency have tried to incentivize development in the city through the creation of redevelopment project areas, with some success, but the overall vitality of the community was at a level that these were likely to see significant development activity only after other major projects were completed, such as the Former Cal Compact Landfill.

The focus of this program are commercial buildings and centers in the following areas: Avalon Boulevard, Main Street, Sepulveda Boulevard, Carson Street, and Figueroa Street. Commercial properties on other east-west streets will be considered if they are near the intersections of the major streets.

Many of these areas were in former Project Areas of the former Redevelopment Agency, and under Redevelopment Law the Agency (or "RDA") would have been able to undertake a number of the projects and programs described herein. However, all redevelopment agencies in California were dissolved under State Law in the 2011-2012 year.

The lesser economic vitality of the City's commercial corridors, particularly in light of the ongoing and continuing COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on businesses, has prompted the City to develop mechanisms to spur development in these key commercial areas.

On the north end, the lack of population density and appropriate retail development sites has made traditional retailing along Avalon Boulevard difficult. There is little non-restaurant "retail" in the stretch from the northern corporate limits to Del Amo Boulevard,

with the exception of two “dollar” stores, a convenience store, a drug store, a liquor store, and a small handful of other shops. The growth in the area has been in housing, particularly in the two communities developed along Victoria, but the traffic speeds and lack of pedestrian amenities along Avalon have made even restaurant businesses struggle.

The south end of Avalon also faces issues, especially with vacant and blighted properties near the Sepulveda Boulevard intersection. Main Street has some commercial centers but most of the commercial activity is at the major intersections of Lomita, Sepulveda, 223rd, and Carson Street. Likewise, Figueroa has a small amount of commercial frontage with most of its activity at Sepulveda (Target), the Carson Street intersection and the shopping Center at Torrance Boulevard.

Finally, Carson Street remains the other signature commercial street in the city but is generally characterized by individual buildings or smaller shopping centers, except for grocery-anchored centers at Main Street and Avalon Boulevard. It also extends the full width of the city, from the 110 Freeway to Santa Fe Street.

The particular challenges along each of these corridors suggests the creation of a multi-year incentive program.

Project Area Goals

For the purposes of the Program description, the goals for the commercial corridors are consolidated and summarized below.



Create a Stronger Local Economy. Strengthen the economic base of the corridors and the community at large by installing needed site improvements and stimulating new commercial expansion, employment, and economic growth. Establish financial mechanisms to assist and encourage commercial development opportunities.



Improve Public Infrastructure and Services. Provide necessary public improvements, including but not limited to flood control facilities, street improvements, parking supply, and traffic circulation. Develop emergency, cultural, recreational, maintenance, operational, and other services and facilities.



Use Land Wisely. Assemble land into parcels suitable for integrated development with improved pedestrian and vehicular circulation in these areas. Secure the availability of property to attract investors and developers and replan, redesign, and develop undeveloped areas which are stagnant or

improperly utilized.



CLEAN

Eliminate Blight. Eliminate deteriorating buildings, incompatible and uneconomic land uses, and other environmental, economic, and social deficiencies; improve the overall appearance of buildings, streets, parking areas, schools, and other facilities, and assure that all buildings are safe for people and businesses to occupy.



PRESERVE

Protect and Enhance Community Character. Preserve artistically, architecturally, and historically worthwhile structures and sites and upgrade urban design standards to provide unity and to encourage community identity.

All economic development activities are pursued with the intention to seek communitywide benefits that create a more cohesive and unified community by strengthening the physical, social, and economic ties between various land uses. The City encourages community and property owner involvement and citizen participation in the adoption of policies, programs, and projects so as to ensure that the Economic Development Plans are implemented in accordance with the objectives and goals of the General Plan. As necessary, the City encourages the coordination, cooperation, and assistance of other local agencies to ensure that projects are implemented to their fullest and most practical extent.

In terms of metrics, the City would evaluate the resources expended on an annual basis against several measures, including:

- Increased tax revenue (Sales, Property, TOT)
- Decreased vacancies, particularly long-term vacancies
- Total new business investment
- Total other public/private sources of funding (e.g., tax credits, grants)
- Total new public works investment

The goal would be that the Program “pay for itself” over time, i.e., that the amount committed by the City to spur new development be matched by increased City revenue from all sources, with the new tax revenue in excess of any annual allocation of funds from the City. The natural mechanism available to former redevelopment agencies, the establishment of a “frozen base” of property tax, is not available to the City at this time, but the City could develop a geographic baseline of total tax revenue from the areas in order to track economic progress.

