

Policy Guidelines for the

Façade Improvement Program

Neighborhood Economic Development

Entrepreneurs

Discovering Opportunities Through Neighborhood
Revitalization

Community Development Department

2008



Façade Improvement Program

Introduction

The Community Development Department encourages property owners, merchants and residents to recognize, enhance, protect and promote the unique character and identity within Mesquite's Target Revitalization Areas. The City Council has authorized creation of a **Façade Improvement Program**, through implementation of the Community Appearance Manual, which offers grants, matching grants, and low interest-rate loans to assist business and property owners in improving their storefronts as part of the revitalization process. The program seeks to develop a more coherent, creative and attractive appearance within the Target Revitalization Areas. These guidelines provide requirements for the renovation of existing buildings and requirements for new development. Additional guidance is available through the Community Development Department.

The aesthetic quality as well as the economic viability of each business enterprise is important, and both are linked in part to the success of surrounding commercial establishments. Studies have shown that thoughtful design improvements and a more appealing street presence often lead to greater sales for a business. Similarly, the physical character of the Target Revitalization Areas contributes greatly to the overall image of the City of Mesquite for its residents, customers and visitors. By establishing these guidelines, the City hopes to achieve several important public and private objectives, including:

- Enhancement of the commercial success of Target Revitalization Areas by ensuring a pleasant experience for business patrons.
- Enhancement of historic buildings, streetscapes, and architectural features within Target Revitalization Areas.
- Recognition that Target Revitalization Areas are communities with unique qualities and characteristics that should be reinforced by planning and improvements specific and appropriate to the place.

Façade Improvement Program grant and loan applications are available from the Community Development Department. Any questions should be directed to the Planning Division at 972-216-6216.

Façade Improvement Program

Overall Goals

The goal of the City of Mesquite is to revitalize designated declining commercial corridors, not to gentrify them or alter their context. The Community Development Department hopes to create a sense of place within Target Revitalization Areas by requiring buildings that promote good design and are pedestrian-oriented, not to mimic malls or other automobile-oriented commercial districts. The Community Development Department encourages renovations and improvements which create a unique and attractive image for each business while respecting the original design parameters of its façade as well as those of its neighbors. Finally, while the Community Development Department values high design standards and creativity, it also encourages solutions which achieve these goals affordably so that business and property owners are benefited rather than burdened by the revitalization process.

In general:

- All improvements must be compatible with applicable zoning codes, satisfy permit requirements, and conform to any other regulatory restrictions.
- Creativity is always encouraged.
- If a building has historic or aesthetic merit, improvements should be designed to reveal the building's original style, form, and materials, whenever possible.
- A building's distinguishing elements should be identified and preserved, when possible.
- Individuality within a standardized or unified appearance is encouraged for single buildings containing multiple storefronts. Separate buildings -- even in cases where several adjacent to each other are occupied by a single tenant or owner -- should remain visually distinct.
- Façades should relate to their surroundings and provide a sense of cohesiveness in the district without strict uniformity.
- High-quality materials should be used in order to convey substance and integrity.
- The use of conforming materials above required minimums is encouraged. The quality of the design and durability of materials chosen will be factors in the consideration of all designs.
- Façades should present a visually-balanced composition.
- Façades should emphasize human scale.
- Façades and openings (i.e. windows and doors) should be divided into architecturally distinct sections which are taller than they are wide.
- Façades should be visually organized with rhythmic elements.
- On retail storefronts, a high level of transparency should be incorporated in order to compliment pedestrian activity.
- Façades should be organized into three major components: the base, body and the cap.
- Colors of exterior materials, signs, window frames, cornices, storefronts and other building features should be coordinated. Choice of colors should be determined by the nature of the building. The exterior colors of historic buildings should be chosen with their historic character in mind. More contemporary designs may allow for a larger range of colors.

Façade Improvement Program

Program Description

The program offers three different types of funding to businesses in Target Revitalization Areas in order to improve the appearance of individual building façades as well as the overall look of the district. Improvements must be to façades visible from a public travelway. The goal of this program is to leverage private improvements while making revitalization efforts affordable, creative and context-sensitive.

The **Façade Improvement Program** is administered by the Community Development Department.

Eligibility

Any building owner or store proprietor/tenant with lease authority or authorization from the owner can apply for funding. The project site must be located in a Target Revitalization Area. Tenants must have a minimum of two years remaining on their lease or an option to renew.

Target Revitalization Areas as of April 2008:

- Truman Heights Neighborhood District
- Mesquite Park
- Sherwood Forest Overlay District
- Casa View Heights

Eligible Projects

Façade improvements as a result of:

- Minor modifications
- Major rehabilitation
- Site redevelopment

Note: All improvements shall comply with the principles outlined in the Community Appearance Manual and, if applicable, requirements stated through a form-based code.

Priority for funds will be given to redevelopment and major rehabilitation.

