



City of Ceres

Downtown Façade Improvement (DFI) Program

GUIDELINES

Introduction

The City of Ceres has a desire to provide financial incentives to property owners and business owners undertaking the revitalization and rehabilitation of commercial storefronts and facades within the boundaries of the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area (CDRA). The City is proposing this joint public-private investment to offer both financial assistance and technical design assistance to property and business owners in order to improve the appearance and economic viability of downtown Ceres.

The City believes that it is in the public interest to improve the aesthetics and physical quality of the project area in order to stimulate private reinvestment. Restoration of the facades of privately owned commercial buildings will eliminate blight and deterioration, thus removing impediments to economic growth. The City of Ceres, in conjunction with funding support from the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area and the former Ceres Redevelopment Agency, has established the Downtown Façade Improvement (DFI) Program to:

1. Promote an economically viable and harmonious corridor that attracts and provides for the needs of businesses, residents, visitors, and shoppers;
2. Contribute to the elimination of visual and physical blight detrimental to an attractive commercial center by correcting building code violations and eliminating incompatible building materials, colors, signs, and other clutter out of place in a healthy and vibrant downtown;
3. Restore blighted storefronts and other building and site elements visible from the public right-of-ways to a level where they are compatible with their surroundings and are aesthetically pleasing;
4. Promote economic development in Ceres by providing an incentive for property and business owners to renovate their building for occupancy by new or expanding businesses.
5. Implement the community's vision for downtown Ceres as identified in the 2011 Ceres Downtown Specific Plan.

Program Components

The Ceres Downtown Façade Improvement Program has two primary program components. The first component is funding support for a Design Assistance (DA) program that is intended to assist property owners and business owners in considering an appropriate scale and scope of a desired revitalization project for the exterior of their building. The City has obtained a list of local design professionals and negotiated preferred rates for this consulting service in preparing a specific exterior façade design plan for any eligible building. The second component is funding support for a Downtown Façade Improvement (DFI) program to undertake the actual work in the maintenance, rehabilitation, and upgrading of existing commercial properties and buildings within the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area (CRDA).

General Program Eligibility Requirements

1. Properties must be located within the boundaries of the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area.
2. Eligible buildings are those occupied, or proposed for immediate occupancy, with retail, commercial, or professional service businesses that currently, or upon occupancy as noted herein, possess a valid city business license and pay the CDRA annual assessments.
3. The applicant must be the property owner or a business tenant with written permission from the property owner.
4. Properties or buildings shall have no outstanding building code or municipal code violations or have any outstanding City payment, such as utility bills, business charges or local taxes.
5. All grants are 50/50 matching grants provided as reimbursements against project costs up to the maximum amounts as noted in each respective program element. Since funding is limited, all project applicants will be prioritized on a first-come, first-served basis.
6. All façade improvement design elements must follow the Downtown Streetscape Standards and Design Guidelines as contained in Appendix A of the Ceres Downtown Specific Plan, adopted by the Ceres City Council, January, 2011.
7. All applications for Downtown Design Assistance (DA) grants must be approved by the CDRAB; and all Downtown Façade Improvement (DFI) grants must be approved by the CDRAB and City Council, prior to applicable work commencing. Retroactive applications will not be accepted.
8. All exterior façade improvements must meet all state and local current building codes and zoning requirements.
9. Following completion of work, the City will record a five-year façade maintenance easement on the property. If the Applicant does not maintain the improvements for which a rebate was granted through the Program, the City has the authority to record a lien on the property to recover the City's financial contribution. A sample of the easement is attached to these Guidelines.

PART ONE

DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM: DESIGN ASSISTANCE (DA)

The City of Ceres, through funding support from the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area members, has allocated up to \$25,000 to provide matching grants to reimburse eligible Applicants up to \$1,500 per single property/business and is designed to incentivize owners of buildings in the Downtown Revitalization Area to obtain professional architectural and design assistance for buildings they plan to revitalize and/or rehabilitate under the Ceres Downtown Façade Improvement (DFI) Program.

