

The Redevelopment Agency of the
City of Oakland
Presents the

2006-2007 Downtown Façade Improvement Program



Before



After

The Oakland Redevelopment Agency is pleased to offer a Façade Improvement Program for properties and businesses located in several target areas within Downtown Oakland. These targeted areas include Uptown, Downtown Historic, Old Oakland, Chinatown and Lower Broadway. Your business or property may qualify for a matching grant of up to \$20,000. If your property is located in the Historic District you are eligible for up to an additional \$30,000 in grant funding for historic restoration. If you need advice on how to improve your building facade, the City can provide you with a limited amount of design assistance.

This program comes at an exciting time for Downtown Oakland. Over the past two years the Downtown has witnessed the completion of the State Office Tower, two new city office buildings, Old Town Square, and City Hall Plaza. Several new private developments include: two new hotels, a 25-story office tower, the 270-unit Lake Merritt Towers, 300,000 sq. ft. office/retail center in the Rotunda Building and a Gap store opening at 14th and Broadway.

Now that new retailers and investors are showing an interest in Downtown Oakland, there is a prime opportunity to bring more business into existing buildings. To take advantage of this opportunity, it is crucial for businesses and property owners to improve their buildings and storefronts, to create an architectural environment that will attract new business. These improvements can increase the number of customers coming to your business or increase the value of your property. Similar programs in other California cities, such as San Jose, Concord, San Mateo, Berkeley and San Leandro, have helped commercial districts improve their image and increase their revenues. For this reason, the Oakland Redevelopment Agency is offering this façade program.

This manual provides an overview of the Downtown Oakland Façade Improvement Program. It describes the assistance available to you or your business as you plan and complete improvements to the exterior of you business or property, and details which types of improvements and activities are eligible for reimbursement under the Program. The manual

takes you step-by-step through the Program procedures and explains what you need to do in order to participate. Read on to find out more.

Who qualifies for the Façade Improvement Program?

You may be eligible for a matching grant up to \$20,000 if your business or property is located in one of the façade target areas (see map). If your building contains 5 or more storefronts it is eligible for an additional \$20,000 in matching grants. If your building is located in the Historic District it is eligible for an additional non-matching amount up to \$30,000 for historic restoration or replication of historic features at the ground floor. You must be willing to pay for at least 50% of the cost of your façade improvement, which may include the following:

- Painting/wall repair/cleaning
- Renovation or repair of windows
- Rehabilitation of historic facades
- Improvement & removal of safety grilles
- New awnings/canopies
- Landscaping and exterior lighting
- Doors and storefront systems
- Removal & replacement of signage

Construction costs related to the above improvements and the associated permit fees are also eligible expenses for matching grants through the Program. Grants will be awarded to projects based on their fulfillment of the following goals:

- Visual impact on the commercial district
- Clustering of projects for maximum impact
- Commitment of applicants to complete project
- Contribution of project to the economic vitality of the commercial district
- Enhancement of property appearance and historical features

Program Requirements

The following requirements must be met to participate in the Façade Improvement Program:

1. Applicants must ensure that all required permits will be obtained for all facade improvements as a part of the Façade Improvement Program.
2. The program participant will be required to meet Property Maintenance Standard as part of the Program agreement with the City. This Agreement will require applicants to maintain at their expense the improvements completed through the Program for five years.
3. All contractors hired by program participants must be licensed contractors that meet minimum insurance requirements set forth by the Program.
4. Program Applicants can be either property owners or tenants of commercial structures. If the program applicant is a business owner and not the property owner, the applicant must have a lease with a minimum of three years remaining from the date of application as well as the demonstrated agreement of the property owner.

Design Services

If you do not have your own architect the Downtown Oakland Façade Improvement Program provides free architectural design services to eligible applicants. The façade program currently works with four architectural firms and you will be assigned one that is best suited for your project's needs. The selected architect and Redevelopment staff member will work directly with property and business owners to create design improvements compatible with the area and within the project budget. The architectural firm may also assist with monitoring the bidding and construction process. The architect will not be completing construction documents as part of the Façade Improvement Program. Fees for design services will be determined by the size of the project; however, the City will pay no more than \$5,000 per project for design services. The applicant will cover all additional fees beyond this.

Grant Funding

The Façade Improvement Program will pay applicants up to fifty percent (50%) of the costs for eligible façade and site improvements, up to a maximum of \$20,000. If you have 5 or more storefronts in your building you are eligible for an additional \$20,000 in matching grants. On top of this if your building is located in the Historic District it is eligible for an additional \$30,000 in grant funding. Matching grants will be distributed in the form of a *reimbursement*, once construction is complete and the terms stated in the Reimbursement Agreement have been met. If the terms and conditions are not met, the rebate will not be issued. In most situations, the grants will be issued in the form of checks payable directly to the property or business owner.

