

Program Description

TYLER STREET STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Overview

The City of Pittsfield has established the Tyler Street Storefront Improvement Program through the City's Department of Community Development to provide free technical assistance and grants to businesses located within the City's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) district seeking to enhance the street level appearance of buildings in the district. These improvements can apply to signage, lighting, windows, awnings, and more. The goal of this program is to support existing businesses in the district and attract new businesses to the district as well as to enhance the pedestrian experience along Tyler Street.

Free Technical Assistance

Applicants to the Tyler Street Storefront Improvement Program are encouraged to seek free professional business advice from the Berkshire Regional Office of the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network at 75 North Street, Suite 360, Pittsfield and can be reached at (413) 499-0933. Applicants are encouraged to seek advice both before and during the application process. Professional business advice can be related to the proposed storefront improvements or any other aspect of the applicant's business.

To assist in facilitating a coordinated permitting review process, applicants are also encouraged to discuss building improvements and signage with the City's Permitting Coordinator, Nate Joyner, whose office is located in the Department of Community Development in City Hall. The Permitting Coordinator can be reached at njoyner@pittsfieldch.com and (413) 448-9673.

Funding

The Massachusetts Development Finance Agency (also known as MassDevelopment) and the City of Pittsfield will provide the grant funding for the Tyler Street Storefront Improvement Program. The maximum grant award for a storefront façade improvement project is \$15,000 with \$7,500 being awarded from the City of Pittsfield and \$7,500 awarded from MassDevelopment's TDI Local Small Business Acceleration Grants Program. Property and/or business owners are required to contribute a minimum of 10% of the total project costs. However, the property and/or business owner's contribution may be more depending on the total project costs.

For example: proposed storefront improvements total \$20,000; the City will contribute \$7,500 from its funds; \$7,500 will be paid from MassDevelopment's grant funds; and the business/building owner must contribute \$5,000 or what is actually 25% in this scenario. The business/building owner will pay out their 10% (or more) contribution first and provide documentation of the payment to the City. The grant funding will be paid out last upon verification of project completion.

Applicants that are approved for the program will be required to sign paperwork with City staff prior to the contractor beginning the work. The required paperwork includes an agreement, note, and recordable lien. The grant funding will be forgiven after two years provided that the following conditions are met during the two year term:

1. In the event that title to the premises remains in the Grantee for a period of two (2) years from the date of the grant, the entire amount of the Tyler Street Storefront Improvement Program grant shall be forgiven.
2. In the event that title to the premises is conveyed during said two (2) year period, the Grantee shall repay to the DCD an amount equal to the entire amount of the grant less fifty (50%) percent for each full year after the date hereof. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a transfer from one joint property owner to another, or a transfer as a result of the death of a property owner by devise or inheritance, or to a surviving joint owner, shall not be deemed a transfer for purpose of this paragraph.

Eligible Properties

The proposed storefront improvement project must be located within the Tyler Street TDI district. Eligible buildings must be used for commercial purposes. Single and multi-family residential buildings are not eligible for this grant program. Mixed-use buildings are eligible if the first floor is used for commercial or professional purposes. If the owner of the building is the applicant, they will be expected to work with his/her commercial tenants on any improvements which will or could impact tenant businesses. Owners of vacant commercial buildings or space may apply as well as commercial tenants with the property owner's permission. Business owners are required to have at least a one year lease in order to be eligible for these grant funds with the exception of signage, which requires a minimum of a three year lease. For-profit and not-for-profit businesses are eligible for this grant program. Religious organizations are not eligible for the grant program. Property and business owners must be up to date on all municipal fees and real estate taxes in order to be eligible for this program.

Eligible Improvements

Limited to the exterior of the building facing Tyler Street including façade renovations; window replacement; door replacement; exterior lighting (affixed to the building, not lighted signs or

freestanding signs); lighting at the interior of the façade/windows in order to further provide vibrancy to the street; painting; awnings (new or replacements); and signs. In some instances, such a building facing a second Street in addition to Tyler Street, improvements on the exterior of the building facing the secondary street may be eligible. Projects that trigger or include accessibility improvements are also eligible. The improvements must comply with all City zoning regulations and ordinances. The design guidelines provided at the end of this document will be utilized by a designated design review committee during the review of applications.

Ineligible Improvements

Ineligible improvements include interior improvements; roof repairs, or other building elements not visible from the street; sidewalk repairs; planting or landscaping; renovations or repairs of any residential property; demolition of historic features without a like replacement. Any improvements begun prior to application submission, for which funding is being requested, will not be considered.

Application Process

The following information must be included with a completed application form:

1. Description of proposed improvements including proposed styles for improvements such as lighting and/or signage and color scheme, accompanied by specification sheets, architectural design drawing(s), or sketch(es) as appropriate;
2. Cost and identification of all required permits, including documentation of permits which have already been received;
3. Photos of the existing façade;
4. Total cost estimates from a licensed contractor - design costs, and permit fees may be included; and
5. A schedule for the proposed work to be completed.

During the application review process, the City will verify that all municipal fees and real estate taxes are paid up to date. All proposed work must be reviewed and approved by the program design review committee. Funds awarded for projects not commencing within six months of the date of award may be reallocated to other projects.

Prior to the issuance of grant funds, City staff will confirm that improvements are completed as described in the application, consistent with the work described in the contractor's cost estimate, and in compliance with all applicable regulations. Checks will be made payable jointly to the applying property or business owner and contractor after inspection by City staff. Photographs of the completed work must be provided to the City upon completion of the project.