Each grant must be matched in kind by the property owner or the business owner.

Design Assistance elements that may be funded:

- Façade condition review (historic as well as structural)
- Recommended building façade improvements
- Development of a conceptual design depicting a “when-done” condition of a building façade
- Prioritized recommendations for physical rehabilitation of the exterior of a building
- Recommendations for code violation repair on building exterior or exterior structural elements that can be used for permit-receipt and historic review.
- Assessment of the structure for compliance with Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements.
- Opinion of cost for feasibility analysis and prioritized recommendations
- Building, historic (Section 106 Review, if applicable), zoning, and other safety code analysis.

These items will assist the owner and the City in setting renovation priorities suitable for the DFI program objectives, help the building owner and related contractors meet building and zoning codes including historic requirements and/or certificates of appropriateness, and facilitate the design professional’s work in preparing appropriate cost estimates and, if requested, finalizing bid requests for Part 2 of the DFI program.

Copies of the conceptual design plans/drawings/feasibility analysis will be provided to the City and the property/business owner and may also be made available for use in attracting other funding resources such as grants, loans or tax credits that could be used to enhance the buildings’ appearance, marketability, and long-term viability.

Note: This Design Assistance component is not intended to produce final detailed architectural construction drawings or structural engineering plans or calculations that may be necessary for subsequent building permit application(s) if required by adopted building and/or construction codes, depending on the specific scope of the final façade improvement project chosen by the Applicant.

DFI Design Assistance (DA) Program Requirements

1. Building and/or property owners must complete and submit a formal application for Design Assistance (DA) to the City of Ceres for review and final approval by the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area Board (Ceres Planning Commission).

2. Owner must select and use architects or design professionals from the City's DFI Qualified Design Professionals list. The grant may not be used to pay for in-house or staff designer. A licensed and registered design professional must complete all design work. *[City will develop list of qualified design professionals following an RFQ process]*
3. All façade improvement design plans must follow the Downtown Streetscape Standards and Design Guidelines as contained in Appendix A of the Ceres Downtown Specific Plan, adopted by the Ceres City Council, January, 2011.
4. The DA research and/or conceptual design work must be completed within 60 days of notification of application approval by the City.
5. Copies of all final products of the design professional – photos, sketches, reports, preliminary building analysis, etc., shall be provided to the City as well as the owner/applicant prior to City payment.
6. The maximum grant award is to reimburse up to half of the total pre-approved design costs not to exceed \$1,500 per project to be reimbursed to the Applicant by the City. The remaining portion of design assistance service fees must be paid to the design professional by the building/property owner with proof of payment presented to the City prior to City's grant reimbursement payment to the design professional for the City's share or applicable reimbursement to applicant.
7. If one or more of the program requirements noted above have not been met, the City reserves the right to refuse reimbursements in whole or in part for any DA-related costs and work completed by applicant.

Downtown Façade Improvement (DFI) Design Assistance (DA) Program Application Process

Design Assistance Program Application forms are available from the Ceres Community Development Department, 2220 Magnolia Street, Ceres, California, 95307, telephone (209) 538-5774. The application process is as follows:

1. After reviewing the Program Guidelines, the Applicant will meet with City staff to discuss the preliminary scope of desired work to be undertaken. If preliminary proposal is within Program Guidelines as determined exclusively by City staff, the Applicant may submit a completed Design Assistance Program Application to the City.
2. The Applicant is responsible for submitting photos of the existing building, showing all exterior building facades visible from the public right-of-ways, any preliminary plans and any available building specifications to the City of Ceres as part of the application submittal.
3. The City Staff will forward the Design Assistance Program Application to the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area Board (Planning Commission) for review and approval to proceed to design stage. No physical work on the exterior of the building may begin during this stage of the application.
4. Upon approval of the Design Assistance Program Application, the City will solicit interest from a design professional on the City's pre-approved list of designers and, in conjunction with the applicant, will negotiate the scope and work products to be prepared by the design professional.

