

Brunswick Main Street Façade and Interior Improvement Grant Program Overview 2020 Grant



Deadline for FY2020 Round 2 Applications: November 16, 2020

What Is The Brunswick Main Street Façade and Interior Improvement Grant Program?

The program offers funds (and in certain cases design assistance) to businesses in the Brunswick Main Street area in order to improve the appearance of individual building facades and/or signs and awnings. *With respect to façade improvements, said improvements must be to external areas visible from the public way.* However, Community Legacy grant monies may also be used for interior improvements, coverage for service fees and streetscape improvements. The goal of this program is to leverage private improvements while making revitalization efforts affordable, creative and community based.

The Brunswick Main Street Design Committee and Main Street Manager (and other Main Street designees) administer the Façade and Interior Improvement Grant Program. The Committee is made up of volunteers, including Brunswick business and property owners, residents, and other interested individuals, some of whom have design expertise and others who just want to improve the physical appearance of the community and facilitate economic revitalization of our downtown.

Our goal is to assist as many qualified projects as our funds allow. This grant will be offered on an ongoing basis as funding permits, and our goal is to fund larger projects in the future. The award amount is based on available funds, the number of qualified applicants and other evaluation criteria. Grant money will be allocated at the sole discretion of the Brunswick Main Street organization subject to approval of submitted applications by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.

Who Can Apply For Funding?

Any building owner or store proprietor/tenant with lease authority or authorization from the building owner can apply for funding. Properties may be either **commercial properties** or **residential properties**, and must be located within the Brunswick Main Street section of the City. Tenants must have a minimum of two years remaining on their lease or an option to renew.

According to the State of Maryland's requirements for the grant, we cannot provide assistance to properties owned and/or occupied, in whole or in part, by any of the following businesses or uses: adult bookstore, adult video shop, or other adult entertainment facility; check cashing facility; church or other religious or sectarian organization or use; college or university; community hall; fire station; gambling facility; gun shop; hospital; liquor store; massage parlor; multifamily or single-family housing development including the development of rental properties; nursing home, assisted living facility, crisis care center, group home, transitional housing, homeless shelter, or transient living facility; pawn shop; tanning salon; or tattoo parlor.

Improvements eligible for funding include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Exterior improvements
 - Exterior cleaning, painting and/or paint removal
 - Masonry repair and repainting
 - Repair and replacement of architectural details or materials
 - Window repair or, in certain cases, replacement
 - New awnings or the rehabilitation of existing awnings
 - Rehabilitation or compatible reconstruction of storefronts
 - Removal of metal siding and exterior slip covers (surfaces)
 - Removal of inappropriate or out-of-date signage
 - Repair or rehabilitation of signage
 - New signage
 - Exterior lighting
 - Roof repair/replacement
- Interior improvements
 - Interior improvements that make properties more suitable for the retention of existing and/or establishment of new businesses
 - Interior improvements that improve the safety of the building.
- Service fees, such as assistance with water-sewer fees, which facilitate retention of existing and/or establishment of new businesses

Ineligible Expenditures:

- IMPROVEMENTS MADE PRIOR TO GRANT APPROVAL
- Refinancing of existing debt
- Inventory
- Sweat equity (payments for applicant's own labor)
- General business operations expenses (payroll, taxes, utilities, etc.)

How Are Projects Selected For Funding?

Applications will be ranked and selected based on a clear and documented set of evaluative criteria. Depending on the number of applications, Brunswick Main Street may assign “waiting list” status to projects that qualify for selection, but do not rank as high as other applications selected for funding.

NOTE: It is important to note that this is a *reimbursement* grant program, meaning that the applicant (i.e., business/property owner) must have the improvements completed and fully paid for themselves, with reimbursement made after successful completion of the work and satisfactory submission of all required documentation.

The evaluative criteria and their anticipated respective weights are as follows:

- **Impact (50%):** Overall impact of the project on the Brunswick Downtown Business District. Will the project eliminate what was previously a liability for the commercial district? Does the project seek to restore the historical or architectural significance of the building? Will the project contribute to the retention or addition of a business downtown? Will the project help bring the building up to code? Will increased pedestrian traffic result? Will the improvements contribute to the safety of the building and its surroundings?
- **Financial Leverage (10%):** What private investment will be used for this project? While we hope to be able to offer outright grants, projects that leverage more private investment will be evaluated higher than those seeking outright grants.

- **Sustainability/Permanence (20%):** How permanent are the improvements (signs are more changeable than new glazing, for example) and is there a maintenance plan for improvements? Does the business own the building? If not, how much time remains on the lease?
- **Community Contribution (20%):** Is the applicant a good neighbor? Is the area around the business kept clean and free of debris on a consistent basis? Does the business participate in community based activities and promotions? Does the applicant actively promote downtown Brunswick and their own business?

The nature of the funding from Maryland DHCD requires that 50% of the total grant funds must be expended prior to July 1, 2021, and the remaining 50% by July 1, 2022. Therefore, Main Street must have sufficient applicant projects that can be completed by the most challenging date of July 1, 2021. (Projects may be started as soon as the selected applicant is notified by Main Street of their award.)

