

**FY 2016
Snow Hill
Façade Improvement Program Overview
Business**



What is the Snow Hill Façade Improvement Program?

The goal of the **Façade Improvement Program** in Snow Hill Maryland is to make revitalization efforts affordable, creative, and community-based while leveraging private improvements. The program is currently designed to offer grants to business and property owners in Snow Hill to assist them with façade improvements to their business properties. The program for 2016 will offer grants up to \$5,000 with an 50/50 match. For every dollar of grant money that is awarded, the applicant must spend a dollar of his/her money toward the project. Depending on the needs of the business owners and response to the program, modification of this plan may be necessary.

The Façade Improvement Program is administered by the Town Manager and the Façade Review Committee. The Committee is made up of representatives from Town staff, Snow Hill business owners, property owners and residents. Some members of the Committee have design expertise while others just want to improve the physical appearance of the community.

Design assistance is available to businesses in the Snow Hill program area in order to improve the appearance of individual building facades, signs and awnings, as well as the overall look of the business district. Assistance may come from members of the committee or in some cases, from the Maryland Historic Trust.

This is the Town's eighth application of funding through the Community Legacy Program for façade improvements to commercial properties, and the goal for this round is to assist as many qualified projects as funds will allow. The business façade grants will be offered with a well publicized deadline. After that, the grant will be offered on an ongoing basis as funding permits. The award amount is based on available funds, applicants, and other variables.

Applicants requiring additional funds may wish to apply to Maryland Department of Housing and Community Developments Neighborhood Business Works Loan Program. The Town of Snow Hill also offers a low interest Loan Program for businesses.

Who can apply for business funding?

Any building owner or store proprietor/tenant with lease authority or authorization from the owner can apply for funding. New property owners and new business tenants are encouraged to apply. To qualify for the business funds, properties must be commercial or residential properties turning commercial located within the town limits of Snow Hill. Tenants must have a minimum of two years remaining on their lease or an option to renew.

According to the State of Maryland's requirements for the grant, the Town **cannot** provide assistance to properties owned and/or occupied, in whole or in part, by any of the following businesses or uses: adult bookstore, adult video shop, or other adult entertainment facility; check cashing facility; church or other religious or sectarian organization or use; college or university; community hall; fire station; gambling facility; gun shop; hospital; liquor store; massage parlor; multifamily or single-family housing development including the development of rental properties; nursing home, assisted living facility, crisis care center, group home, transitional housing, homeless shelter, or transient living facility; pawn shop; tanning salon; or tattoo parlor.

What types of improvements are eligible for funding?

- Exterior cleaning, painting and/or paint removal
- Masonry repair and repointing
- Repair and replacement of architectural details or materials
- Window repair, or in certain cases, replacement
- Rehabilitation or compatible reconstruction of storefronts
- Removal of metal siding and exterior slip covers (surfaces), in some cases replacement of siding
- Restoration or replacement of deteriorated or hazardous walkways – new ones must be ADA compliant
- Repair or rehabilitation of signage
- New Signage
- New awnings or the rehabilitation of existing awnings
- Removal of inappropriate or out-of-date signage

Projects must be visible from the public way. Preference will be given to projects that involve the front façade of a business. In some cases, the side and rear views are eligible for improvements funded by this grant.

INELIGIBLE Expenditures:

- IMPROVEMENTS MADE PRIOR TO GRANT APPROVAL
- Roof work, except where considered part of the facade
- Interior rehabilitation unless it is essential to rehabilitate the building's façade and then only eligible on a very limited basis
- Interior decoration
- Refinancing of existing debt
- Inventory and equipment
- Sweat equity (payments for applicant's own labor)
- General business operations expenses (payroll, taxes, utilities, etc.)

Priority Funding

Priority for funds will be given to (not in order of priority):

- Removing non-historic elements from building facades
- Rehabilitation or compatible reconstruction of storefronts
- Front façade projects over other part of the building
- Commercial/income –producing buildings over those owned by public agencies
- Store signage - new and rehabilitating existing and historic signage
- Awnings – repair or installation

How are projects selected for funding?

Business and property owners must apply for funding by filling out the Town's Façade Application available on the website (www.snowhillmd.com) or from Town Hall. There is a \$25 non-refundable processing fee to be submitted with each project application. Applications will be reviewed and ranked by the Façade Review Committee and selected based on a clear and documented set of evaluative criteria. Depending on the number of applications, the Review Committee may assign "waiting list" status to projects that qualify for selection, but do not rank as high as other applications selected for funding.

Please note: Property owners will be limited to **one** application for each property that will include all improvements to the property in one application. Multiple applications for a property will **not** be accepted.

All façade grants require a match, which means that the applicant pays a portion of the improvement and the Façade Grant pays a portion. The match for this round will be 1:1— for every \$1 the applicant spends on the project the Town of Snow Hill's facade grant will match with \$1. Grant requests up to \$5,000 will be considered.

The evaluative criteria and their respective weights are as follows:

- **Impact (40%):** – Overall impact of the project on the Town. Would the improvements have a positive impact on the town's commercial district? Are inappropriate design elements removed? Will the project eliminate what was previously considered to be a liability for the commercial area? Does the project seek to restore the historical or architectural significance of the building? Does the project fall into a priority-funding category?
- **Community Contribution (20%):** – Is the applicant a good neighbor? Is the area around the business kept clean and free of debris on a consistent basis? Does the business participate in organized promotions or other community based activities? Does the applicant actively promote Snow Hill and their own business?
- **Sustainability/Permanence (20%):** – How permanent are the improvements (signs are more changeable than new glazing, for example) and is there a maintenance plan for improvements? Does the business own the building? If not, how much time remains on the lease? A minimum of two years is required.
- **Cost/Schedule (15%):** – Is the project feasible from a cost and scheduling point-of-view?
- **Financial Leverage (5%):** – Projects that leverage more private investment will be graded higher than those seeking the maximum match.
- At the Review Committee's discretion, exceptions to any of the guidelines may be approved due to special conditions or situations.

