

Sterling Main Street Façade Grant Program Guidelines



A. INTRODUCTION

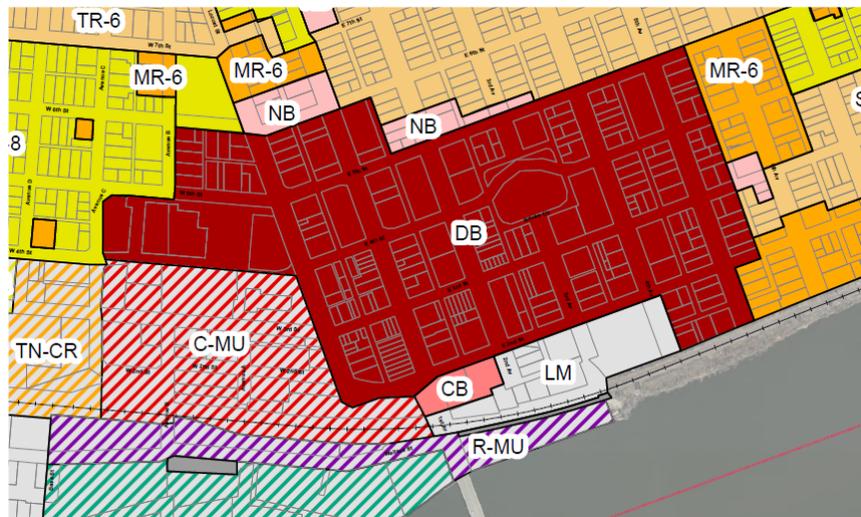
Sterling Main Street’s Façade Grant Program was developed to encourage improvement and investment to the overall revitalization of the Downtown Business District of Sterling. This program provides grant funds for exterior improvements to a property owner’s or tenant’s commercial building that will be aesthetically pleasing and complementary to local design guidelines. The program is funded by Sterling Today, Inc., and administered by Main Street of Sterling, Inc. (commonly referred to as “Sterling Main Street”).

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of the program is to provide financial incentive to business and property owners located within the Downtown Business District of Sterling, Illinois to upgrade the exterior of their building. The program is designed to retain and attract businesses, strengthen the Downtown Business District, increase utilization of downtown buildings, restore economic vitality and enhance property values.

C. TARGET AREA

The Façade Grant Program is available to all commercial properties located within the central business district as defined by the zoning code of the City of Sterling (DB & C-MU shaded areas).



D. AVAILABLE FUNDING

The Program is a reimbursement program. All grant funds are allocated and administered by Sterling Main Street. Grant funding is limited per fiscal year, and awarded on a first come, first served basis. Projects should be “shovel-ready” at the time of application. The Applicant shall pay all design and construction expenses related to improvements to the exterior facades of an existing commercial building. Sterling Main Street shall reimburse the Applicant for eligible improvement expenses.

There are THREE (3) levels of funding available:

- **LEVEL ONE:** To be used for non-architectural elements such as paint and awnings. **The maximum grant amount reimburses 20% of the grantee’s cost up to \$3,000**
- **LEVEL TWO:** To be used for activities which may be considered routine maintenance necessary to prevent further deterioration of original elements, such as tuck pointing, replacement of doors and/or windows, etc. Exterior improvements related to ADA compliance may be included under this category. **The maximum grant amount reimburses 30% of the grantee’s cost up to \$5,000.**
- **LEVEL THREE:** To be use for all Level One and Two improvements PLUS the restoration/refurbishment of architectural elements such as transom windows, cornices, trim and other architectural details. **The maximum grant amount reimburses 50% of the grantee’s cost up to \$40,000**
- **SPECIAL PROJECTS:** Grant requests in excess of \$40,000, or not falling clearly under Levels 1, 2 or 3 shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis directly by Sterling Today, Inc.

All awards in excess of \$10,000 shall be subject to a 10-year recapture agreement. Should Applicant sell or otherwise dispose of the subject property or substantially alter the building façade as improved within 10 years following the grant award, Sterling Main Street shall have the right to recapture a percentage of the funds previously awarded. Ten percent (10%) of the total award will be forgiven for each year of the agreement. Applicant shall be notified at the time any award is made if their grant will be subject to such an agreement, and will be provided additional documentation for their review and signature.

E. ELIGIBLE USES

Façade grant funds may be used for design and maintenance improvements made to front, rear or side building elevations. Priority will be given to front and street facing facades. Eligible activities shall include but are not limited to the following:

1. Awnings, canopies or sunshades (installation of new or repair/replacement of fixed metal or fabric awnings).
2. Painting or exterior surface treatment (stucco, tile, stone or brick replacement or repair).
3. Repair or replacement or restoration of façade masonry, brickwork or wood.
4. Outdoor lighting (installation of new exterior lighting fixtures, repair or replacement of existing lighting fixtures).

