

Façade Improvement Program

Assisting Property Owners with
Restoration/Rehabilitation of Building Frontages

The Redevelopment Agency of the City of Merced
Façade Improvement Program
Adopted: March 15, 1993
Amended: August 3, 1998
Amended: October 2, 2006

MERCED REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Façade Improvement Program was created in order to aid the Redevelopment Agency in carrying out the goals and objectives of the Redevelopment Plan, including blight elimination, and preservation of historic and architecturally significant commercial buildings. The intent of the Program is to stimulate improvements and restoration of commercial building frontages of properties located within the boundaries of the Redevelopment Project Area #2 and the Gateways Project Area. The Program is a one time inclusive grant, which is not intended to cover routine property maintenance.



The Redevelopment Agency's Façade Improvement Program is available to all property owners who have a commercial building located within the Redevelopment Project Area #2 or Gateways Project Area boundaries. The Agency is ready to assist with improvements to your commercial building frontage. The Façade Improvement Program is a matching, one time, dollar-for-dollar grant of up to \$150 per linear foot of public street frontage or a reimbursement of up to 50% of the actual improvement expenses on a rebate basis, whichever is lower. The Agency is prepared to assist selected façade beautification projects on the following basis:

1. Applications will be looked upon favorably for presenting more complete and inclusive façade improvements to commercial buildings. Prior to approving an application, Agency staff and the Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC) may recommend additional improvements in order to achieve a more complete renovation of the building façade. In the case of competing applications and limited funds, the Agency and RDAC may give preference to properties that:

- Are located within the Downtown Central Retail Core area of Redevelopment Project Area #2, generally bounded by 19th Street, Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, 16th Street, and “O” Street and along major corridors such as Yosemite Parkway; or
 - non-corporate mandated improvements to franchised businesses;
- Others are also encouraged to apply.

2. Eligible improvement efforts include painting, plastering or stucco work, wood or brick treatment, awnings or canopies, windows, doors or entrances, visible roof areas such as mansards, store fronts, signage and graphics, lighting, gutters and downspouts, fences and gates, landscaping and irrigation, pedestrian pathways and sidewalks, and *architectural assistance* needed in the development of any of the above. Alley or parking lot building frontage is not considered public street frontage thus is not automatically eligible for calculations of rebate amount; improvements to such areas is encouraged and may be considered in special circumstances.

Removal of any existing non-conforming or illegal signage on the property must be included in the proposed scope of work.

Improvements to the interior of the building are ineligible for rebate through this program unless it can be demonstrated that work in the interior is essentially related to the beautification of the exterior.

Agency and any necessary building permits must be secured prior to any work requiring such approval begins.

3. The façade easements will be purchased and recorded for the completed work. A façade easement ensures the Agency’s investment in the property is protected in case of ownership or business change.

Façade easements will be purchased for 50% of their cost, with funds to be used for reimbursement for the beautification work completed on the property. The easements will be purchased, in the form of a rebate check to the property owner, upon completion of the beautification work.

Easements will require the property owner to maintain the façade improvements to the building for the life of the Redevelopment Project Area. Project Area #2 expires in August 2017 and Gateways Project Area expires in 2029. A copy of the easement agreement is attached for review.

The Redevelopment Agency of the City of Merced Façade Improvement Program

To Apply:

1. Fill out the Design Review Commission Application form and the Façade Improvement Program Application included in this packet.

The application form must be supplemented with the following in order to be considered a complete application:

- a. Proof of property taxes paid;
 - b. Complete estimates of proposed improvements from a licensed contractor(s);
 - c. Site plan, to scale (paper copy and electronic format as .jpg file);
 - d. Elevation, to scale (paper copy and electronic format as .jpg file);
 - e. Color and Material Samples;
 - f. Current photo(s) of eligible improvement frontage(s).
2. Completed applications are accepted at the Civic Center, 678 W. 18th Street, Merced, CA.
 - Design Review Application should be submitted to Kim Nutt in the Planning Department (2nd floor).
 - Façade Application should be turned in to the Redevelopment Agency office (3rd Floor).

The Process:

1. Upon submittal of the application to the Planning Department, staff will review and schedule your item for consideration by the Design Review Commission (DRC).
Note: Façade changes may require a building permit. Planning department staff will advise.
2. Once your application is approved by the DRC, make an appointment to meet with Redevelopment Agency staff.
3. Agency staff will present the application to the Redevelopment Advisory Committee for their review and approval/disapproval.
4. Once City/Agency approvals have been obtained, you may begin your façade improvement work.
 - a. If you are coordinating the work through a third party or several third party contractors, you will be responsible for ensuring that the work is done to City standards.

