



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)

SMALL BUSINESS FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

I. INTRODUCTION

The Small Business Façade Improvement Program is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The Town of Hamden has allocated funds to enhance the visual appeal and economic vitality of commercial districts within eligible low and moderate-income areas of our community.

The primary objective of this program is to revitalize Hamden's commercial districts by supporting existing small businesses and encouraging new businesses to locate in our town. The program provides direct benefits to participating business owners by improving their storefronts and operations, which can increase customer traffic and sales. Additionally, all Hamden residents benefit through job creation, enhanced services, beautified neighborhoods, and improved economic vitality.

All project approvals are subject to review by Town departments, committees, and commissions, which must adhere to Town ordinances and regulations. Business owners must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations, including Building Code, Property Maintenance Code, and where applicable, Federal Labor Standards Provisions.

II. PROGRAM GOALS

Our specific program goals are to:

1. Enhance the visual appeal and functionality of commercial façades in Hamden's eligible business districts
2. Create and retain jobs for low and moderate-income residents
3. Eliminate blight that negatively impacts business growth and deters reinvestment
4. Retain existing businesses and attract new businesses to Hamden
5. Address conditions detrimental to community health, safety, and welfare
6. Improve access to goods and services for residents in low and moderate-income neighborhoods
7. Strengthen Hamden's commercial corridors and neighborhood business districts

III. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Town provides financial support in the form of a direct grant to eligible small businesses. Key funding details include:

- **Grant Amount:** Up to \$30,000 per qualifying business
- **Availability:** Contingent upon CDBG funding availability
- **Disbursement:** Reimbursement basis after verification of expenditures

CDBG funding awarded is disbursed to applicants awarded funding on a reimbursement basis.

Reimbursement is made only for eligible expenses upon verification the work has been completed and the contractor/vendor paid by the business owner. On a limited case by case basis, the Town of Hamden will consider direct payment to the vendor when a delay in receiving reimbursement by the grant would result in financial hardship for the business owner. Businesses receiving grants must maintain operations in Hamden and comply with all applicable laws, codes, and regulations for a minimum of three years after receiving funds. Failure to do so may result in required repayment of grant funds.

IV. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Economic and Community Development Office is committed to guiding business owners through every step of the application and implementation process:

- **Application Support:** Staff will help businesses complete applications and gather required documentation
- **Design Assistance:** Consultation on façade design options that enhance business visibility while complying with town regulations
- **Permitting Guidance:** Help navigating permit processes, though final approval responsibility remains with the property owner
- **Contractor Selection:** Assistance identifying qualified contractors and reviewing bids.
- **Compliance Oversight:** Ensuring all projects meet CDBG requirements and program goals

V. ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for the program, businesses must meet these criteria:

- **Location:** Business must be in eligible low and moderate-income census tracts (1651, 1655, and 1656)
- **Business Type:** Must be a for-profit entity with 25 or fewer employees
- **Operating History:** Must have been in operation for at least one year
- **Financial Standing:** No delinquent taxes (Town, State, Federal) or liens due to the Town of Hamden
- **Legal Operation:** Must possess all necessary licenses and permits

- **Ownership Structure:** Must not be a franchise operation
- **Application Authority:**
 - Business owners may apply; for multiple owners, one representative must be designated in writing.
 - The property owner must approve of the project and authorize the Town and contractors to complete the improvements in writing. The property owner may also be needed to sign off on any permit requests.

VI. ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

Eligible façade improvements include, but are not limited to:

1. Restoration of original architectural features and removal of elements that cover original design
2. Installation or replacement of business signage and awnings (must comply with town regulations)
3. Exterior painting, cleaning, and repointing of masonry
4. Replacement of exterior doors, windows, stairs, porches, and/or railings visible from public right-of-way
5. Repair or paving of customer parking areas visible from public right-of-way
6. Installation or upgrade of exterior lighting to improve safety and visibility
7. Replacement of architectural elements with structural issues
8. Correction of exterior building code violations
9. Installation of accessibility improvements (ramps, accessible doorways, etc.)
10. Landscaping improvements that enhance curb appeal
11. Other permanent exterior improvements with significant visual impact

All work must comply with Town ordinances and regulations. Historical buildings may have additional requirements to maintain architectural integrity.

VII. INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The program will NOT fund the following:

- Labor costs of the business or property owner
- Refinancing existing debt
- Personal expenses
- Purchase of inventory or consumable goods
- Purchase of alcohol, tobacco, or cannabis products

- Political or religious activities
- Payment of taxes, fines, or legal fees
- Construction of new buildings
- Purchase of real estate
- Interior renovations (unless related to accessibility improvements)
- Activities that do not meet a CDBG national objective
- Activities deemed ineligible based on CDBG regulations
- Activities prohibited by federal, state, or local regulations

VIII. REQUIRED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

Projects selected for funding will require environmental clearance in compliance with 24 CFR Part 58 prior to the commitment of funds.

