

# Landmark Towns of Bucks County

## BOROUGH OF BRISTOL FAÇADE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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### DESIGN CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Landmark Towns of Bucks County offers matching grants for storefront and facade improvements in the Bristol Borough downtown business district up to a maximum amount of \$5,000 per storefront for significant historic improvements based on the merits of the project. Design challenge grants are intended to stimulate private investment in the preservation of historic downtown architecture and to foster image-making improvements in the four downtowns that comprise the Landmark Towns.

Funding for the Landmark Towns Façade Program is provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) through the Pennsylvania Main Street Program. Grants are made in accordance with policies established by Landmark Towns, the Borough of Bristol, and the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) of Bristol Borough. Landmark Towns administers the program.

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### ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Any person(s) or legal entity owning a property or leasing a commercial property in the Bristol Borough Main Street district (see attached map) is eligible to apply. Qualifying commercial properties include single-purpose retail and office buildings and mixed-use buildings containing combinations of retail, office, and residential apartments.

In cases where more than one storefront exists within the same facade, each storefront can receive its own grant for eligible grant activities. A storefront shall be defined as having its own unique entrance, interior space, and display window. A corner property is considered two façades and is eligible to receive two façade grants regardless of the number of entryways and display windows. Multiple businesses that share one storefront shall be considered one applicant. The façade is the part of the building facing the street or streets. It includes the entirety of the face of the building from the ground up. Regardless of the upper floor uses, the whole façade should have a unified color scheme.

**Property Owners with Multiple Properties** may submit more than one application annually. Currently, there is no limit to the number of applications a property owner may submit in one year and the Landmark Towns Design Committee **may** approve more than one application to a single property owner in the same year. Grants are awarded only to applicants that have submitted all required application materials and a non-refundable \$50.00 application fee by the annual deadline. If all monies are not expended within one grant period, an extension may be granted.

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## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**Eligible Activities** include: Major maintenance, repair, rehabilitation and restoration of commercial and residential storefronts and facades. Projects must achieve visible results that enhance the Borough of Bristol's downtown image, marketability, and economic vitality.

**Ineligible Activities** include: Landscaping, fences, walls, site improvements including sidewalks, paving, parking lots, and sandblasting.

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## DESIGN STANDARDS

Project activities must conform to The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. The general standards are as follows.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

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## **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

Landmark Towns of Bucks County Design Challenge Grants are intended to stimulate private investment in the Bristol Borough Main Street project area. The outlined project area is roughly:

- Mill Street from to Radcliffe Street
- Radcliffe Street from Mill to Market Street

The program seeks to preserve and restore historic downtown architecture and to foster image-making improvements to all downtown properties regardless of their historic significance.

Projects must achieve visible results that enhance the downtown image, marketability, and economic vitality. Design Challenge Grants have the following specific objectives:

1. Reduce or eliminate vacancies in the core of downtown Bristol Borough, and promote the adaptive reuse of commercial buildings;
2. Bring substandard building conditions into compliance with basic health, safety, and building codes and enhance the visual appeal of downtown businesses;
3. Facilitate compliance with federal ADA access requirements; and
4. Assist with the preservation of historic commercial buildings and assure that such buildings are rehabilitated in an appropriate manner.

Grant applicants are encouraged to use the services of design professionals and to attend Landmark Towns educational sessions on 'good design practices.' Landmark Towns facilitates compliance with the required design standards by providing technical and design assistance to grant applicants if available.

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## **APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES**

A variety of commercial property improvements, including major maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of storefronts and facades are appropriate activities as is certain new construction. Some examples of appropriate grant activities include:

1. Brick and Stone Masonry - Structural repairs, cleaning, repointing, and painting.
2. Architectural Metals - Repair, cleaning, refinishing, painting, duplication, and restoration of exterior building components, e.g., cast iron, pressed tin.
3. Doors and Windows - Maintenance, repairs, replacement, and restoration of window sash, exterior doors, and installation of storm windows in conjunction with other significant facade improvements.

4. Exterior Woodwork - Maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of sills, window and door frames, bulkheads, storefront and roof cornices, window hoods, and decorative moldings.
5. Storefronts - Removal of inappropriate coverings and additions, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, lighting and restoration of display and transom windows.
6. Signage - Maintenance, repair, removal, and replacement in connection with real property improvements, not to exceed \$1000. per storefront.
7. Painting - Surface preparation, cleaning, and painting.
8. Awnings - Installation, repair, and maintenance of fabric awnings in connection with real property improvements, not to exceed \$2000. per storefront.
9. Design Assistance – Architectural, historic preservation, and graphic design services up to 10% of grant not to exceed \$500.
10. Lighting – External lighting fixtures both for signage and building lighting, not to exceed \$3000. per storefront.

