



HEDC STOREFRONT AND STREETScape IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

Grant funds are subject to budget availability and as a result, funding may not be available for all eligible applicants. Grants are awarded based on available funds.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. Applicant must schedule a pre-application meeting with the HEDC Director.
2. Applicant must be a property owner or business tenant of a street level business with street front presence and access.
3. If the Applicant is a business tenant, the business will need to have the property owner's express consent for the proposed improvements and have been established in the City of Hitchcock for at least 12 months.
4. Property taxes must be current.
5. Applicant must represent that to the best of their knowledge they have no debts to the City.
6. Applicant must certify that there are no current code enforcement actions pending against the property that would not be mitigated by the project.
7. Preference will be given to businesses located in the Downtown District and east of Highway 6 and FM 2004 along Highway 6. Preference will be given to the following types of businesses:
 - a. Restaurant/Café/Purveyor of Food
 - b. Apparel/Shoes/Home Furnishings & Other Soft Goods
 - c. Grocery/Food & Floral Market/General Merchandise
8. Nonconforming signage on property, if applicable, must be permanently removed as part of the improvement.
9. Applicant must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements and obtain the necessary regulatory approvals.
10. All paint colors must be submitted to the HEDC Review Committee and approved by the HEDC Review Committee.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Projects are reviewed on a competitive basis. The Evaluation Form outlines the rating criteria by which each submitted project is assessed. Those projects with the highest weighted average will be granted funding.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Labor, design, and material costs are eligible costs. Further, permit fees associated with the proposed renovation/rehabilitation and fees for architectural design and engineering for the project are eligible program costs. Costs incurred for alterations or improvements completed prior to receipt of formal written approval by HEDC are not eligible for reimbursement. Funds cannot be used to correct outstanding code violations or for property damage caused by acts of nature.

HEDC will provide dollar for dollar matching grants from **\$500 to \$5,000** to commercial property/business owners who present eligible projects that will activate the streetscape using high-quality, pedestrian-oriented design elements. Projects must exceed \$1,000 to be considered for a grant.

Reimbursement Match Calculation Example:

Total Qualifying Project Cost	Maximum HEDC Reimbursement Match
\$1,000	\$500
\$1,500	\$750
\$2,000	\$1,000
\$2,500	\$1,250
\$5,000	\$2,500
\$10,000	\$5,000
\$14,000	\$5,000
\$20,000	\$5,000

Criteria in which eligible projects will be determined include:

- Design quality of proposed improvements
- Consistency of design with business activity
- Compatibility with design of surrounding buildings and neighborhood
- Proposed improvements are sufficient to improve the aesthetics of the building/retail center
- Improvement of property will significantly impact the revitalization of the City
- Community involvement of Applicant

QUALIFYING IMPROVEMENTS

Rehabilitation of building facades visible to the street, including storefronts and streetscapes, which consist of new and/or the repair, restoration, replacement, or removal of:

- Cornices
- Gutters and downspouts
- Awnings and canopies
- Siding/trimming, and bricking
- Exterior Lighting

- Painting (limited colors, no day-glow) and masonry cleaning
- Exterior finishes or materials that are incompatible or inappropriate with the requirements of the Downtown District
- Architectural elements
- Entrance upgrades /doors/windows
- Balconies
- Signage
- Outdoor furnishings in connection with sidewalk cafes
- Landscaping (i.e., plant life, planting beds, planting containers)
- Limited security and accessibility improvements
- Permit and design review fees can be reimbursed through the program
- Dumpster Screening

The following repairs are allowed as long as they are part of work which directly affects the storefront and/or streetscape:

- Fences
- Seal coating and re-stripping of parking lots
- Bike racks
- Interior window display lighting

In addition, sustainable elements such as bio-swales and semi-permeable pavers may be included in the larger project.