PROGRAM PROCEDURE

The standard procedure for Downtown Façade Improvement Program is as follows:

APPLICATION PHASE

1. Applicants interested in the Program are to call Brian Kendall at 238-7403 or email him at bkendall@oaklandnet.com. Mr. Kendall will determine if your building is in the Project Area of Downtown. (See map on Oaklandnet.com.) Buildings are eligible as long as some portion of the building is used for retail. This focus of the program is to improve the exterior look of retail stores and the buildings that house them.

DESIGN PHASE

2. ORA staff will meet with the property and/or business owner and an architect, either your own or one hired by the City, at the site to discuss the façade improvements desired and probable costs. The architectural firm will complete a design proposal for the façade of the building. The scaled drawings will include the existing and proposed elevations. They will typically include measurements of significant features of the existing and proposed elevations, construction details, specifications for materials and hardware, specific colors and finishes. The drawings do not constitute construction

documents, but in some cases may be sufficient to obtain permits. Additional information may be required to obtain building and any other required permits, which is the responsibility of the applicant. In certain commercial districts such as those along Broadway and Telegraph Avenue where design review through the Planning Department is required, the drawings will satisfy the requirements for design review submission.

3. Redevelopment staff will arrange a second meeting with the applicant and the project architect to review the drawings of the suggested improvements and eventually finalize and agree upon the scope of the façade improvements. One or more alternative designs may be presented at this time, depending on staff recommendation and the type of project. Following this meeting, a finalized design will need to be agreed upon between the applicant and the ORA staff member and the applicant will make a formal commitment to provide his/her part of the matching funds for the project.

BIDDING PHASE

4. Using the design documents prepared by the project architect, the applicant gets estimates for work from licensed contractors. Documented bids from three contractors are required for all work over \$200 unless the vendors available to do the work are limited in which case the bid would be considered a sole source. Different parts of the project, such as signage, awnings or paint, can be separated for bidding and contracting, provided the applicant is committed to coordinating the contractor's work. In order to perform work, contractors must to meet requirements listed on the Program's Contractor's Requirements sheet of the Reimbursement Agreement (see below).
5. The architect and ORA staff will review the bids received for the compliance with the design documents, and to ensure that no improper substitutions are made. If bids are over budget, the architect will suggest areas to reduce costs.

GRANT AND AGREEMENT PHASE

6. Once a finalized design has been **agreed upon** between an ORA staff member and the applicant the **Agreement for Reimbursement of Façade Improvement Renovation Costs** can be signed. This will include among other things, finalized design drawings.
7. If the project is in a location that requires **design review** (determined by zoning), the project will need to conform to appropriate standards. The owner or contractor will submit the plans for design review.

CONSTRUCTION & PROJECT COMPLETION

8. The applicant will hire the contractor(s) and coordinate construction activities with the contractor. Redevelopment staff will not coordinate contractors' work. The applicant will have 90 days to authorize the contractor to begin construction from the date

Redevelopment signs the Reimbursement Agreement. If the applicant has not authorized the contractor to begin construction within 90 days, Redevelopment has the right to terminate the contract and utilize the reserved grant funds for other applicants who are ready to proceed.

9. Applicants of the program must adhere to the City's zoning and building codes. Applicants and their contractors must obtain all appropriate building, sign, electrical, plumbing, encroachment and other permits required by City prior to construction. Applicants will be responsible for permit fees (other than Design Review). The permit fees for such permits are eligible expenses for reimbursement under the Façade Improvement Program.
10. Contractor change orders will not be made without the prior approval of Redevelopment staff and the architect. This can be done verbally. Applicants are responsible for any approved change orders that may affect the approved bid price.
11. Redevelopment staff and the project architect will monitor the work completed by the contractor to ensure that it is done according to the drawings, specifications and agreement. A pre-construction meeting and one to two field inspections will be completed, depending on the size of the project.
12. Once work is completed, Redevelopment staff and the architect will review the completed improvements to ensure that the agreed upon design had been executed correctly. Once this is done the applicant will sign the **Application and Certificate for Payment** and send it along with copies of paid invoices for their reimbursement.

For More Information:

Thank you for your interest in the Downtown Façade Improvement Program. With a continuing partnership between local businesses and the City, we can achieve a dramatic facelift of the Downtown within the next few years that will significantly improve the area's business climate. If you have any questions on whether your project qualifies, please call Brian Kendall at the Oakland Redevelopment Agency (ORA), at (510) 238-7403 or write to 250 Frank Ogawa Plaza, Ste. 5313, Oakland CA 94612 or email at bkendall@oaklandnet.com