Are There Any Design Guidelines?

Yes. The Design Committee of Brunswick Main Street is looking for projects that protect the historic integrity of the building and improve the overall appearance of the downtown area, particularly as it relates to exterior façade projects. The goal is to return the building facades in the downtown area to their appearance following their initial construction. We also recognize that some buildings may have a different period of architectural significance that supersedes the original construction appearance.

Projects must consider the impact on the preservation of the historic fabric and character of the building; are original features being retained and repaired, are historic materials being used? For example, we would not support the installation of vinyl siding, but would support the repair and repainting of original wood siding.

Projects should draw upon the history and architecture of the building, but should reflect the current use. We are not trying to recreate some past time in the history of Brunswick; instead we are trying to draw upon the architectural and historic distinctiveness of the downtown as a means to move Brunswick into a vibrant future. We strongly encourage creative new uses for the existing building stock. (Beans in the Belfry is a good example of a preserved building with a new use.) We also encourage modern yet compatible awnings, signage, lighting and other fixtures to enhance the appearance of storefronts and downtown.

Please refer to the Brunswick Main Street Façade Improvement Program Design Guidelines for direction on signage, awnings, façade improvements and other aspects of commercial district design. Copies are available on the Brunswick Main Street website: BrunswickMainStreet.org or from the Main Street Manager, located at City Hall. Projects must conform to all appropriate zoning codes. Projects must also meet the approval of the Brunswick Main Streets' Design Committee and the Maryland Historic Trust requirements, if necessary.

How Does The Application Process Work?

Grant funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis and cannot be issued until the proposed project has been fully and successfully completed in accordance with the contract. **WORK COMPLETED PRIOR TO LETTER OF COMMITMENT IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING.**

Application and Selection Process

1. Meet with the Design Chair, Main Street Manager and/or Main Street Grant Administrator, or the Design Committee prior to submitting application. The Design Committee may also invite applicants to discuss their project plans at a Design Committee meeting. Additionally, Brunswick Main Street's Design Committee may provide design assistance/recommendations (free) to applicants depending on the scope of the project.
2. Supply non-refundable \$35 application fee, payable to Brunswick Main Street, Inc.

3. Complete grant application in full, including:
 - Illustrations of the proposed work or architectural drawings
 - Color photos (minimum 2) of the site and its relationship to adjoining sites
 - Color samples and texture of finish materials, where applicable
 - Landscaping plans, where applicable
 - Contractor proposals: Minimum of two licensed contractor proposals on contractor's letterhead. At the discretion of Brunswick Main Street, additional contractor proposals may be requested.
 - All building construction plans as may be required by the Planning and Zoning Administrator.

4. Deadlines. Completed applications must be received by the Main Street Manager at the Main Street office by **4:00PM on Monday, November 16, 2020**. Applications received after this date may not be considered. If there are fewer applications than funding available, another round of opportunity will be offered.

5. The Design Committee will review and rank the applications, vote on approval, and submit its recommendations to the Brunswick Main Street Board of Directors within 30 days of receiving the applications. The Board of Directors will then vote on the application at the next board meeting. Every effort will be made to expedite the process.

6. Selected applicant's plans will be forwarded to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and to the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) for project approval.

7. The applicant will be notified, in writing, whether their project will receive funding, and to what level. The notification will outline the specified amount of the grant with information on any other requirements. The applicant can then proceed with the necessary permitting and review process.

What Happens After A Project Is Selected For Funding?

1. Renovation/rehabilitation work must begin within three (3) months and be completed within twelve (12) months of approval. Depending on the scope of the project, extensions may be requested. Brunswick Main Street reserves the right to cancel this agreement in the event of failure to comply with this schedule.

2. The applicant is responsible for obtaining all building permits and any other required permits for the work to be done. The applicant is responsible for conformance with all applicable safety standards and conditions.

3. The applicant agrees to maintain the property and improvements.

4. The Brunswick Main Street Façade and Interior Improvement Grant Program may promote an approved project, including but not limited to, displaying a Main Street sign at the site, during and after construction, and using photographs and descriptions of the project in Main Street's materials.

How Do I Get Reimbursed For My Project?

Funds will be released to the applicant as quickly as possible upon satisfactory completion of the project and satisfactory submission of all required documentation. Other reimbursement requirements:

1. Submission of a financial summary report, including copies of paid invoices/cancelled checks and waivers of lien from contractors (and subcontractors, if applicable), and photos and/or drawings of the completed project.

2. A Design Committee member(s) will inspect the property for compliance.

3. Photos and drawings will be submitted to the Maryland Historic Trust to insure compliance of work, if necessary.

4. Funds will be dispersed only after verification that the work has been completed in accordance with the contract.

NOTE: Brunswick Main Street reserves the right to make changes in the conditions of the Façade and Interior Improvement Grant Program as warranted.