

St. Mary's County

Façade and Streetscape Improvement Program



Program Guidelines

What is the Façade and Streetscape Improvement Program?

The Façade and Streetscape Improvement Program is a non-residential improvement grant initiative administered by the St. Mary's County of Economic Development. The purpose of the program is to encourage and assist property and business owners located in both the Lexington Park Master Plan "Downtown" & "Great Mills Corridor" and the Charlotte Hall footprint of the Sustainable Communities designation to restore and improve the appearance of the façades of their buildings, surrounding streetscape, and make the target area a more appealing place to shop, eat, work, and do business.

Only work on facades visible from a public right-of-way or a shared parking facility are eligible for grant funding.

How does this program work?

The Façade and Streetscape Improvement Program provides reimbursement grants for up to 50% of an applicant's expenses for eligible façade repair/restoration and streetscape improvements. For this round of the Program the maximum award is **\$6,000**. There is no minimum award but be aware that projects that fail to provide a meaningful improvement to the site and surrounding area may be unable to score sufficient points to be selected for funding.

This means:

- If you propose a qualifying project of at least \$1000, you may apply for reimbursement grant of \$500 grant.
- If you propose a qualifying project of at least \$12,000, you may apply for reimbursement grant of \$6,000 grant.
- If you invest more than \$12,000 for a project, the maximum reimbursement that can be approved is \$6,000.

Who can apply for Façade and Streetscape Improvement Program funds?

Any property owner and any tenant who has written authorization from the property owner can apply for funding. The area of eligibility is within the boundaries of the Lexington Park target area and Charlotte Hall sustainable community designation and is limited to non-residential and multiuse buildings only. Eligibility is limited to existing structures currently legally used for commercial, mixed-use, industrial or office uses OR vacant and currently zoned in either a Commercial or Mixed-use District or in an Industrial and Office District. Note that home occupation businesses are not eligible in this round of the program.

Commercial and Mixed Use Districts	Section: 31.9 Residential Mixed Use (RMX) Section: 31.10 Village Center Mixed use (VMX) Section: 31.11 Town Center Mixed use (TMX) Section: 31.12 Corridor Mixed Use (CMX) Section: 31.13 Low-Intensity Mixed-Use (MXL) Section: 31.14 Medium Intensity Mixed-Use (MXM) Section: 31.15 High Intensity Mixed-Use (MXH)
Industrial and Office Districts	Section: 31.16 Limited Commercial Industrial (LCI) Section: 31.17 Industrial (I)

What type of repair and restoration work is eligible for Façade and Streetscape Improvement Program funds?

Grants will be awarded for well-designed façade improvements that increase the longevity of a building. Price quotes are required as part of the application process – a set grant amount will be approved and cannot be changed, even if the project ends up costing more once completed. The funds may be used for specific improvements including:

- Cleaning and repair of building exteriors
- Cleaning and/or re-pointing of brick, and other masonry
- Exterior paint or other like finishes
- Replacement of deteriorated/ damaged windows, doors, siding and/or framing visible from a public ROW
- Restoration of exterior architectural details for historic buildings and removal of elements covering any such architectural details
- Installation of ordinance-compliant on-premise permanent signs or repair of existing on-premise permanent signs, which are in the opinion of the Review Committee attractively integrated into the architecture of a building including its window areas, doorways and awnings, or canopies. Reimbursement may be provided *only* for signs that identify an on-premise institution, organization, or business.
- Installation of ordinance compliant lighting for the purpose of illuminating the exterior of and/or ordinance-compliant on-premise signage that identify an on-premise institution, organization, or business.
- Removal, repair, and/or installation of awnings, canopies, or shutters
- Removal of solid roll-down security gates
- American Disability Act (ADA) compliant exterior and site accessibility improvements
- Landscaping improvements on or immediately adjacent to the premises of the building or business and visible from the public right-of-way (work within a shared or public right-of-way may be approved only with ROW owner(s)' written permission)

What are examples of ineligible expenses?

- Roofs that are not visible from a public ROW
- Replacement or resurfacing of parking lots
- Construction of a new or replacement structure
- Interior improvements
- Projects completed prior to the approval of the application
- Inappropriate cleaning methods, repairs, replacements, or alterations not in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation
(<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/secretary-standards-treatment-historic-properties.htm>)
- Equipment or inventory
- Cost of labor performed by the applicant or by a contractor or subcontractor that is not MHIC licensed
- Landscape maintenance activities (mowing, pruning, in-kind replacement of existing unhealthy or dead trees, shrubs, or perennial ground covers)
- Establishment of buffers, forest conservation afforestation or reforestation required by the zoning ordinance to obtain a building permit or site plan approval.

Are there any design guidelines?

Projects should fit with the general vision laid out in the Lexington Park Master Plan. The Lexington Park Master Plan is available on the website [HERE](#).

For structures on St Mary's County inventory of Historic Structures, the project will be reviewed by MHT to determine if the project must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Those Standards are available on the National Park Services website [HERE](#).

If a building code compliance violation is present, correction of the violation must be made as part of the proposed improvement work.

How does the application process work?

1. Applicants must complete an application and upload required application materials to the online application [HERE](#). A Review Committee (RC), and as necessary, the Maryland Historical Trust in the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), will review applications. **Applicants are encouraged to reach out to Lee Greely by email at lee.greely@stmaryscountymd.gov or 240-538-2744 with any questions prior to submitting an application.**
2. The review committee will review the proposals and coordinate approval from state authorities and provide a total points score based on the scoring criteria.
3. If approved, a Letter of Commitment is granted. The letter will include the specific amount granted and any conditions of approval. The amount of the grant award is set out in the Letter of Commitment and will not be changed after project initiation.

Work completed prior to a Letter of Commitment is not eligible for funding.

Where can I find the application?

The application is an online form located [HERE](#).

You can find a sample application on the St. Mary's County Façade & Streetscape Improvement Grant webpage to review prior to submitting a formal application.

What happens after my project application is approved?

The project must be completed within six (6) months. The six-month time period will begin on the date stated in the executed Grant Agreement. Extensions of the project period may be granted at the review committee's discretion.

Applicant is responsible for obtaining all building permits and site plans and any other approvals for the work to be done. The Applicant is responsible for conformance with all applicable safety standards and conditions. Changes to the scope of work must be pre-approved by the RC. The Applicant also agrees to maintain the property and the improvements.

The Department of Economic Development's Development Facilitator is available to help applicant through the site plan and permitting process. Please reach out to Lee Greely by email at lee.greely@stmaryscountymd.gov or 240-538-3744 to get connected to the Development Facilitator.

What happens if my final project costs less or more than the initial estimates?

If the final project cost is less than originally approved, you will receive 50% of the lower cost. This will allow the County to use excess funds for additional projects.

However, if the final project costs more than the initial estimates, the grant reimbursement amount will remain as initially approved. Funding cannot increase because it will impact funding for other Applicants.

How do I get reimbursed for my project?

Grant funds are issued on a reimbursement basis using direct deposit and cannot be issued until the project has been completed and approved by the RC for reimbursement. Before a payment can be issued, applicants will need to submit a Project Completion Report including photos of the completed work and proof of payment for the project.

DED staff will review the Letter of Commitment, Project Completion Report and perform a site visit to review the completed project to determine that the work performed is consistent with the work approved. Once consistency is verified, DED will submit a request for reimbursement to DHCD. Once DHCD has approved reimbursement and transmitted funding to the County, the reimbursement to the applicant will be processed.