



**City of Williamsport Main Street Program  
Design Challenge Grant  
For Storefront and Façade Improvements  
Policies and Procedures**

**CITY OF WILLIAMSPORT**

**For additional program information or questions please contact:**

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## **DESIGN CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The Borough Business Revitalization Program offers 1 to 1 matching reimbursement grants for façade improvements in the City of Williamsport's Main Street District up to a maximum amount of \$5,000 per property (per PA Department of Community and Economic Development). Design Challenge Grants are intended to stimulate private investment in the preservation of historic downtown architecture and to foster image-making improvements to properties.

Funding for the City Main Street Revitalization Program's Design Challenge Grant Program is provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development through the New Communities Program. Grants are made in accordance with the City of Williamsport Main Street Design Challenge Grant Policies and Procedures and are in conformance with all applicable state and local requirements.

## **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Any person(s) or other legal entity owning property in the City of Williamsport's Main Street Project area (see attached map defined herein – project boundaries in green) is eligible to apply. Special arrangements can be made for merchants who lease buildings. Priority will be given to commercial properties and businesses especially those that contain storefronts. The selection of Design Challenge Grant recipients is based solely on project merit and not on financial need. Only external improvements are eligible. Projects will be evaluated in terms of quality, design compatibility and level of visual impact.

All property owners must be current on their State, County, School District, and Local Municipal taxes in order to be eligible. If a property owner is delinquent on their taxes, tenants located within the property are also ineligible to receive a grant. The applicant must be current on all applicable municipal utility bills (i.e. Sewer and Water).

A property shall be defined as having its own unique city tax identification number.

In cases where more than one storefront exists within the same property, each storefront can receive its own grant for eligible grant activities but the total amount awarded to the property cannot exceed the grant maximum (up to \$5,000). A storefront shall be defined as having its own unique entrance, interior space, and display window. One storefront shall contain one business. Multiple businesses that share one storefront shall be considered one applicant. The façade is the front part of the building facing the street and has its address on that street. It includes the entirety of the face of the building from the ground up.

A single property owner can receive more than one Grant if he/she owns more than one property. If a property owner seeks and receives a Grant, a tenant in the same building can also receive a Grant as long as the total amount does not exceed the Grant maximum amount for the building (up to \$5,000). A tenant can apply for the full amount, with the consent of the property owner.

A single business that spans two or more properties is eligible for one grant.

**PROJECT AREA – (indicated in green on the map)**

**Williamsport Main Street Boundaries**



## **Program Overview**

### **ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES**

Major maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of commercial storefronts and facades are eligible activities. Projects must achieve visible results that enhance the city's image, marketability and economic vitality. Projects will be evaluated in terms of quality, design compatibility and level of visual impact.

## **INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES**

Sidewalks, landscaping, fences, retaining walls, site improvements, paving, parking lots, and sandblasting are not eligible activities.

## **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

For more detailed guidelines please refer to the attached Design Guidelines for Downtown Williamsport. Where applicable please refer to U.S. Department of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings". Available at: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/stand.htm>.

Generally, the following principals should guide an applicant in determining how to approach the design of a project. If there are questions or a need for clarification, please contact your City Main Street Manager.

**CHARACTER** – The **CITY OF WILLIAMSPORT** enjoys a variety of architectural styles. It is the goal of this design program to see that each building is presented in its most appealing form and the original character of the building is preserved and enhanced. A property should be used for its characteristic purpose, or be placed in a new use that requires reasonable changes to the defining properties of the exterior of the building and its site and environment.

**PRESERVATION** - Any existing or historical character of a property should be retained and preserved to the extent that it is feasible. The removal of historical materials or alterations of features and spaces that characterize a property should be avoided.

**CHANGE** – It is recognized that many properties have changed over time. Those changes that contribute to the significance of the Target Area's architectural character in their own right should be retained and preserved.

**HISTORY** – Each property should be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create an inaccurate sense of history or architectural elements from other buildings will not be favored.

**DETAILS** – Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property should be treated with respect.

**REPAIRS** – Features that have made a property unique and recognizable should be repaired when they have deteriorated, rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature should match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, material. Replacement of missing features should be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence.