NON-QUALIFYING IMPROVEMENTS

- Roofs
- Structural foundations
- Billboards
- Security systems
- Non-permanent fixtures
- Interior window coverings
- Vinyl awnings
- Personal property and equipment
- Security bars
- Razor/barbed wire fencing

DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

All improvements must conform to applicable City of Hitchcock building codes, local, state, and federal laws. The following improvements are encouraged:

1. Parapets which serve to hide air conditioning units, gutters, down spouts and other rooftop equipment or structures from view;

2. New storefront construction, appropriately scaled within an existing building;
3. Cleaning, repainting, or re-siding of building;
4. Awnings or canopies that can be both functional and visually appealing;
5. Lighting that is visually appealing and appropriately illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of a building façade;
6. Window display areas which are appropriately scaled and which facilitate night viewing;
7. Window replacement and window framing visible from the street, which is appropriately scaled to the building;
8. Additional signage that is attractively integrated into the architecture of the building, including the window area, awnings, or canopies, and entryways;
9. Curbing, irrigation, approved trees, landscaping beds or other landscaping features attached to the building where appropriate; and
10. Removal of architectural barriers to public accessibility.

Other improvements can be made with written approval if they meet the objectives of the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program.

APPLICATION

The Applicant will consult with the HEDC Executive Director, before an application is submitted, to determine Applicant and project eligibility. HEDC staff will work with Applicant to help Applicant meet program conditions that are required for a commitment of funds. If Applicant is determined eligible, the Applicant will be required to submit the following attachments:

1. Completed application.
2. Color photographs of existing storefront and streetscape conditions with description of what is represented in each photograph prior to making the proposed improvements.
3. A written statement of the project scope and why improvements are needed. Provide as much detail as possible, including what you are changing or replacing, type of new materials to be used, color, location on building, etc.
4. If the Applicant is a property owner, show proof of ownership.
5. If the Applicant is a business tenant, letter of permission from the property owner to participate in the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program. Letters should include the expiration date of the current lease.
6. Architectural drawings and/or renderings of the improvements, reflecting placement, materials, and colors to be used. Some minor projects may only require pictures of materials.

7. At least two bids from licensed contractors reflecting work to be performed, costs and completion schedule. If the Applicant is a licensed contractor, an additional bid must be submitted to validate the Applicant's bid. Contractor fees and overhead for Applicant owners will not be reimbursed. Any contractor that has submitted a competitive, detailed estimate can be used. All contractors must be licensed and bonded. All construction contracts will be between the applicant and contractor. Contractors cannot be changed unless new bids have been submitted to the HEDC.

HEDC Contact:

- **Lance LaCour, Executive Director; 409-502-7331; econdir@cityofhitchcock.org**

RELATED PARTIES

This program is not open for participation to any Hitchcock City Council member, board or commission member, city employee, or immediate family members of an employee or council/board/commission member.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The HEDC has the sole authority to determine the eligibility of proposed work and confirmation of completed work. HEDC's Review Committee will meet monthly to review applications unless no applications have been submitted. The Applicant need not be present for the Committee meeting. Grant applications will not be reviewed by the Committee until all the requested information is submitted.

The Committee has the right to deny the application if, in its sole opinion, it does not meet the goals or requirements of the program. Certain work may be required or precluded as a condition of funding. If the Committee determines that the project meets the criteria of the program and should move forward, a recommendation is made to the HEDC Board of Directors, which meets on a semi-monthly basis. Generally, an award decision will occur within 45 days of submittal of the complete application.

Applicants will be notified in writing as to whether the application has been rejected or approved. Upon approval, the Applicant must enter into a legally binding performance agreement with the HEDC which references and incorporates the Guidelines and General Conditions of this Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program and the terms and conditions of his/her participation in the program. The specific requirements of this Program include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) Project scope, property location and specific improvements to be undertaken; 2) Amount of the grant; 3) Work commitment period, so that if funds are not used within that period, program funds can be reallocated for other eligible projects; 4) Maintenance requirements and operating standards, which will vary based on nature of establishment;

5) Acknowledgment of the reimbursement claim procedures and supporting documentation needed for reimbursement; 6) Monitoring and right of final inspection by the HEDC; 7) Approval of all work by City of Hitchcock building official (as needed); 8) Acknowledgment of change order procedures; 9) Compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws; 10) Promotional rights of HEDC for the project; 11) Repayment penalty for removal of improvements; and 12) HEDC's standard contract terms and provisions (e.g., liability, indemnification, termination, etc.)