Design

Projects shall conform to the Mesquite Zoning Ordinance. If the project is located within a Target Revitalization Area that has adopted a form-based code within its neighborhood district, the form-based code shall prevail. Projects shall also meet the requirements of the Community Appearance Manual and be approved by the Director of the Community Development. The Community Development Department has educational materials on signage, landscaping, façade improvements and other aspects of commercial district design. Applicants should contact the Department for these and other resources.

Façade Improvement Program

Funding Methods

Grant Program: Under this funding method the Community Development Department shall provide grant money for façade improvement. Funds do not have to be repaid to the City. There is a maximum grant contribution by the Community Development Department of \$5,000 per project. In multi-storefront buildings, a maximum of \$12,500 may be allocated for projects involving multiple businesses. Work completed prior to a letter of commitment is not eligible for funding. Grant funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis and cannot be issued until the proposed project has been completed. Before a check is cut, applicants will need to submit proof of payment for completed work and the Community Development Department must review the completed project to determine if the actual work performed conforms to approved plans.

Matching Grant Program: Under this funding method the applicant pays a portion of the improvement and the Community Development Department pays a portion. The maximum amount of the match is 50%/50%. The grant may exceed \$5,000 if the applicant pays a larger share of the overall cost of the project. In all other respects, the grant conditions are the same as the standard grant program.

Low Interest-Rate Loan Program: Under this funding method the Community Development Department will provide low interest-rate loans for façade improvement. The maximum loan amount that can be allocated by the Community Development Department is \$10,000 per project. In multi-storefront buildings, a maximum of \$15,000 may be allocated for projects involving multiple businesses. Work completed prior to a letter of commitment is not eligible for funding. Funds are disbursed upon issuance of the building permit. The City will require loan collateral. The term of the note will vary.

Funding

The Community Development Department will apply for CDBG funding each year to fund the **Façade Improvement Program**. Additionally, the Department is pursuing additional funding with local banks through the Community Reinvestment Act and other funding sources.

Funding Criteria

Applications will be reviewed and selected based on their compatibility with the vision and goals of the Façade Improvement Program and their impact on the Target Revitalization Area. Non-conforming uses or functions are not eligible for funding. Funding preference will be assigned to projects that:

1. Conform to other form-based site design requirements in addition to the Community Appearance Manual.
2. Serve as catalyst projects.
3. Improve neighborhood-based retail, service and convenience businesses.
4. Are not formula businesses.
5. Make a substantial contribution to implementation of revitalization codes or small-sector plans.

Note: The City Council reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to make changes in the terms and conditions of the Façade Improvement Program as warranted and terminate the program at any time without notice.

Façade Improvement Program

Application Process

Applicants should meet with a staff planner in the Planning Division of the Community Development Department and complete a preliminary application. Depending on the extent, priority and visibility of the work involved, the Planning Division may allocate free design assistance to applicants to help develop a proposal.

*Note: Projects with multi-storefront buildings, such as a strip center, must apply as a cohesive unit in order to be considered for the **Façade Improvement Program**.*

When the preliminary application has been reviewed, qualified applicants will be asked to complete a full application, which includes professionally prepared architectural drawings, color samples and cost estimates. Competing bids may be required to ensure the relative accuracy of cost estimates. The Planning Division will review the application and submit a recommendation to the Director of Community Development within 30 days of receiving a complete application. The Director will review the application and make a decision within 10 days of receiving the Planning Division's recommendation. Following review and approval of the application by the Community Development Department for compliance with all necessary city and federal funding regulations (a 2- to 10-day process), the applicant will receive a letter of commitment from the Community Development Department for a specified amount with information on any other requirements. The applicant can then proceed with necessary permitting. Loan funds are released upon receipt of a building permit. Grant funds will be released to the applicant upon completion, inspection and documentation of the project.

If an application is denied, a new application can be submitted during the next funding round.

Selected Projects

Work selected for funding must be completed within 6 months of approval of the application, unless extended by the Community Development Department. (Time-extension forms are available from the office.) 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. The applicant also agrees to maintain the property and improvement.

Promotion

The Community Development Department may promote an approved project to advertise the **Façade Improvement Program**. Promotion may include displaying a Target Revitalization Area sign at the site, during and after construction, using photographs and descriptions of the project in Target Revitalization materials and press releases.

Façade Improvement Program

Preliminary Application Form (Project Consideration Phase)

Name of applicant _____

Name of business _____

Address of business _____

Phone number _____ Fax number _____

E-mail address _____

Type of business _____

Applicant is the Property Owner Business Owner Other _____

How long has the business been at the current location? _____

When does your lease expire? _____

Property owner's name (if different from applicant) _____

Property owner's address _____

Property owner's phone number _____

Note: If you are not the property owner, please have the property owner or an authorized representative co-sign this application where indicated in the General Conditions.