**SURFACE CLEANING** – Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials are not favored. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, should be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

**ALTERATIONS** – New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction should not destroy any historic materials that characterize a property. The new work shall be compatible with the size, scale and architectural features that protect the characteristic integrity of the property and its environment.

**SIGNAGE** – Signs play an important role in how a business is initially perceived. Not only are they a marketing tool, but they also set the appearance from a roadway. Signage should project an atmosphere that is welcoming and inviting to members of the community and visitors. Consistent signage adds to the character of the area in which it is placed, and should be considered to be a unifying factor in a town. Lighting to be external, directed onto the sign.

### **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

Williamsport Design Challenge Grants are intended to stimulate private investment. The Program seeks to preserve and restore historic city architecture and to foster image-making improvements to all properties regardless of their historic significance.

Projects must achieve visible results that enhance the city image, marketability, and economic vitality. Design Challenge Grants have the following specific objectives:

1. Reduce or eliminate vacancies in the city, and promote the adaptive reuse of commercial buildings;
2. Bring substandard building conditions into compliance with basic health, safety, and building codes and enhance the visual appeal of city businesses;
3. Facilitate compliance with federal ADA access requirements; and

Assist with the preservation of historic commercial buildings and assure that such buildings are rehabilitated in an appropriate manner.

Grant applicants are strongly encouraged to use the services of design professionals. The Williamsport Main Street Program facilitates compliance with the required design standards by providing technical and design assistance to Grant applicants. Allocations of design services will be determined by the Williamsport Design Committee based on criteria that it establishes.

### **ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES**

A variety of property improvements, including major maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of storefronts and facades are eligible activities. Eligible grant activities include:

1. Brick and Stone Masonry – Structural repairs, cleaning, re-pointing and painting.

2. Architectural Metals – Repair, cleaning, refinishing, painting, duplication, and restoration of exterior building components, e.g. cast iron, pressed tin.
3. Doors and Upper Story Windows - Maintenance, repairs, replacement, and restoration of window sashes, exterior doors, and installation of storm windows in conjunction with other significant façade improvements.
4. Exterior Woodwork – Maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of sills, windows and doorframes, bulkheads, storefront and roof cornices, window hoods, decorative moldings.
5. Storefronts – Removal of inappropriate coverings and additions, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of display and transom windows and lighting.
6. Signage – Maintenance, repair, removal, and replacement in connection with real property improvements.
7. Painting – Surface preparation, cleaning, painting.
8. Awnings – Installation, repair, and maintenance of fabric awnings in connection with real property improvements.
9. Lighting – External lighting fixtures both for signage and building lighting.
10. Routine Applicant Maintenance- the applicant may apply to do work him or herself but will only be reimbursed the cost of supplies. Labor will not be reimbursed unless the applicant is a qualified, licensed contractor. The applicant will be required to obtain to estimates for the cost of supplies.

## **TERMS OF GRANT AWARD**

Williamsport Main Street Design Challenge Grants are awarded on a 50-50 matching cost basis. Individual property owners and authorized tenants, lessees, etc. match the Grant dollar-for-dollar with private investment monies. The maximum Design Challenge Grant that may be awarded is \$5,000 per application for projects costing \$10,000 or more.

**Grants are made on a cost reimbursement basis**, following a process of application, design, review, approval and construction. Receipt of grant awards is contingent upon submittal of construction cost invoices from bona fide contractors or tradesmen. The applicant must submit documentation to the Williamsport Main Street Design Committee that substantiates the total and final cost of the work and documentation that substantiates the work is complete in order to receive rebate check.

All work must be completed within three (3) months from the Notice to Proceed; otherwise the grant will be forfeited. Applicants may request an extension in writing through the Design Committee.

In the event that the approved project exceeds a total of \$25,000, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry enforce Prevailing Wage regulations. This is a requirement of the Department of Labor and Industry and must be made known to the contractor or contractors who are responsible for completion of the project. Failure to adhere to Prevailing Wage regulations could lead to Department of Labor and Industry sanctions against the contractor.

