



Town of Warren, Rhode Island

Storefront Improvement Program

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, March 5, 2010 at 12:00 NOON

The Town of Warren Storefront Improvement Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Block Loan (CDBG) to revitalize Warren's downtown and is administered by the Town Planner. If you would like further information or would like to apply, please contact the Town Planner at (401) 245-2469.



The 305 Census Tract in Warren. Business owners in the tract are eligible to apply; however, businesses that meet the program's priorities are more likely to receive funding.

Who can apply?

Any business owner or business property owner located in the 305 Census Tract can apply for the program (see map above). A business owner who is leasing space in the district must demonstrate lease authority or obtain authorization from the building owner to make improvements to the property. Business owners/property owners must be in good standing with the Town (i.e. free of all taxes or fees owed). Income information is not required and the program does not currently have income restrictions.

What type of assistance is available?

The Storefront Improvement Program offers business property owners or business owners with lease authority in the 305 Census Tract a forgivable, no-interest loan for up to 50% of their investment in improving a storefront façade, not to exceed \$20,000. Tenants with lease authority must have at least 2 years remaining on their lease. Eligible businesses can apply for up to \$20,000 for **exterior improvements** to a single storefront. (For multi-storefront buildings, each storefront can receive up to \$5,000 match with a maximum of \$20,000 for the entire building). The program requires a **match of funds by the applicant**; every dollar paid by the Town must be matched by a dollar from the applicant. The match requirement applies to all work, including signage.

Storefront Improvement Loans will be forgiven upon receipt of a "Certificate of Completion" from the Town Planner. Projects that are not completed within a year from the loan agreement will lose loan forgiveness unless an extension is granted by the Town Planner. A lien on the property will be placed within the Town Clerk's office in the amount of the principal on the loan until a Certificate of Completion is granted, at which time, the lien will be released.

What types of projects are eligible?

The program can only fund **exterior** improvements to your storefront. Only work approved by the Town Planner is eligible for the program; work completed **prior** to receiving a commitment letter from the Town is **not** eligible for funding.

The following types of improvements are eligible for funding:

- Installation of new signs or improvements to existing ones
- Installation, repair or replacement of awnings
- Restoration of exterior facade
- Exterior painting
- Removal of inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes and materials
- Reconfiguration of existing doors and entrances
- Repair or replacement of existing storefront windows (including window boxes)
- Installation of exterior building, sign or display area lighting
- Removal of security window bars, roll-down grates and grate boxes
- Other improvements may be allowed on a case-by-case basis

All projects are reviewed competitively. Applications that emphasize the following program priorities for the 2010 year will be rated more positively than those that do not:

- **Businesses that target goods, services or jobs** to the 305 Census Tract;
- **Greater visibility** (entryways, Main Street, Water Street and Child Street) and enhancement of the overall streetscape;
- **Permanent fixtures** such as awnings, painting or other improvements that last even if the business does not;
- **Condition of the property**;
- **Ownership history** (loans will not be made to owners who have not consistently maintained their properties);
- **Historic storefronts** that require additional care and financial options to upgrade and maintain. Historic storefronts for the purposes of this program are those storefronts over 70 years old (pre-1940);
- **Amount of private funds in the project.**

Are there design guidelines?

All projects must comply with the Town of Warren Zoning Ordinance. All work will be reviewed by the Town Planner, the Building Inspector and the RI State Historic Preservation Office (RISHPO) for approval. (All CDBG funded projects, regardless of their location, are required to be reviewed by the RISHPO). Applicants to the program are strongly encouraged to use green or natural materials, although this is not a deciding factor. Under no circumstances will vinyl or architecturally inappropriate finishes be acceptable. Professional drawings, detailed material specifications or other information may be requested depending on the scale of the proposal. The Economic Development Board will select projects for funding among competing acceptable proposals.

How does the application process work?

The program uses a 2-step application process. The time frame for processing your application depends on the detail of your design and the number of applications received. Each of the steps is listed below with an estimated time frame.