Are there any design guidelines?

Yes. The Review committee of Snow Hill is looking for façade projects that protect the historic integrity of the building and improve the overall appearance of the area. The Town is not trying to recreate some past time in the history of Snow Hill; instead it is trying to draw upon the architectural and historic distinctiveness of the town as a means to move Snow Hill into a vibrant future. However, the Town recognizes that some buildings may have a different period of architectural significance that supersedes the original construction appearance.

Successful projects will consider the impact on the preservation of the historic fabric and character of the building. Are original features being retained and repaired? Are historic or like-kind materials being used? For example, the Town would not support the installation of vinyl siding, but would support the repair and repainting of original wood siding.

Successful projects will draw upon the history and architecture of the building, but also reflect the current use. The Town strongly encourages creative new uses for the existing building stock. It also encourages modern yet historically compatible awnings, signage, lighting and other fixtures to enhance the appearance of storefronts in the business district.

Projects must meet the approval of the Snow Hills' Review Committee, Snow Hill Historic District Commission and the Maryland Historic Trust requirements.

Please refer to the ***Snow Hill Historic District, a Reference Guide for Property Owners*** for direction on signage, awnings, façade improvements and other aspects of commercial district design. Copies are available for \$5.00 each in Town Hall or in PDF format at www.snowhillmd.com under "More News". Projects must conform to all appropriate zoning and building codes.

How does the application process work?

Grant funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis and cannot be issued until the proposed project has been completed. **WORK BEGUN or COMPLETED PRIOR TO LETTER OF COMMITMENT IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING.**

Application Process

1. Applications must be completed and submitted to Town Hall with a non-refundable application fee of \$25.00. Applications are available at Town Hall or on the Town's website: www.snowhillmd.com.

Complete applications **must** include the following information:

- Illustrations of the proposed work or architectural drawings
- Photos of the site and its relationship to adjoining sites
- Color samples and texture of finish materials, where applicable
- Landscaping plans, where applicable
- All building construction plans as may be required by the Code Official.
- A **detailed** analysis of project cost with supporting documentation (contract proposal, materials list, etc.) from the persons doing the work. Proposals must come from the contractor and be presented on official business letter head.

Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding.

Applicant **must** be current with **all** payments to the Town of Snow Hill, the County of Worcester and the State of Maryland with regard to water sewer bills and taxes of all kinds (income, personal property, real estate and any other applicable tax). **Failure to so will render an application for grant funds ineligible.**

2. **Return all applications by March 15, 2016 to:**

Snow Hill - Façade Improvement Program
P.O. Box 348
Snow Hill, Maryland 21863

With a non-refundable application fee of \$25.00. Checks may be made out to the Town of Snow Hill

3. **Deadline**

All applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. on March 15, 2016.

The Review committee will review the applications and vote on approval. The applicant will be notified, in writing, whether their project will receive funding. The notification will outline the specified amount of the grant with information on any other requirements. The applicant can then proceed with necessary permitting and review processes. If necessary, selected

applicants' plans must be submitted to the local Historic District Commission and to the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) for project approval. The Town Hall staff will seek approvals from MHT on behalf of the applicant.

Work can not begin until all approvals have been received.

If an application is denied, a new application can be submitted during the next funding round.

When the project is selected for funding, what happens next?

1. Renovation/rehabilitation work must begin within six (6) months and be completed within nine (9) months of approval. Signage and awning projects must be complete within six (6) months of approval. Depending on the scope of a project, extensions may be requested in writing. Snow Hill reserves the right to cancel this agreement in the event of failure to comply with this schedule.
2. The applicant is responsible for obtaining all building permits and any other required permits for the work to be done. The applicant is responsible for conformance with all applicable safety regulations, building codes, ordinances and other applicable regulations. All applicants are responsible to check directly with Town Hall to see if a building permit is necessary for their projects.
3. Upon completion of the project, all debris and leftover building materials will be disposed of properly. The applicant agrees to maintain the property and improvement.
4. The Town of Snow Hill may promote an approved project including, but not limited to, using photographs and descriptions of the project in area newspapers.

How do I get reimbursed for my project?

Because this is a **reimbursement program** for the applicants and for the Town of Snow Hill, the Town must apply for reimbursement of its funds from the state and those funds are then passed on to the applicant. In most cases, funds will be released to the applicant upon receipt of said funds at Town Hall. In some cases, the Town will reimburse the business for its financial outlay up front to prevent significant cash flow hardship in the business. A letter requesting advanced payment is required. This will only be done when the following requirements have been met.

1. The Town will perform an inspection of the project's work. In order for the Town to request reimbursement funds, the applicants must provide proof of completion of the project.
2. A letter requesting reimbursement funds stating the amount and date of project completion.
3. A financial summary report, **copies of paid invoices signed** by the contractor and waivers of lien from contractors (and subcontractors, if applicable).
4. Photos and or drawings of completed project. "Before and After" photos are required. All debris has been removed from the property.

A Local committee member will inspect property for compliance. If necessary, photos and drawings will be submitted to the Maryland Historic Trust to insure compliance of work. Funds will be dispersed only after verification that the work has been completed in accordance with the contract.

As stated in the Façade Improvement Application the property will return a prorated amount of grant funds to the Town if the improvement is removed or not used for a period of two years.

Note: Snow Hill reserves the right to make changes in the conditions of the Facade Improvement Program as warranted.