## **STATE AND LOCAL REGULATIONS**

All work must conform to local and state ordinances: permits from the City of Williamsport and/or permission from the property owner will be required in writing, if applicable.

1. Properties will be inspected in accordance with the Code of Ordinances for the City of Williamsport to establish the scope of work necessary to comply with the basic health, safety, and property maintenance requirements of the International Building Code. All rehabilitation work financed in connection with the Design Challenge Grant Program must conform to the applicable requirements of City codes and regulations.
2. Any questions about City Codes and regulations should be referred to the City of Williamsport's Zoning/Codes Officer at 245 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Williamsport, (570) 327-7517.
3. Contractor must conform to Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry Prevailing Wage standards if the cost of the project exceeds \$25,000. For more information on those standards, visit [http://www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/li\\_apps/requestPW.asp](http://www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/li_apps/requestPW.asp)

## **REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

All Design Challenge Grant applications and completed projects are subject to review by the Williamsport Main Street Program Design Committee as a condition of the grant award.

The Williamsport Main Street Design Committee will review applications and determine eligibility using the Program's Design Challenge Grant Policies and Procedures and the Design Challenge Grant Evaluation System (attached hereto).

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

The Williamsport Main Street Program's Design Challenge Grant Program is operated on a "first-come, first-served" basis until all funds have been allocated. The Program can be broken down into four phases that are designed to walk the applicant through the process step by step.

### **I. Design Your Project**

After you receive two (2) bids you will be ready to submit your Formal Application to the Design Committee for their evaluation.

The major steps include:

- Hold individual design assistance consultation (if deemed necessary)
  - Receive rendering/sketch of proposed improvements
  - Receive scope of work for bidding purposes
- Obtain two bids
- Submit application with scope of work, two bids, photo of existing building, project narrative (summary of work to be done, impact on property, business and additional comments speaking to the value of this project)
- Complete Formal Application and submit to Design Committee by advertised application date. (Date will be set after of all the Intent to Participate Forms have been submitted and reviewed and the length of time required to provide the necessary design assistance is determined. All applicants will be notified in writing.)

The Design Committee will do the following once the application is complete:

- Review Formal Application
  - Notify applicants in writing of Committee decision to approve or deny allocation of grant funds

### **II. Build Your Project**

If approved, it will be up to the applicant to secure all necessary permits required for construction. Once all of required permits have been obtained, the applicant must enter into a simple but formal Reimbursement Agreement with Williamsport Main Street Program that states all work must be completed per the approved application. Copies of all obtained permits must be submitted to the Williamsport Main Street Manager prior to the execution of the Reimbursement Agreement.

Upon execution of the Reimbursement Agreement, the applicant will receive final instructions and a written Notice to Proceed from the Williamsport Main Street Manager. **Work preformed prior to receiving a written Notice to Proceed will not be eligible for reimbursement. Any unapproved deviations from the approved application will make the project ineligible for reimbursement.**

The applicant will have three months from the date of receiving the written Notice to Proceed to build the project. Applicants may request an extension through the Design Committee.

The major steps include:

- Applicant obtains all required permits and submits copies to the Main Street Manager
- Applicant Signs Reimbursement Agreement
- Applicant Receives Final Instructions and written Notice to Proceed
- Construct Project

### **III. Reimbursement for your Project**

After your project has been constructed it will be time to get reimbursed. In order to get paid after project completion the applicant must submit documentation to the Design Committee that substantiates the total and final cost of the work. The applicant must also provide documentation that substantiates the work is complete, including invoices from the contractor, a copy of the canceled check to verify that payment has been paid in full and a current photo of the property. Upon receipt and review of the aforementioned documentation the Design Committee will recommend that reimbursement be made. The Main Street Program will then release the funding in the form of a rebate check to the applicant.

The major steps include:

- Applicant submits cost and completion documentation (including invoice, canceled check and photo) to the Design Committee
- Design committee reviews documentation and submits recommendation to the Main Street Program for reimbursement
- Main Street Program approves reimbursement request and distributes rebate check to applicant

**For questions regarding the Design Challenge Grant or for more information on the Williamsport Main Street Program please contact:**

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