Upon the date of HEDC board approval, the Applicant has 30 days to enter into the above noted agreement with HEDC and 90 days from the date of contract execution to begin construction. If the work does not begin within the 90-day period, the Applicant will be notified in writing that the grant will lapse, and the grant agreement will be terminated. Once construction has started, the Applicant has one year to complete the improvements. If the improvements are not complete at the end of the one-year period, the Applicant will be notified in writing that the grant will lapse, and the grant agreement will be terminated. If an approved project is nearing the one-year lapse point, an opportunity will be provided for the Applicant to request an extension. One extension may be granted at the discretion of the HEDC Board depending on the project's circumstances and the future needs of the program. If an approved grant does lapse and is terminated, the Applicant may re-apply if funds are available. There is no guarantee that a resubmission will be approved, and the project will be reevaluated based upon the established criteria detailed above.

After approval, any changes to the project, no matter how minimal, must be approved by the HEDC and a Final Inspection Report must be obtained through the City Secretary/Permit Clerk. Grant recipients will work closely with the HEDC's Director to communicate the project progress and resolve any issues or questions. Funding will be provided on a reimbursable basis after satisfactory project completion and submission of project receipts to HEDC. Further, reimbursement payment will not be issued until the Applicant has paid for the improvement work in full. Reimbursement claims must be accompanied by the following supporting documents: proof of payments (e.g., cancelled checks, paid invoices/receipts of eligible expenses), statements from architects, contractors and/or subcontractors acknowledging that all payments have been received.

ADJUSTMENTS and TERMINATION

The Applicant understands that the HEDC and the City of Hitchcock reserves the right make changes in the conditions of the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program as they determine in their sole discretion as warranted at any time, including for applications already pending. If the Applicant seeks to change the scope of their project after a grant has already been approved, the Applicant must meet with the HEDC Director. The Applicant must have written approval on all modifications to remain eligible for grant funding. All work for approved projects must be completed within one year of the date

construction begins unless an extension is granted by the HEDC. HEDC has the right to terminate any agreement under the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines or if the project has been started prior to executed agreement with the HEDC.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

1. It is expressly understood and agreed that the Applicant shall be solely responsible for all safety conditions and compliance with all safety regulations, building codes, ordinances, and other applicable regulations. Neither approval of a grant application nor payment of the grant upon completion of the project shall constitute approval by any City department or HEDC staff of the project, nor shall approval of such grant application or payment of the grant upon completion constitute a waiver by the City or the HEDC of any safety regulation, building code, ordinance and other applicable regulation.
2. It is expressly understood and agreed that the Applicant is solely responsible for overseeing the work, and will not seek to hold HEDC, the City of Hitchcock, and/or their agents, employees, officers, and/or directors liable for any property damage, personal injury, or other loss related in any way to the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program, and by submission of an application, the Applicant agrees to indemnify HEDC, the City of Hitchcock, and/or their agents, employees, officers, and/or directors from any claims or damages resulting from the project, including reasonable attorneys' fees.
3. The Applicant shall be responsible for maintaining sufficient insurance coverage for property damage and personal injury liability relating to the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program.
4. The Applicant authorizes the City of Hitchcock and the HEDC to promote an approved project, including but not limited to displaying a sign at the site during and after construction, and using photographs and descriptions of the project in material and press releases.
5. The Applicant must agree not to change or alter the improved façade without prior written approval from the HEDC for three (3) years from the date of the rebate check issued under the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program. The Applicant agrees to return a pro-rated amount of the grant money received if the improvement is removed within three (3) years.

Evaluation Form: Below are the evaluation criteria and point system that will be used to assess each of the submitted projects.

Evaluation Factor	Possible Points	Score
Design quality of proposed improvements	20	
Consistency of design with business activity	10	
Compatibility with design of surrounding buildings and neighborhood	10	
Proposed improvements are sufficient to improve the aesthetics of the building/retail	20	
Improvement of property will significantly impact the revitalization efforts of the City	30	
Community involvement of Applicant	10	
TOTAL SCORE RECIEVED	100	