



Façade and Signage Improvement Program Guidelines

A. INTRODUCTION

The Baton Rouge North Economic Development District (BRNEDD) has established the Façade and Signage Improvement Program (FSIP), which will provide technical and financial assistance to property owners seeking to renovate or restore their exterior signage, lighting, or commercial building facades. The FSIP is designed to impact properties in need of revitalization, resulting in the improved exterior, visibility and presentation of a business. The FSIP is not designed to subsidize corrections to building code violations that prolong the life of a commercial property.

FSIP will provide a fifty percent (50%) matching grant up to \$5,000 for the funding of well-designed improvements which will coordinate all important features of the storefront into a more attractive image while creating, if necessary, an accessible entrance for the public. This may include the restoration of architectural details, better windows and doors, and well-proportioned signage and lighting. Applicants will be responsible for hiring licensed architects and contractors to refine this conceptual design depending on the scope of work.

B. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply to the terms used in this policy:

Applicant: the property owner signing the Application for a Façade and Signage Improvement Grant.

Construction Costs: the cost of permits, fees, construction materials, and installation labor. All other associated costs are deemed excluded, including, but not exclusively, the following costs: design, construction document preparation bidding, sweat equity and construction financing.

DRC: the District's Development Review Committee.

Eligible Enhancements: the improvements identified as eligible in Section C of the guidelines.

Façade: the portion of the building parallel to the primary right-of-way as determined by the District.

Notice to Proceed: a written notice from District Staff authorizing the Applicant to begin construction as approved by the District.



Property: the physical lot and/or building to which improvements are being made.

Staff: the District's Executive Director or their designee(s).

C. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following criterial must be met for participation in FSIP:

1. Applicants must be commercial property owners located within the boundaries of the Baton Rouge North Economic Development District
2. Applicants who have previously received a grant award from the BRNEDD must wait 12-months from the date of the award before applying for another grant
3. Non-conforming signage on the property (as defined by East Baton Rouge Parish Ordinance - Chapter 16. Signs) must be permanently removed as part of the improvement (if applicable)
4. Applicants must be up to date on all Parish and Sate taxes prior to participation in the program
5. Applicants must not have any liens filed against the property owned by the applicant, including but not limited to, grass cutting/blight liens, demolition liens, board-up/open structure liens and paying liens (this pertains to improvements completed and associated with FSIP program participation)
6. Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements
7. Understanding the overall objective of the FSIP is to improve the exterior, visibility and presentation of a property; the District has the discretion to decline an application while suggesting enhancements that would enable future acceptance
8. Ineligible businesses: residences, home businesses, check cashing, bars/taverns, liquor stores, tattoo parlors, pawnshops, night clubs, and adult stores.



D. DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

Improvements to be funded by the program must be compatible with the character and architecture of the individual building as well as meet District standards with regards to latest construction and design trends. Buildings with significant architectural qualities are strongly encouraged to restore and maintain these features. Improvements for buildings not having such architectural features should still be carefully considered and be seen as an opportunity to substantially enhance the appearance of the buildings and their streetscapes.

1. Eligible Façade/Signage Improvements:

- a. Restoration of details in historically contributing or significant buildings, and removal of elements which cover architectural details
- b. Window replacement and window framing visible from the street which is appropriately scaled to the building
- c. New District-approved signage, including monument signage, pole signage, electronic message boards and other signage as specified in the District's codes;
- d. Lighting which is visually appealing and appropriately illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of a building façade;
- e. Awnings or canopies which can be both functional and visually appealing;
- f. Curbing, irrigation, approved trees, landscaping beds (not including planting material) or other landscaping features attached to the building where appropriate;
- g. Cleaning, repainting or re-siding of building;
- h. Resurfacing and/or restriping of parking lots visible from the street;
- i. New storefront construction, appropriately scaled within an existing building;
- j. Removal of architectural barriers to public accessibility
- k. Replacement or repair of the portions of the roof that are visible from an adjacent public street
- l. Replacement or repair of existing gutters and/or downspouts
- m. Installation of new sidewalks and/or the replacement or repair of existing sidewalks

2. Ineligible Improvements/Expenses:

- a. Exterior improvements located on the rear of the buildings
- b. Interior improvements



- c. Outdoor dining/seating
- d. Playground or recreational equipment
- e. Structural changes
- f. Burglar bars
- g. Security/alarm system
- h. "Sweat Equity"
- i. Murals
- j. New commercial construction
- k. Benches/Porch swings
- l. Umbrellas
- m. Gazebos
- n. Trellises
- o. Window boxes
- p. Permitting fees
- q. Architectural, survey and other professional fees
- r. Asbestos testing, removal, abatement or remediation
- s. Improvements for which insurance monies are received

3. Prior Improvements

Alternations and improvements made prior to receiving a "Notice to Proceed" are not eligible for reimbursement.

E. PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

1. Financial Assistance

Funding offered is a grant in which the FSIP fully **reimburses** the Applicant up to **(50%) of costs, (\$5,000 maximum reimbursement for \$10,000 or greater in improvements)**. Architectural design fees may not be included in the total cost of eligible improvements.

Applicant's match may be in the form of other financial aid (grant or loan) received from other agencies and/or banks but may not be "in-kind". The FSIP will only provide reimbursement after the Applicant has paid their licensed architect, contractor, or vendor(s) in full and after the project is determined to have been completed in accordance with the contract between the District and Applicant.

2. Application and Information



If you wish to participate in the FSIP, please visit our website at www.brnedd.com/facade.

F. PROCEDURES

All prospective applicants must follow the procedures in the order outlined below.

1. Applicant completes and submits FSIP application online along with the required documents
2. FSIP coordinator contacts the applicant to discuss the application submission, FSIP program overview and the proposed improvements that includes photos, plans or drawings provided by the applicant.
3. FSIP coordinator visits the applicant's business location and performs a pre-improvement assessment.
4. Proposed projects will be presented to the BRNEDD Board for review and final approval.
5. Upon approval by the BRNEDD Board, the FSIP coordinator obtains a fully executed FSIP Applicant agreement from the business owner and releases a "Notice to Proceed" (NTP) to commence project improvements. Any work completed prior to receiving an NTP will not be reimbursed.
6. Applicant has seven (7) days from the date the NTP is sent to begin implementation of BRNEDD-approved improvements. The Applicant must provide the FSIP coordinator with copies of all building permits and certifications obtained for the improvement project.
7. Licensed contractor or vendor constructs improvements as specified in the final design. Any changes to the BRNEDD approved plan must be reviewed and approved by the FSIP coordinator
8. Applicant notifies the FSIP coordinator the project is completed.
9. FSIP coordinator performs a final assessment and confirms all improvements comply with final drawings and specifications.



10. Applicant submits copies of all paid invoices, a signed FSIP Improvement Acceptance Form, and FSIP Disbursement Form to the FSIP coordinator, who then submits a request for grant award release within fifteen (15) days.
11. If the application is denied, the Applicant will not be allowed to reapply to the Program for 60 days from the original application date.

The District reserves the right to make adjustments regarding conditions and parameters outlined in these guidelines.

G. TERMINATION

The Baton Rouge North Economic Development District has the right to terminate any agreement under the Façade and Signage Improvement Program if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines or if the project has been started prior to an executed FSIP Applicant Agreement with the BRNEDD and the receipt of a "Notice to Proceed".