

EASTON MAIN STREET INITIATIVE EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

2024 DESIGN CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM AND GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING AND FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

Purpose and Scope

In order to encourage rehabilitation of building façades and streetscape improvements in the downtown business district, the Easton Main Street Initiative (EMSI) is able to use funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development to financially assist property and business owners in completing their projects.

Eligible buildings must be located in the Main Street district which is indicated on the map below in green. Most street-facing exterior improvements will be considered for the grant including paint, windows, repointing, doors, façade repair/ restoration, and signage. In addition to physical improvements, professional design services are also eligible for assistance under this program.



Available Funds for Façade Improvements

This grant program will reimburse property and business owners a fifty percent match of project costs up to \$5,000. For example, if a project costs a total of \$10,000, \$5,000 will be reimbursed. Projects exceeding \$10,000 will only be eligible for a maximum reimbursement of \$5,000. Façade improvement projects exceeding \$25,000 in cost are not eligible for this program.

Available Funds for Design Services

This grant program will reimburse property and business owners up to \$500 for professional design fees related to a façade improvement project. Reimbursement will be made in full with no match requirement for design fees up to the stated maximum allowance.

Available Funds for Signage

This grant program will reimburse property and business owners a fifty percent match of signage costs up to \$1,500. Sign projects that exceed \$3,000 are only eligible for a maximum reimbursement of \$1,500.

Eligibility Requirements

Only property owners, tenants and business owners in the designated Main Street district are eligible to apply for this grant. Tenants and business owners are encouraged to apply for assistance even if they do not have any ownership in the building. The tenant applicant must receive written permission from the property owner to be submitted with their application. The property owner and tenant may apply for funding for separate work on the same building. For example, the building owner may wish to replace windows, while the tenant may wish to replace signage. Any applications made for improvements on the same property by the same person must be at least three years apart from completion of the original project.

Corner properties and properties with two façades visible from streets recognized by City of Easton streetmaps may be eligible for additional funding. Please indicate this on the application. At the discretion of the EMSI Design Committee, projects with major impact may be eligible for additional funding.

Eligible activities include exterior improvements made to the property that are visible to the street and permanently attached or adhered to the property such as paint, masonry, lighting, shutters, windows, downspouts, doors, façade repair, sidewalk improvements, and signage that is attached to the building.

If the building owner or tenant is proposing to do the improvements themselves, EMSI will reimburse for materials only, and the building owner or tenant must submit estimates of material prices. If the building owner is a professional contractor, only materials and labor costs for improvements completed by subcontractors will be reimbursed provided an invoice and proof of payment is submitted.

At the time and date of application, all applicants must be up to date and current on the payment of their Easton Area School District and Northampton County taxes as well as City of Easton accounts (including property taxes) in order to be considered and in order to be eligible to receive funds.

Written notification of EMSI Design Challenge grant award must be received by property/business owner prior to project launch or sign installation. Projects that begin before receipt of “Letter to Proceed” will risk voidance of their approval.

Evaluation Criteria and Approvals

Deadline for submission of completed applications is **Friday, June 7, 2024**. Please note, this is a competitive process. Applications will be evaluated on a point system, taking into consideration the following criteria:

- Location / visibility from main corridors
- Aesthetic impact
- Business impact
- Historic impact
- Significance of the grant to the success of the project
- Use of building
- Owner occupation
- Project amount
- Use of design professional
- Overall scope of the project
- Applicant’s ability to carry out the project

All designs must be in keeping with the Easton Historic District Guidelines and recommendations of the Historic District Commission (HDC). Approval from the HDC, and a related Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from Easton City Council must be attached to the application. If the COA is pending approval, the application for funds may be approved pending approval by the HDC and Easton City Council. EMSI will award funds based on the project’s compliance with standards set forth by the Secretary of Interior for historic restoration and preservation.

Many projects, including signage, will require a City building permit or zoning approval. All proper permits and zoning approvals must be received in order to be eligible for funding. Any applicant who received approval for grant funds but who finished the project without proper City approvals will not be eligible for reimbursement of expenditures.

If façade painting is part of the proposed project, the applicant must submit color swatches and a color schemata diagram indicating where each color will be used on the building. The color schemata must be a minimum submission of the manufacturers’ color swatches and a print-out photograph of the entire façade clearly indicating where each color is to be used. A professional color rendering of the façade may be submitted but is not required. Although not regulated by HDC, color combination and placement on the building must be approved by EMSI as part of the application approval process. If the approved colors are not implemented in the project, funds may be withheld.