- b. You must begin the restoration/rehabilitation (construction) process within 90 days from approval and complete the entire process within 270 days.
Failure to meet this time frame releases the commitment of encumbered funds to the project/applicant and the applicant must reapply.
5. Contact the Redevelopment Agency once work is completed and staff will begin the rebate process. The following will be required for processing:
 - a. Copies of your paid invoice(s) for the work done;
 - b. A statement of how much money you are requesting be reimbursed;
 - c. A copy of any permits obtained with signed approvals where required.
6. Agency staff will review the paid invoices, compare the total amount with the RDAC approval amount, and will process the façade easement purchase.
7. The City will expedite payment to you upon return and recording of the easement agreement from the County Recorder's Office.

For questions regarding the Façade Improvement Program, contact:

City of Merced Redevelopment Agency
678 W. 18th Street, Merced, CA 95340
Third Floor, City hall
(209) 385-6827

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Façade Improvement Program?

The Façade Improvement Program is a one-time inclusive grant, which is not to be used to cover routine property maintenance. The Agency will reimburse property owners with beautification improvements to the façade of their building of up to 50% of the total cost of the improvements or up to \$150 per frontal foot whichever is less, in exchange for an easement.

What is an easement?

In this case an easement is a recorded contract between the property owner and the Agency that helps ensuring the investment made by the agency through the façade improvements is maintained for the duration of the project area. Subject to change, the expiration of Project Area #2 is August 2017 and the expiration of the Gateways Project Area is 2028.

How does an easement get purchased?

After proper approvals, completed work and submittal of receipts, Agency staff will begin processing and executing a Façade Easement Agreement. Upon execution the Façade Easement Agreement will be sent to the County's Recorder's Office for recordation. Upon recording, a check in the amount of the rebate will be mailed to the property owner and the process will be considered complete.

Who qualifies for the Program?

All property owners within the boundaries of the Redevelopment Project Area #2 and Gateways Project Area qualify for the program and are encouraged to apply (See attached map for project area boundaries). In the event of competing applicants and limited funds, preference may be given to properties located within the downtown core area. The Agency and RDAC look favorably upon comprehensive projects that include a more complete façade improvement.

What improvements qualify?

Qualifying improvements consist of: painting, plastering, stucco, wood or brick treatment; awnings, canopies, windows, doors or entrances; store fronts, signage, and graphics; lighting; fences and gates; landscaping and irrigation; pedestrian pathways and other work. See the application for a more complete list of qualifying improvements.

Who determines the rebate?

The Redevelopment Advisory Committee determines project approval and a rebate amount. Agency staff does not have the authority to determine a rebate amount; staff may only recommend that the Redevelopment Advisory Committee consider a certain amount.

How long would I have to complete the project?

Once an application is approved, property owners have 270 days to complete the restoration/rehabilitation project of their building. See the full Façade Improvement Application packet for full details.

How long will it take to receive the rebate once approved?

After receiving documentation of project costs including all receipts and a copy of the signed-off building permits, staff will review the documents. Signed Façade Easements will be recorded, and the rebate forwarded to the property owner within 10 days of receipt of the recorded Façade Easement Agreement.

What are the benefits of the Façade Improvement Program?

When property owners care about their investments it shows in more ways than one. Beautification of building façades, eliminate negative visual impact, increase property value, and attract new business, stimulating the local economy.

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APPLICATION FORM

Date: _____

Property Owner Name (Applicant): _____

Property Owner Daytime Phone Number: _____

Address of Property to be improved: _____

Description of proposed improvements: (please print)

Estimated Cost \$ _____ Estimated Completion Date: _____

I understand that an authorized rebate may be revoked if the approved project is modified without prior approval of modifications.

Applicant/Property Owners Signature(s):

Checklist: for Applicants:

- Proof of current year paid property taxes
- Estimate for proposed improvements
- Scaled site plan (paper copy and jpg. electronic format)
- Photos of building in current form (digital photos in jpg. format)
- Renderings depicting proposed improvements (color and to scale in jpg. format)
- Color and Material Samples

Staff to complete this section:

Date Application Submitted: __/__/20__ Complete: _____

DRC Consideration: Date _____ Approved? _____

RDAC Consideration: Date: _____

Result: Approved _____ Amount: \$ _____

Denied: Reason _____ Date letter sent: _____