Another measure of economic vitality would be the rate of new business creation in the area, as measured by business license data. The City will establish a baseline of data for business licenses, which should show a normal aging curve. The experience in certain marginalized areas is typically that the aging curve of business licenses is

relatively flat, pointing to a low rate of new business creation in the area and a low rate of economic vitality.

Another measurable aspect of the Program would be the rate of code enforcement complaints, whether they are active files or complaints themselves. The closure rate for complaints, particularly through properties changing hands and undergoing renovation, is also key.

Finally, the amount and profile of investment in the area will be tracked. Most of the properties there are small enough to be manageable by a small firm or group, and significant investments by groups that have the potential to and interest in leveraging their investments into wider area-wide efforts will also be noted.

SECTION II - FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GUIDELINES

The City of Carson has developed a Façade Improvement Program designed to encourage improvement and investments that contribute to the overall revitalization effort in the city. The Façade Improvement Program features grants with no matching requirements of **up to \$2,500** to finance all or a portion of a property owner or tenant's **exterior** improvements, and grants of up to \$25,000 with a dollar-for-dollar match from the applicant. The Program may feature complimentary design guidance for program participants, as well as an expedited design approval process.

ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS ARE FOR:

- Exterior Signs (installation of new or repair or replacement of legally installed and mounted signs; including neon or halo-lit signs);
- Awnings, canopies, or sunshades (installation of new or repair or replacement of fixed metal or fabric awnings), which could include perpendicular wall-mounted castle banners (without signage);
- Painting or exterior surface treatment (stucco, tile, stone, or brick replacement or repair);
- Asphalt paving, replacement or repair of tiles or decorative pavers (not in the public right-of-way); sidewalk or courtyard repaving (not in the public right-of-way);
- Repair or replacement of masonry walls or footings;
- Outdoor lighting (installation of new exterior lighting fixtures; repair or replacement of existing exterior lighting fixtures);
- Installation, repair or replacement of decorative or security fencing;

- Replacement of plate glass windows; re-glazing of windows or change of window mullions with the approval of architectural application by the City;
- Installation or replacement of outdoor landscaping and fountains;
- Design and permit fees associated with the above eligible improvements.

USES NOT ELIGIBLE:

Funds may not be used for improvements that are not permanent or mounted or affixed to the building or the sidewalk. Ineligible uses include but are not limited to:

- Vinyl letter signage (windows);
- Portable signs, such as sandwich board or A-frame signs; signs not mounted or attached to storefronts;
- Flags or banners;
- Benches and trash receptacles;
- Tables, chairs, or umbrellas.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

Property owners or business tenants located in Carson, with the priority being for locations on Avalon Boulevard, Main Street, Sepulveda Boulevard, Figueroa Street, and Carson Street. Tenant business owners must show evidence of consent from the property owner.

Buildings or structures eligible for rehabilitation under this Program must be commercially zoned and developed for uses permitted by the City's Zoning Ordinance.

As a result of participating in this rehabilitation program, it must be adequately demonstrated that the subject property is or will continue to be utilized for commercial purposes as provided by the City's adopted zoning ordinance.

All taxes, assessments, and insurance premiums currently due or in arrears on the property must be paid before grants are made. The applicant property must have sufficient fire and flood insurance (if required) as necessary to protect the owner and the City's interest in the property.

GRANT AMOUNTS:

If the City provides all the project funding without a match from the applicant, the maximum grant shall be \$2,500. However, applicants are encouraged to match City funds: the maximum grant increases to \$25,000 if the applicant matches the City funds with a \$22,500 private contribution. The grant increases on a dollar-for-dollar basis over \$2,500, up to the \$25,000 cap. All grants are on a reimbursement basis with evidence of completeness and payments to contractors and subcontractors required.

For owners of multi-tenant centers, the maximum grant is \$250,000 based on a total expenditure of no less than \$500,000. The requirements for center owners are:

- The development of a Signage Program for the center and the implementation of no fewer than 75% (or 6 signs, whichever is more) of the individual tenant signs in the center. This includes installation of new or repair or replacement signs; includes neon or halo lit signs;
- Replacement of awnings, canopies, or sunshades (installation of new or repair or replacement of fixed metal or fabric awnings) if they are currently featured in the center;
- Painting or exterior surface treatment of the entire façade (stucco, tile, stone, or brick replacement or repair);
- Asphalt paving, replacement or repair of tiles or decorative pavers (not in the public right-of-way); sidewalk or courtyard repaving (not in the public right-of-way);
- Repair or replacement of masonry walls or footings;
- Outdoor lighting (installation of new exterior lighting fixtures; repair or replacement of existing exterior lighting fixtures);
- Installation, repair or replacement of decorative or security fencing;
- Replacement of plate glass windows; re-glazing of windows or change of window mullions with the approval of architectural application by the City;
- Installation or replacement of outdoor landscaping and fountains, particularly the replacement of decorative perimeter landscaping to drought-tolerant;

REHABILITATION STANDARDS:

All work performed under the provisions of this Program shall meet all applicable standards contained in the City's adopted zoning ordinance, local building and safety codes, and such other codes as designated by the Planning and Building and Safety Divisions. The City's Municipal and Zoning Ordinance can be viewed on the City's web site at <http://ci.carson.ca.us>.