In the case of a financial hardship as deemed by the review committee, the match of ten (10) percent of the grant funds may be waived on a case by case basis. The design review

committee may also waive the minimum required lease. Preference will be given to applicants that meet the lease terms described on page 2.

Tyler Street Storefront Improvement Program Design Guidelines

General Guidelines

- Restoration of architectural details, including removal of obstructions or elements which hide such detailing.
- Removal of design elements which are not consistent with the building's character.
- Installation or repair of awnings or canopies that are functional and visually appealing. Awnings and canopies made from vinyl or plastic and those that are lit internally are not eligible for funding.
- Improvement of façade conditions through cleaning, painting, repair and replacement.
- Design of façade improvements should complement or replicate a building's original materials.
- Doors should be primarily comprised of glass, compatible with the scale, material and shape of the overall façade.

Signage

- Internally lit or backlit signage is discouraged.
- Window signage shall not cover more than 25 percent of available window space.
- Pole signage and temporary signage are ineligible.

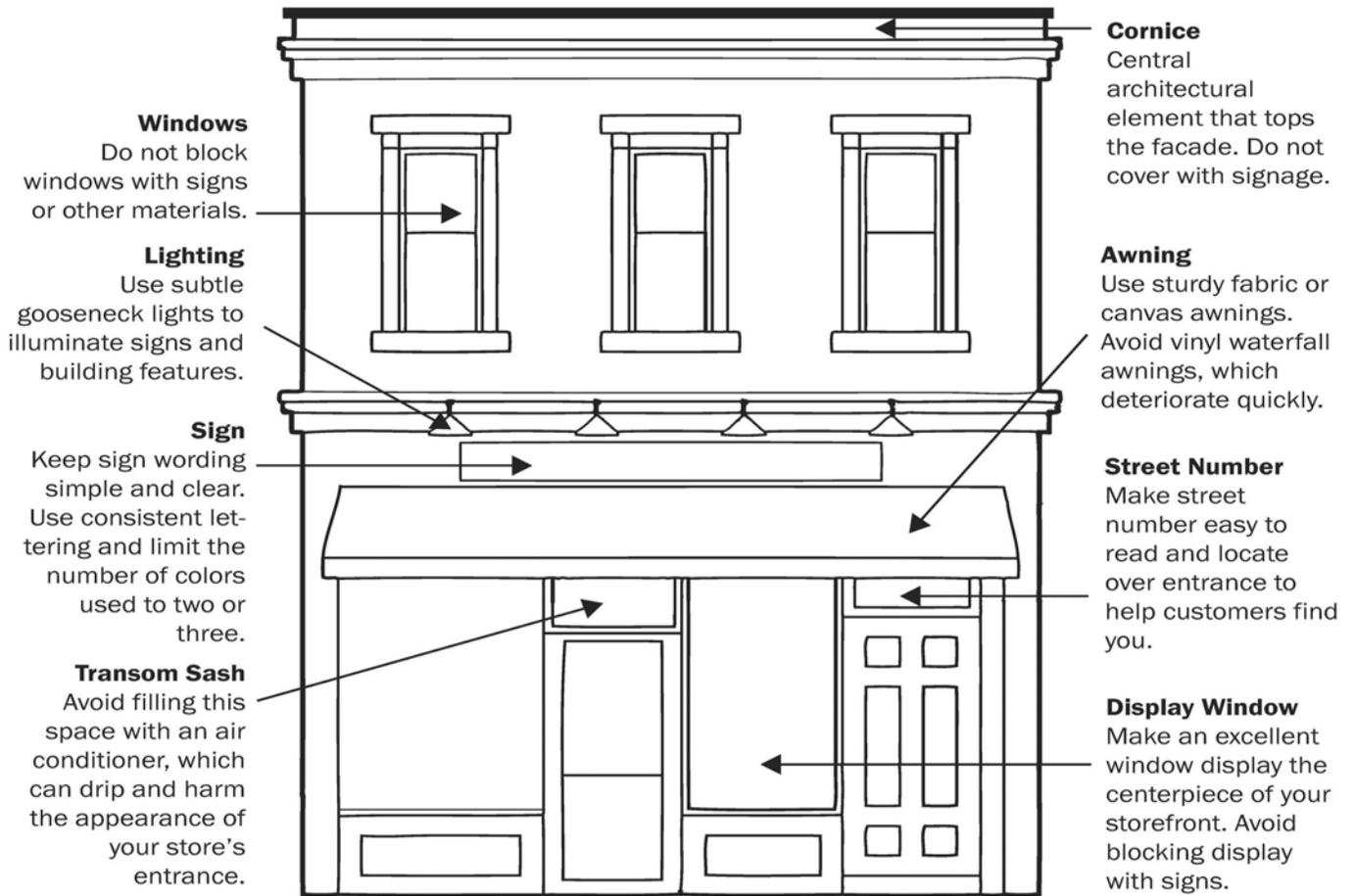
Windows

- Replacement of windows and framing should be appropriately scaled to the storefront.
- Window treatments should enhance the exterior look creating visual appeal for pedestrian traffic.
- Restoration of window space that has been covered or downsized is encouraged.
- Visibility in and out of the space shall not be obscured through excessive signage or display cases.
- Transparency should be retained or increased where possible. Reflective or dark tinted glass should be replaced with clear glass.

Lighting

- Lighting fixtures should be visually appealing and in concert with the building's character, and downward casting, illuminating the storefront and sidewalk.
- Exterior lighting fixtures should be appropriate to the building's architectural style.
- Lighting should provide an even illumination level. Flashing, pulsating or similar dynamic lighting is prohibited.

The diagram on the following page is provided for additional guidance.



source: oakislandcontractor.com