- **Step 1 (4-6 weeks):** Fill out a **Project Consideration Form**. This form is reviewed by the Town Planner and the Building Inspector. The Town Planner may call you for more details, including plans, contractors, material specifications, etc. Once all comments or requested materials are received by the Town Planner, the project will be forwarded to the RI SHPO for review. Once RISHPO sends an approval letter, the project proposal will be forwarded to the Economic Development Advisory Board to determine which projects will receive funding. The Project Consideration Form (and other materials as requested) will be rated against other applications and the owner will be notified with the results. For more complicated projects (major façade work, for example) the Town Planner and/or the EDB may request more design specifications.
- **Step 2 (5-10 weeks):** Upon approval and receipt of all required plans and specifications, you will be asked to sign a **Loan Agreement**, which will include clauses on the use of debarred contractors and the Davis Bacon requirement. All contractors and subcontractors for the work must be identified. Projects must not utilize contractors who appear on the General Services Administration's Excluded Parties List (to search this list, go to www.epls.gov). If the total project cost exceeds \$2,000 (regardless of the loan amount), projects *must* comply with the Davis-Bacon Prevailing Wage Act, and the applicants will be responsible for collecting the necessary Davis-Bacon form from any contractors. For more information about Davis-Bacon prevailing wages, please contact the Town Planner or visit the Town's website (Department of Planning and Community Development) for links and information. Within a week, you will receive a **Notice to Proceed** from the Town Planner and will be free to begin construction. Work started prior to receiving the Notice to Proceed is not eligible for funds.

What happens after I am accepted?

You can begin construction after you receive your Notice to Proceed. Work selected for an improvement loan must be completed within one year of receiving signing the Loan Agreement, unless an extension is granted by the Town Planner. You are responsible for obtaining any permits necessary for carrying out the improvements and compliance with all applicable safety standards and conditions.

At least two quotes will be provided for all work under this program and copies of all designs, proposals, contracts or other relevant documentation will be provided to the Town of Warren. Payments for work under this program will be paid directly to the contractor as specified in the loan agreement. Documentation of the business owner's match must also be provided. Upfront expenses for materials are acceptable once the loan agreement has been executed.

The Storefront Improvement Program and the Economic Development Board reserve the right to promote an approved project including, but not limited to, displaying a sign on the site during and after construction, and using photographs and project descriptions in program materials and press releases.

Contact Information

Caroline Wells, Town of Warren, Department of Planning & Community Development, 514 Main Street, Warren, RI 02885 or by phone 401-245-2469.

Town of Warren reserves the right to make changes in the conditions of the Storefront Improvement Program as warranted.



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Storefront Improvement Program

Project Consideration Form

Thank you for your interest in improving your storefront and helping to make Warren a more attractive place. Please answer the following questions about your potential improvement and return to the **Department of Planning and Community Development, 514 Main Street, Warren, RI 02885**. A completed and signed project consideration form are necessary for consideration in this program.

Who are you?

Name: _____

Business Name: _____

Property Owner Business Owner Other _____

NOTE: if you are not the property owner, please have the owner or an authorized representative sign where indicated in the General Conditions form.

Where are you located?

Business Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email (if available): _____

Briefly describe your business and its history:

What type of storefront improvements do you plan to make? Provide a brief description (e.g. awning, new doors, windows, signs, lighting, painting, etc):



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Storefront Improvement Program

General Conditions

1. I have read and understand the guidelines of the Storefront Improvement Program.
2. I understand and agree that all work completed prior to final approval is ineligible for funding.
3. I understand that if accepted into the program, all construction costs exceeding \$2,000 will require the payment of prevailing wages as stated in the federal Davis-Bacon Act.
4. I understand that the Town of Warren reserves the right to make changes in the conditions of the Storefront Improvement Program as warranted.
5. I understand that I am not officially accepted into the Storefront Improvement Program until my design is approved by all necessary parties and I receive a commitment letter from the town.

Signature of applicant: _____ Date: _____

Property Owner Authorization

If the applicant is not the property owner, please have the property owner, or an authorized representative, review the information submitted, sign below, and check the Conflict of Interest Disclosure.

As the owner of the property at _____ I agree to the above conditions and authorize the said business owner to make exterior improvements to my property as part of the Storefront Improvement Program.

Signature of Property Owner or Authorized Representative: _____

Date: _____

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Are you, the APPLICANT, a Town of Warren employee or member of a Town of Warren Board or Commission? yes no

Are you, the PROPERTY OWNER, a member of a Town of Warren Board or Commission?

yes no