The City has determined that City-funded assistance may only be used for exterior rehabilitation items and American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance requirements.

Such exterior improvements may include, but are not limited to, exterior refinishing, new attached signage, and building façade improvements.

The scope of work anticipated under the Program generally addresses exterior blighting conditions. As such, property inspections are generally focused on the exterior of the structure and general site conditions. In the course of any inspection which results in the disclosure of a code deficiency such as faulty wiring, plumbing, fire protection, egress and ingress exiting, or other such deficiency, it shall be the responsibility of the owner to correct all identified deficiencies prior to Program participation.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event that the code deficiency is directly associated with work that will be performed as a part of the façade improvements (e.g.: a substandard entry door which is of insufficient size and lacks panic hardware, which will be replaced as a component of a new storefront), then such repairs may be included within the allowable scope of work under the Program.

Therefore, Program assistance can be used for Building and Health Code violations, seismic upgrades, and ADA compliance requirements as identified by the City and in compliance with the exterior rehabilitation requirement. However, eligible rehabilitation activities funded Program are limited solely to the exterior of the building structure and the performance of required ADA compliance. The eligibility of any costs for ADA barrier removal under the Program is subject to Director approval. Typical allowable ADA improvements include improvements of entryway, path of travel, handicap bathroom access, and ADA parking spaces.

All Program improvements must be physically attached to the property and permanent in nature. Program Staff will recommend specific improvements based on a site analysis or architectural design recommendations.

Additionally, to participate in the Commercial Façade Improvement Program, all signage on the property to be rehabilitated must be brought up to conformance and maintained in conformance with the Sign Ordinance of the City.

APPLICATION REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS:

Applications are available in the Community Development Department. The applicant is required to hire the contractor and is responsible for obtaining design approvals. The City shall assist in scoping the project and will reimburse the applicant for work performed, based on submittal of evidence of work performed and paid.

Staff will process and receive applications on a first-come first-served basis. All applications will be date-stamped as they are received. Following staff's determination of applicant and property eligibility, grant funds shall be reserved in order of application receipt and approval. The reservation of funds is a planning function and not a commitment to provide funds or service. The City is not committed to provide assistance

until all processing procedures have been implemented and the applicant enters into an Improvement Agreement with the City.

Funding is limited and subject to availability. When all available program funds have been reserved for the fiscal year, unfunded applicants shall be placed on the Program Interest List. These unfunded applicants will have first priority when additional funds become available, if necessary, and will be notified and may re-apply to the Program at such time.

To the extent feasible, prospective applicants shall be pre-screened for basic eligibility requirements over the telephone by Program staff. A log of pre-screening calls shall be maintained by the City. In the course of performing an initial application review, staff will perform the following tasks:

1. Review application for completeness and eligibility of the applicant and property.
2. If upon review of the application staff determines the applicant and property are ineligible, inform the applicant in writing of such determination.
3. If upon review of the application staff determines the applicant is eligible, Staff will log the application into the program database.
4. Obtain a property information report from the City's GIS system or other property information service provided by the City's title company. This report must include the Assessor's Parcel Number, square footage, year built, ownership information, flood zone information, transaction history, and other pertinent information used to verify property type, size, age, value, and physical location.
5. Program staff to determine if the proposed rehabilitation meets the goals of the City, owner and Program.
6. Once an applicant has been determined to meet eligibility requirements, and the project has received preliminary approval by the Program Staff, an initial inspection of the property will be made by Staff to confer with the property owner to develop a preliminary proposed scope of work, and the type of assistance being requested.

As a goal, processing time from the date the Program determines that the applicant is eligible for assistance under the Program until a grant is approved or denied shall be 60 days.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that City funds may not be released until the City has certified that a review of the project activities demonstrates that no significant impact on the human environment is likely to occur or that actions have been initiated that would mitigate any potential impacts to the extent practicable.