5. Following consent of the Applicant, the City will issue a written Notice to Proceed to the selected design professional and the design work shall commence within 30 days.
6. All finished design products shall be completed and submitted to the City and Applicant within 60 days from receipt of Notice to Proceed. Extensions may be granted at the sole discretion of City staff.
7. City staff will monitor the ongoing progress during Design Assistance plan preparation to ensure that the work is performed according to the approved Program Application and plans. No changes to work approved by the Notice to Proceed shall be made without the written consent of both the Applicant and the City. If changes to the work are made without written City approval no reimbursement grant will be given to the Applicant.
8. Once the conceptual design work is completed, the City and Applicant will forward said proposed façade design plans to the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area Board (Planning Commission) for review and final approval to include a recommendation to the City Council.
9. Rebate claims for all eligible design assistance expenses must be submitted with the following supporting documents:
 - A completed Design Assistance Reimbursement Grant Claim form, supplied by the City.
 - Canceled checks and paid invoices/receipts for eligible design work.

After final approval of the design plans by the CDRA Board, the rebate reimbursement will be processed. Allow thirty (30) days for receipt of the rebate check.

PART TWO

DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM: FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

The City of Ceres, through funding support from the former Ceres Redevelopment Agency, will budget \$250,000 to provide matching reimbursement grants of between \$1,000 to \$10,000, per single eligible property/business, to provide financial assistance for the maintenance, rehabilitation, and upgrading of existing commercial properties and buildings within the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area (CRDA). The grant reimbursement program is intended to stimulate building improvements while being mindful of the historical significance and uniqueness of downtown architecture. The program is designed to enhance the appearance of the district, and indirectly, make a positive statement about downtown Ceres business climate.

Eligible Façade Improvements that may be funded:

- Restoration and rehabilitation of the building's exterior wall(s) which face a public street (alleys are not included unless that abutting business wall is visible from the public street). Specific examples of eligible improvements include:
 - Complete exterior façade rehabilitation
 - Repair/replacement of façade tile, brick, and woodwork
 - Removal of existing exterior materials to expose original building materials
 - Scraping, priming, and painting of window frames, cornices, and store front
 - Repair/replacement of windows and doors*
 - Repair/replacement of worn awnings or canopies*
 - Repair/replacement of signage and brackets*

*Costs associated with these improvements may only be considered for matching grant funds if they are part of an overall building improvement project. Just replacing your awning, signage, or windows does not meet the intent of the program and will not qualify for matching grant funds.
- Other minor repairs when incidental to overall façade improvements such as
 - Exterior lighting
 - Repair of sidewalk or provisions of ADA curb ramps or other ADA improvements that are an integral part of the exterior design revitalization project.
 - Rehabilitation of upper façade and display areas of side walls of a building
- For properties with multiple storefronts, it is recommended that the façade treatment provide a cohesive theme while also allowing for some distinctive design elements to the various businesses, such as signage, exposing transom windows, lighting, flower boxes, murals, etc., to enhance street visibility and promote economic development.