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### **TERMS OF GRANT AWARD**

Landmark Towns of Bucks County Design Challenge Grants are awarded on a 50-50 matching cost basis. The maximum Design Challenge Grant that may be awarded is \$5,000. per storefront for projects costing up to \$10,000 or more. Grants are made on a cost reimbursement basis, following a process of application, design review and approval, and construction. Receipt of grant awards is contingent upon submittal of construction cost invoices from bona fide contractors or tradesmen. A final site inspection by the Landmark Towns Regional Coordinator and one other representative from the Landmark Towns Design Committee to ensure scope of work is consistent with the application is required for payment in full. Property owners who choose to do their own work will be reimbursed for materials and pre-approved professional fees only.

NO FUNDING WILL BE PROVIDED FOR WORK COMPLETED BEFORE THE APPROVAL PROCESS AND WITHOUT SATISFACTORY FINAL SITE INSPECTION.

There is a 90 day project deadline for completion of work with extensions under certain circumstances only with approval by the Landmark Towns Regional Coordinator.

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### **STATE AND LOCAL REGULATIONS**

- Projects including structural repair or replacement, signs, awnings and lighting must be reviewed by the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) of Bristol Borough. Certain projects may require permit approval. HARB does not need to review “in-kind” projects involving painting and maintenance. Upon recommendation of approval by HARB, the project would then be placed on Borough Council’s agenda for review and approval.

- Any questions about Borough codes and regulations or about whether or not a project requires HARB action or permit approval should be referred to Bristol Borough’s Zoning Officer – Sally Bellaspica at 215-785-4501, Ext. 20. Office hours are Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Signage must comply with local ordinances. For additional information on sign regulations, contact the Zoning Officer.
- **“The Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act (43 P.S. § 165-1 et seq.; 34 Pa. Code § 9.101 et seq.) may be applicable to this Project. If applicable, the Grant Recipient is responsible for including prevailing wage rates in all bid documents, specifications, and construction contracts pertaining to the Project. The Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) has final authority to make all prevailing wage applicability determinations. A copy of this letter is being forwarded to L&I for a formal determination of applicability of prevailing wage requirements.**

**Please Note: Prevailing Wage requirements are generally applicable to grants for construction, demolition, reconstruction, alteration, repair work, renovations, build-out and installation of machinery and equipment in excess of \$25,000.00. Any questions as to final prevailing wage obligations should be directed to the Bureau of Law Compliance at 1 (800) 932-0665.”**

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## **REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

All Design Challenge Grant applications and completed projects are subject to review and approval by the Landmark Towns Design Committee. All disputes shall be resolved by the Executive Board of Landmark Towns or its designee.

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## **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

1. Meet with the Landmark Towns Regional Coordinator and/or Design Committee Designee with approval from Regional Coordinator
  - Bring a current photo of your property.
  - Receive the appropriate application (i.e. HARB).
  - Discuss your plans for the property.
  - Understand the property’s historic architecture.
  - Present a rudimentary sketch of the work to be accomplished.
2. Complete application
  - Secure architect or design assistance, if needed.
  - Provide an estimate for project. Note: Two estimates may be required depending on scope of work.
  - Complete and sign all sections of the application.
  - Return application to Regional Coordinator, Landmark Towns of Bucks County, #2 Canal’s End Road, Bristol, PA 19007.
3. Grant approval

- Landmark Towns of Bucks County Design Committee will review application for approval or refer questions or concerns to the applicant .
  - Landmark Towns office will provide contract document if application is approved.
4. Execute project
- Work cannot begin until the contract document is signed by both parties.
  - Work must comply with approved project description.
  - Property owner/lessee must agree to allow “Partial Project Funding made available through Landmark Towns of Bucks County” signage to be visibly placed on the property during construction and for 30 days following completion. Property owner/lessee must further agree to allow Landmark Towns to publish before/after photos.
  - When necessary, Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) must be issued by borough.
  - Project must be completed within 90 days unless otherwise agreed.
5. Finish project
- Once project is completed, send an “after” photo and copies of the receipts to the Landmark Towns Regional Coordinator.
  - Within one month of receiving copies, Landmark Towns will reimburse the property owner in accordance with the terms of the grant, barring any unforeseen difficulties.
  - Completed work **must** be inspected by Landmark Towns and borough code officials and constructed in accordance with approved description of project to be eligible for reimbursement.