All information on the HDC, permits and zoning can be found in the Codes and Zoning office on the second floor of Easton City Hall and online at www.easton-pa.gov

Application Process

1. Contact the EMSI office at (610) 330-9940 to answer any questions you may have.

2. Arrange for **three bids or material estimates** for the work being done along with a time table for completion.
3. If applicable, obtain a Historic District Commission Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Application from the Codes department, located on the second floor of City Hall or call (610) 250-6724 with any questions.
4. Obtain proof of current compliance with all taxes associated with the property or business.
5. Once the preliminary review of the application and corresponding bids and requirements is finished and has been deemed complete, the application will be submitted to the Design Committee for review.
6. If approved by the committee, the applicant will receive a Notice to Proceed letter from the EMSI staff. Applicant must also sign a Reimbursement Agreement document and Non-Discrimination/ Non-Sexual Harassment Clause. **Work must begin within 60 days from the date of the grant approval letter and must be completed within 6 months of inception.** Any modifications to the original design must be brought to the attention of the EMSI office. Designs that deviate from the original without prior approval risk their reimbursement.
7. When all work is complete and all contactors and professional services are paid in full, please forward receipts, invoices marked "Paid in Full" and canceled checks or credit card statements for the completed work to the EMSI office for reimbursement along with photos of the completed project. Payments to contractors, suppliers and vendors must originate from Grantee. Do not pay in cash.
8. Once all information and receipts are submitted, and prior to any funds being released, the Design Committee will arrange for a site visit to inspect that the work has been completed as per the original application.
9. Reimbursement can be expected **within 60 days of submission** of appropriate paperwork.
10. Applicants may apply for funding for façade improvements and design/architectural services simultaneously. Signage applications must be made under separate applications.
11. EMSI reserves the right to withdraw funding from any applicant that does not comply with the stated guidelines and processes set forth.

**APPLICATION FOR MAIN STREET FAÇADE
DESIGN CHALLENGE GRANT 2024**

Applicant name: _____

Business Name: _____

Property Address:

Mailing Address:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Reimbursement check is written out to: _____

- Business? Yes ___ No ___
 - o If yes, please provide Tax ID# _____
- Applicant? Yes ___ No ___
 - o If yes, please provide SS # _____

Building owner's name and contact information if different from above:

BUILDING INFORMATION

Building's Primary Use (please indicate number of residential units if mixed use property):

Current Tenants, if Owner: _____

Is Building Fully Occupied? Yes _____ No _____

Lease Expiration Date, if Tenant: _____

Application is for:

____ Signage (Please indicate sign type)

- ____ blade (projecting) with lighting
- ____ blade without lighting
- ____ painted window sign with lighting
- ____ painted window sign without lighting
- ____ awning or canopy with lettering
- ____ flat, wall or fascia

____ Exterior improvement

- ____ painting
- ____ windows
- ____ doors
- ____ gutters / visible roof
- ____ repointing
- ____ other, please specify: _____

____ Code compliance/ADA compliance

____ Professional design services

2.) How long has this business been in operation?

- 10 or more years
- between 3 and 10 years
- less than 3 years

3.) Building use: (check all that apply)

- Retail/restaurant storefront
- Owner occupied commercial
- Tenant occupied commercial
- Commercial property/mixed use
- Owner occupied residential
- Tenant occupied residential

4.) Was a design professional consulted on this project? yes no

If yes, please provide contact information:

Proposed Dollar Amount for completed project: _____

Timetable for Completion:

Do you plan improvements in addition to those that will be covered by the grant?
If yes, please explain:

Please include with your application:

1. Completed application
2. Completed W-9 form for reimbursement payee
3. Proof of current compliance with all local taxing authorities to include copies of most recent property tax bills and copies of proof of payment
4. Current photograph(s) of building
5. Project cost quotes/estimates for all components of the project (minimum three required). If doing the work yourself, a single materials estimate is sufficient.
6. Applicable diagrams, sketches, photos, color swatches, schemata, etc.
7. Letter permitting exterior improvements, if not the property owner
8. Contractor signed quote
9. Copy of contractor liability insurance
10. Historic District Commission (HDC) Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Application and/or subsequent City Council approval if already obtained. If a hearing date is pending, please advise as to the date.
11. Any Additional information you may feel would be helpful in the evaluation process

I acknowledge that I have read the complete Grant Guidelines and Application Process and have retained a copy for my records.

Signature

Date

***Updated 4/24/2024**