Downtown Façade Improvement (DFI) Program Requirements

1. Building and/or property owners must complete and submit a formal application for DFI Program to the City of Ceres for review and approval by the Ceres City Council, which shall include a recommendation from the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area Board (Planning Commission).
2. Exterior Façade Improvement projects chosen for grant funding assistance must have selected and used the DFI Program's Design Assistance (DA) component for professional architectural and design assistance of the proposed façade improvement project.
3. Reimbursement grants made under this DFI Program shall be a minimum of \$1,000 and shall not exceed a maximum of \$10,000 per building. The applicant is expected to provide at a 50% match of his or her own capital to the total project cost. Grants will only be given for façade revitalization projects that have a minimum investment of \$2,000 per building.
4. The exterior façade improvement work proposed must be in conformance with the recommendations of the design professional, prepared for that specific building, and as approved by the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area Board (CDRAB).
5. Any permits required under the City's Building and Zoning Codes must be applied for and properly issued prior to commencement of façade improvement work.
6. Per California Labor Code § 1771 all workers, including contractors and subcontractors, employed on a project that includes public funds ("public works" projects), must be paid at not less than the "general prevailing rate of per diem wages."
7. All construction and/or façade revitalization work must be completed within one (1) year of authorization to proceed by the CDRAB.
8. Upon completion of the façade improvement work, color photographs of the completed project shall be submitted to the City for review and approval by the Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area Board (CDRAB) and City Council that the work and any improvements comply with the Downtown Specific Plan and the specific Design Assistance (DA) parameters previously approved by the CDRAB.
9. After meeting all program conditions and completing the façade improvement work, the City will record a five-year façade maintenance easement on the affected property. If the Applicant does not maintain the improvements for which a reimbursement was granted through the Program, the City has the authority to record a lien on the property to recover the City's cost.
10. After recordation of the façade maintenance agreement, the City will provide the applicant with a certificate of completion indicating that the applicant has acted in good faith, and has satisfactorily completed the project. At that point, the City will release a check made out to the applicant in the amount agreed upon for reimbursement to the Applicant.

Downtown Façade Improvement (DFI) Program Application Process

Program Application and Agreement forms are available from the Ceres Community Development Department, 2220 Magnolia Street, Ceres, California, 95307, telephone (209) 538-5774. The application process is as follows:

1. After reviewing the Program Guidelines, the Applicant will meet with City staff to discuss desired work to be undertaken based on the conceptual plans prepared through the DFI Design Assistance process. If proposed work is within Program Guidelines as determined exclusively by City staff, the Applicant may submit a completed DFI Program Application to the City. Written bids, sketches, color samples and material samples should be included.
2. The City Staff will forward the DFI Program Application to the Ceres City Council for review and approval to proceed to construction stage. No physical work on the exterior of the building may begin during this stage of the application.
3. Upon approval of the DFI Program Application and funding request by City Council, the Applicant is then responsible for submitting any formal plans and specifications to the City of Ceres and obtaining all required planning and building permits, and any other applicable approvals, with the assistance of City staff.
4. Upon final authorization of any required construction plans, the City will send a written Notice to Proceed to the Applicant. The Applicant may proceed with the façade improvements pursuant to the approved design and issued permits. Work shall commence within ninety (90) days of the approval date of the building permit. Extensions may be granted at the sole discretion of City staff. All payments for the work should be made by the Applicant supported by clearly defined invoices outlining eligible work.
5. City staff will monitor the ongoing progress during construction to ensure that the work is performed according to the approved Program Application and plans. No changes to work approved by the Notice to Proceed shall be made without the written consent of both the Applicant and the City. If changes to the work are made without written City approval no reimbursement grant will be given to the Applicant.
6. Once the work is completed, the Applicant will execute, and the City will record, a facade maintenance easement, good for five (5) years, on the subject property. No rebate will be paid until the façade easement is recorded.
7. Rebate claims for all eligible expenses must be submitted with the following supporting documents:
 - A completed Reimbursement Grant Claim form, supplied by the City.
 - Any applicable planning and building permits.
 - Canceled checks and paid invoices/receipts for eligible work.

After final approval of the improvements by the City and any other division of the City authorized or required to approve the improvements, the rebate reimbursement will be processed. Allow thirty (30) days for receipt of the rebate check.

8. After the work is completed, Applicant shall display a sign (provided by the City) indicating participation in the Program. The sign shall be displayed either on the exterior or in the front window of the building for a period of thirty (30) days.

*Attachments: Ceres Downtown Revitalization Area Map
Sample Façade Maintenance Easement*

“Buy Local” Component

Whenever possible, applicants are strongly encouraged to use local contractors to complete tasks associated with their revitalization project. [This will not only help garner support to continue this program, but more importantly, support our local businesses while boosting our local economy.]