Proposed Façade Improvements

Please describe the proposed improvement to the property. Include two color photographs showing the existing building conditions. If you have any additional building information, such as scaled plans or architectural documentation for compliance with the Community Appearance Manual V. 1.0 (i.e. façade overlays, construction costs, etc.) please include them with your application.

Description of the proposed improvement (e.g., new doors/windows, façade materials, color, etc.):

Proposed project budget _____ Desired completion date _____

How much funding assistance are you requesting? _____

Would you like Design Assistance (no cost to business or property owner)? _____

Signature of applicant _____ Date _____

Two copies of two color photos (required). Additional information attached (optional).

Facade Improvement Program

Preliminary Application Form (Project Consideration Phase)

General Conditions

It is expressly understood and agreed that the applicant is not an agent, servant, employee, or subcontractor of the City of Mesquite.

It is expressly understood and agreed that the applicant shall be solely responsible for all safety conditions and compliance with all safety regulations, building codes, ordinances, and other applicable regulations.

It is expressly understood and agreed that no funds are approved for the proposed improvements until the applicant is notified in writing and meets all Program requirements, and that work completed prior to final approval of the application is ineligible for funding.

It is expressly understood and agreed that the applicant will not seek to hold the City of Mesquite, and/or its agents, employees, offices and/or directors liable for any property damage, personal injury, other loss relating in any way to the Façade Improvement Program.

The applicant agrees to maintain the property and improvements, including, but not limited to, keeping the premises clear of all nuisances, repainting as necessary to maintain appearance, and promptly removing graffiti.

The applicant agrees not to modify or alter the improved façade without the consent of the City of Mesquite, and then only in conformance with the Community Appearance Manual.

The applicant authorizes the City of Mesquite to promote an approved project, including but not limited to displaying a sign at the site, during and after construction, and using photographs and descriptions of the project in City materials and press releases.

The applicant understands that the City of Mesquite City Council reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to make changes in the terms and conditions of the Façade Improvement Program as warranted (applied prospectively), and may terminate the Program at any time without notice.

Signature of applicant _____ Date _____

(If applicant is not the property owner, please have the property owner or the owner's authorized agent review and co-sign this statement below.)

As owner of the property at _____, I have reviewed the above Preliminary Application, and if a Full Application is eventually approved by the City of Mesquite, I authorize _____, as the operator/occupant of said location to perform or have performed the façade improvements described above as part of the City of Mesquite Community Development Department, Façade Improvement Program.

Signature of property owner
Or owner's agent _____ Date _____

Façade Improvement Program

Full Application Form (Bidding Phase)

Name of applicant _____

Name of business _____

Address of business _____

Phone number _____ Fax number _____

E-mail address _____

Type of business _____

Applicant is the Property Owner Business Owner Other _____

How long has the business been at the current location? _____

When does your lease expire? _____

Property owner's name (if different from applicant) _____

Property owner's address _____

Property owner's phone number _____

Note: If you are not the property owner, please have the property owner or the owner's authorized agent co-sign this application where indicated in the General Conditions.

Proposed Façade Improvements

Please describe the proposed improvement to the property. The following *must* accompany this application: two color photographs that show existing building conditions; a completed Statement of Architectural Compatibility found within the Community Appearance Manual v. 1.0. (including façade overlays of the proposed improvements) and one or more bids on contractor letterhead.

Proposed improvements:

Total proposed budget _____ Proposed start date _____ Estimated completion _____

Signature of applicant _____ Date _____

Two copies of two color photos attached. Cost estimates attached.

Completed Statement of Architectural Compatibility attached (with façade overlays and palette board)

For Community Development Use: Approved Grant Matching Grant Low-Interest Loan
Amount _____ Date _____

Statement of Architectural Compatibility Approval _____ Date _____

Director of Community Development Approval _____ Date _____

City Manager Approval _____ Date _____

Façade Improvement Program

Request for Time Extension Form

Name of applicant _____

Name of business _____

Address of business _____

Phone number _____ Fax number _____

E-mail address _____

Type of business _____

Applicant is the Property Owner Business Owner Other _____

When was the project chosen for funding? _____

When is the project completion deadline? _____

Property owner's name (if different from applicant) _____

Property owner's address _____

Property owner's phone number _____

Note: If you are not the property owner, please have the property owner or the owner's authorized agent co-sign this application where indicated in the General Conditions.

Façade Improvements

Please describe the complications resulting in the need for a time-extension form. The following *must* accompany this application: two color photographs that show existing building conditions and building plans showing what has been completed and what still needs to be done for project completion.

Description of complications:

Additional time requested _____ Estimated completion date _____

Signature of applicant _____ Date _____

Two copies of two color photos attached. Building plans attached.

For Community Development Use:

Planning and Zoning Manager Approval _____ Date _____

Director of Community Development Approval _____ Date _____