5. Repair and/or replacement of original building materials and decorative details that are deteriorated or missing (cornices, eaves, parapets and other architectural features).
6. Repair of non-original materials that cannot be removed due to deterioration of the underlying original building material.
7. Repair, replacement or addition of entrances, doors, display windows, transoms or second story windows.
8. Exterior improvements for the purposes of ADA compliance including, but not limited to, ramps, doors, door openers, walks, guardrails, no-slip materials or level platforms at doors.
9. Design fees on completed projects.

All applicants shall utilize the Sterling Main Street Design Standards attached hereto as a guide for designing improvements to buildings.

F. INELIGIBLE USES

The following are not eligible for inclusion in this program:

1. Signage
2. Roof repairs.
3. Construction of new buildings.
4. Structural additions to existing buildings.
5. Purchase of property and/or buildings.
6. Equipment.
7. Interior fixtures & furnishings.
8. Inventory or operating capital.

G. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS & PROJECTS

BUILDING - Funds must be used for facade rehabilitation of existing commercial buildings within the designated target area. All properties must be conforming uses or legal nonconforming uses under the City's zoning ordinance.

APPLICANTS - Owners, tenants, or owner/tenant joint ventures may submit applications under this program. Tenants must submit written approval of the property owner, evidence of their leasehold interest and must comply with requirements and standards as deemed necessary by Sterling Main Street. Owners of properties which are vacant at the time of application should provide documentation of the intended use of the property by the owner or any future tenant. Priority will be given to owner-occupied or long-term tenanted properties.

PROJECTS – All proposed improvements must comply with the City of Sterling Building Code, Sign Regulations and Zoning Ordinances. Applicant must obtain all necessary approvals and/or permits from the City of Sterling.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Applicant obtains application and design standards from Sterling Main Street to develop ideas for improvements.
2. The Applicant should obtain project bids from their contractor(s) of choice.
3. Applicant submits completed application, including any design plans, photos, material samples, cost estimates and construction timelines to Sterling Main Street for review.
4. Upon receipt of a completed Application, a meeting will be set for Main Street's Façade Grant Review Committee. The Review Committee will review the application and supporting documents to ensure it meets the design standards set forth for the grant program and eligibility requirements. The Review Committee will make a grant funding recommendation to the Sterling Main Street Board of Directors for approval, or return the request to the Applicant for additional information.
5. Upon referral of an application by the Review Committee, the Sterling Main Street Board of Directors will review the proposed project using the evaluation criteria set forth below and make a determination as to whether or not to recommend approval of the grant request to Sterling Today, Inc., and at what level of funding.
6. Upon approval of Sterling Today, Inc., Sterling Main Street will notify Applicant of the award, and a letter of commitment will be issued. Applicant may then begin work on the project. If the application is not approved, Applicant will be notified of the reasons for rejection, and what, if any, steps may be taken to gain approval.

H. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Façade grant applications will be reviewed and evaluated based on the criteria listed below. Proposed improvements that meet these criteria, and are "shovel-ready," will be most competitive for grant funding.

IMPACT (40%) Overall impact of the project on the Downtown District. Are inappropriate elements removed? Will the project eliminate what was previously a liability for the commercial district? Does the project seek to restore historical or architectural significance of the building? Is the project in a highly visible location that has significant impact on surrounding properties?

FINANCIAL LEVERAGE (10%) Projects that leverage more private investment will be graded higher than those seeking just the grant funding.

SUSTAINABILITY/PERMANENCE (30%) How permanent are the improvements and is there a maintenance plan for the improvements? Does Applicant own and occupy building? If a tenanted space, who is responsible for building maintenance?

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS (20%) Is the Applicant a good neighbor? Is the area around business kept clean and free of debris on a consistent basis? Does the business participate in organized Main Street promotions and other community-based activities? Does Applicant actively promote downtown Sterling in a positive light, as well as their own business?

I. POST APPLICATION PROCEDURE

1. Projects **MUST** be started within two months of approval and completed within twelve months, unless otherwise agreed to, in writing, between the parties. Failure to do so may result in the loss of the grant award. It is strongly recommended that projects be “shovel-ready” at the time of application.
2. Changes in the approved work specifications must be approved, in writing, by Sterling Main Street.
3. Sterling Main Street shall be notified within 10 day of the completion of the project, so that it may confirm that the work was done in accordance with the terms of the grant.
4. Within 60 days of the completion of the project, Applicant shall submit to Sterling Main Street proof of payment for all expenses related to the project, both labor and materials, for which it is seeking reimbursement. Such proof of payment may include copies of paid invoices, lien waivers, cancelled checks, etc.
5. Upon receipt of proof of payment and verification that the work was completed in accordance with the terms of the grant, a check shall be issued to the Applicant for the amount awarded.
6. Deviations from an approved plan may disqualify the applicant from this program.

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