- No physical work, construction, or commitment of funds may begin until the environmental review process has been completed and approved by the Town and, where required, by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- This includes, but is not limited to, signing contracts, purchasing materials, or beginning any demolition or construction work.
- Applicants will be required to provide additional information required to conduct the environmental review, which includes, but is not limited to, photos necessary to comply with historic preservation requirement, scope of work for planned project describing any construction activities, etc.
- The Town of Hamden will conduct the environmental review and notify applicants once the project is cleared and eligible to proceed.

Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the loss of CDBG funding for the proposed project.

IX. PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria (100-point scale):

- 1. Visual Impact (30 points)**
 - Degree of improvement in building appearance
 - Contribution to overall street aesthetics
 - Consistency with neighborhood character
- 2. Business Sustainability (25 points)**

- Length of time in business
 - Lease terms (preference for long-term leases or owner-occupied)
- 3. Community Impact (25 points)**
- Services provided to neighborhood residents
 - Addresses community needs
- 4. Project Readiness (20 points)**
- Complete application with all required documentation
 - Clear project plan and timeline
 - Ability to secure permits in a timely manner

Projects must score at least 70 points to be considered for funding. The Economic Development Commission will review applications and make recommendations, with final approval authority resting with the Economic and Community Development Office.

X. APPLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

A. APPLICATION

1. The program opens July 1, 2025, accepting applications on a rolling basis with quarterly award cycles
2. Application and guidelines available at <https://www.hamdenedc.com/>
3. Submission of *complete application package including:
 - Completed application form
 - Business plan or summary
 - Project description and budget
 - Design sketches or renderings
 - Cost estimates
 - Proof of property ownership or lease agreement
 - Tax compliance verification
 - Required business licenses
 - Photos of area to be improved
4. Economic Development Commission review and recommendation
5. Final selection by Economic and Community Development Office

**Only complete application packages will be considered.*

B. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

1. Execution of grant agreement outlining terms and conditions.
2. Completion of a required environmental review for projects funded through a federal program before the hiring of a contractor or executing a contract for goods and/or services.
3. Procurement of all necessary permits and approvals.
4. Competitive bidding process (minimum three quotes) for all goods and services.
5. Project completion within six months unless extension granted in writing.
6. Regular progress reporting and documentation of expenditures.
7. Final inspections, as applicable.

C. PAYMENTS

1. All funds disbursed on reimbursement basis
2. Documentation required:
 - Paid invoices and receipts
 - Proof of payment (canceled checks, credit card statements and bank statements)
 - Photos of completed work
 - Compliance with all grant agreement terms
3. Processing of reimbursements within 30-45 days of complete and approved documentation
4. Final payment after verification of all project elements

D. MONITORING AND REPORTING

1. Annual site visits for three years following grant award
2. Reporting requirements:
 - Changes in business operations
 - Maintenance of improvements
3. Notification required for ownership changes, relocations, or closure for a minimum of three years following completion of project.

XI. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

A. BUSINESS INSURANCE

Business owners must obtain and maintain:

- General liability insurance as required by the town's Risk Manager

- Property insurance covering grant-funded improvements
- Workers' compensation insurance if applicable
- Certificate of Insurance naming the Town of Hamden as additional insured

B. CHANGE ORDERS

1. All project changes require prior written approval
2. Changes increasing costs above approved amount are responsibility of business owner
3. Substantial changes may require re-approval by Economic Development Commission

C. PUBLICITY AND RECOGNITION

1. Town reserves the right to use business name and project details in promotional materials
2. Business owners agree to display temporary signage during construction acknowledging CDBG funding
3. Business owners may be asked to participate in program testimonials

XI. NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Projects funded through the Community Development Block Grant must comply with Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended. This requires that no person in the United States shall, on grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, or disability be excluded from participation in, denied benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program funded with community development funds.

Additionally, business owners must comply with Fair Housing Laws and Title VIII of the U.S. 1968 Civil Rights Act, which prohibit discrimination based on race, color, creed, sex, religion, disability, or national origin in business practices.

XIII. PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

For application assistance or questions, please contact:

Town of Hamden

Economic and Community Development Office

2750 Dixwell Avenue

Hamden, CT 06518

Email: cdbg@hamden.com

Website: <https://www.hamdenedc.com/facades>

XIII. DEFINITIONS

- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):** Federal funding program administered by HUD that provides resources for community development activities that benefit low and moderate-income persons.
- **Economic and Community Development Department:** Town department that coordinates economic development activities including business attraction, retention, and expansion efforts.
- **Façade:** The exterior face of a building, especially the principal front that faces a public space.
- **Low and Moderate Income:** As defined by HUD, households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income for Hamden.
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** Federal agency that oversees the CDBG Program. Hartford Area field office: 20 Church Street, One Corporate Center, 10th Floor, Hartford, CT 06103-3220.