As such, environmental forms must be completed and approved prior to releasing funds. A Determination of Categorical Exemption, Statutory Worksheet, and Level of Environmental Review form will generally address anticipated typical commercial rehabilitation activities contemplated under the Program. Staff shall ensure that appropriate documentation is prepared and signed by the City's authorized official prior to the commitment of Program funds. Copies of the environmental review documentation shall be maintained in the project file.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT AGREEMENT:

The Façade Improvement Grant Agreement is an agreement between the City and the Owner that links the grant documents to the completion of the Façade Improvement Project by the Owner. It is a contract between the City and the applicant setting forth the terms and conditions of the grant of Program funds, specifically:

- a. Source of funding.
- b. Applicable funding source requirements.
- c. Conditions of program eligibility.
- d. Amount granted.
- e. Basic use of the funds.

At all times throughout the application and pre-construction phases, it is critical that Staff emphasize to owners both verbally and in any written correspondences that absolutely no Program funds have been committed or approved by the City until the designated Program representative signs the Improvement Agreement. Only after this occurs can funds be encumbered.

FLOOD AND HAZARD INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS:

Applicants are obligated to carry sufficient hazard insurance coverage on the subject property to be rehabilitated under the provisions of this Program. Prior to any grant or loan assistance, minimum fire insurance coverage shall be provided in an amount which is equivalent to the value of the subject building or structure including the proposed rehabilitation improvements. Uninsured applicants must obtain coverage in the required amount prior to receiving grant and/or loan assistance. Applicants in a "Flood Hazard Area" will be required to purchase flood hazard insurance. This requirement may be waived for emergency repairs, at the discretion of the City.

APPLICATION FORM (Page 1/3)

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Business Name:	
Business Address:	
Applicant's Name:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

<p>Description of Requested Improvements:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Estimated Cost: _____</p> <p>Is this your estimated cost, or have you obtained a bid or estimate from an architect or contractor?</p> <p>_____ self _____ contractor _____ architect</p> <p>(Please provide a copy of estimate if available)</p>	<p>Please note that if the City provides all of the project funding, the maximum grant shall be \$2,500. However, applicants are encouraged to match City funds: the maximum grant increases to \$5,000 if the applicant matches the City funds with a \$2,500 private contribution. The grant increases on a dollar-for-dollar basis over \$2,500, up to the \$25,000 cap.</p> <p>Property owners of multi-tenant centers undertaking improvements on behalf of the entire center are eligible for up to \$250,000 on a dollar-for-dollar match basis.</p> <p>Amount applying for:</p> <p>\$ _____</p>
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APPLICATION FORM – (PAGE 2/3)

PROPERTY INFORMATION

FOR OWNER OCCUPANTS

I hereby certify that I am the owner of my business property. The property is vested (owned) under the following name:

Property Owner Legal Name:

Contact Information:

Assessors Parcel Number:

FOR TENANT/LESSEES

I am a lessee/renter of the space for which I am applying for a Façade Improvement Grant. The owner of the property is:

Contact information for the property owner:

Remaining years on lease term: _____

Assessors Parcel Number:

PROGRAM BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the areas are:

APPLICATION CHECKLIST - (Page 3/3)

All applicants must provide:

- Application (Completed and Signed by Applicant)
- If incorporated, evidence that applicant has authorization to apply for program
- Verification of Property Ownership, if owner (Title or Deed of Trust)
- Evidence of Tenant's Right to Make Improvements, if tenant or lessee (Signed)
- Description of Scope of Work
- Estimate or Bid, if available
- Copy of Valid Carson Business License (Applicant, if applicable)
- Copy of Valid Carson Business License (Contractor hired to perform work, required)
- Copy of Contractor's License
- Copy of Property Insurance Policy including Flood and Hazard Insurance
- W-9 (Any reimbursements awarded will be made to the address listed on the W-9)
- DUNS (Dun & Bradstreet's Data Universal Numbering System) Number (if applicable)

No assistance may be provided for any contract awarded before the application is approved. Once the application is approved by the City, the applicant must provide the following:

- Evidence of required permit approvals from the City of Carson
- If claiming cash match, provide verification of funds availability (loan agreement, canceled checks, etc.)

I hereby declare that the foregoing information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the City of Carson to verify the information to determine my eligibility and to conduct an inspection of my property. I understand that as the applicant I will hire the contractor and am responsible for obtaining design approvals. I understand that the program provides that the City will reimburse the applicant for work performed, based on submittal of evidence of work performed and paid, and that the City will not pay contractors or vendors directly.

Applicant

Date

City of Carson – Department of Community Development
701 E. Carson Street, Carson, CA 90745

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