

WPB Façade Rebate Program Policy 2012

Intent

WPB, the Special Service Area for the Wicker Park and Bucktown neighborhoods, is interested in preserving the character of the commercial streets, particularly as it relates to historic buildings and pedestrian-scale architecture. The WPB Façade Rebate Program is intended to provide funds to help building/business owners improve the overall physical appearance of the exterior of their buildings/businesses. By improving individual storefronts, the program will help to revitalize and beautify the entire WPB commercial district, enhance the pedestrian-scale streetscape and ensure that exceptional design solutions are introduced within the district, while preserving the unique character and qualities of the WPB district.

Program Eligibility

Owners and tenants (with owner's written consent) of street level commercial/retail property, located within WPB's boundaries, may apply (map included at the end of this document). All applicants must submit property PIN to verify eligibility.

Each physical address is eligible for one **façade rebate in any five year period**. If a business owner applies for and receives a rebate at one address and then relocates within the district, any subsequent applications under the WPB Façade Rebate Program will be considered on a case by case basis.

If any change in the ownership of the property or business participating in the program occurs during improvements, the application will be suspended until a meeting with WPB staff and new ownership is completed and any changes to the original application are approved in writing. There is no guarantee that new ownership will be approved for the same rebate amount as the previous owner. All such applications will be considered on a case by case basis.

Eligible Improvements

Improvements under the Façade Rebate Program may include:

- Façade Renovation
- Historic Preservation
- Historic Signs and Restorations
- Awning Installation
- Exterior Lighting
- Windows and Doors (Storefronts)
- Power Washing of Exterior Façade
- Sandblasting

- Signage (Removal and Installation of New)*
- Billboard Removal
- Removal of Security Gates or Fences Corner Storefronts

Ineligible Improvements

- Roof Replacements
- Rear or Alley Façade
- Routine Maintenance and Repairs (painting, glass replacement, caulking, sealing or minor repairs unless part of larger project)
- New Construction
- Billboard Installation

All proposed improvements and rehabilitative work will be subject to a review and approval process by the WPB Review Board. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all the proposed improvements are reviewed by appropriate City of Chicago departments to assure compliance with zoning and building code requirements, and any other local and state laws and ordinances if applicable. It is also the responsibility of the applicant to secure all necessary permits; copies of all permits are required as part of the program.

Eligible Expenditures

Approved applicants who plan to make building/storefront improvements are eligible for a rebate of up to 50% of the approved costs, not to exceed \$5,000 provided the location is within WPB's boundary and the improvements are covered under this Program. *Regarding signage improvements, (removal and installation of new), applicants may only receive up to 50% of approved costs or \$1,000, whichever is less.* City permit fees may be included in the total storefront improvement cost. The improvements must have a *positive impact* on the commercial area and improve the aesthetic appearance of the storefront and/ or building. **Work must have been completed no more than 90 days prior to the submission of the rebate application (or any reasonable time thereafter) to be eligible for reimbursement under the rebate program.**

The program will concentrate primarily on street level improvements, but upper level improvements may be approved if it has significant impact on the street appearance. This will be subject to approval by the WPB Review Board and WPB Commission. In the case where the applicant serves as the contractor, two additional estimates from other contractors will be required for the cost evaluation of the project. Associated costs due to the applicant being the contractor or supplier of goods are not eligible expenditures and will not be considered in the rebate estimate.

* Regarding **signage improvements** (removal and installation of new), applicants may only receive up to **50% of approved costs or a rebate of \$1,000 whichever is less.**

Application Process

An application will only be reviewed after receipt of all application materials, listed below. **Applications will be considered incomplete and WILL NOT be reviewed until all of the following information is received:**

1. Application form completed in its entirety. The application must be submitted in hard copy and digital format along with completed checklist and Rebate Work Summary Worksheet. Application, checklist and worksheet can be obtained at the Wicker Park-Bucktown Chamber of Commerce office or online at www.wickerparkbucktown.org.
2. Three (3) sets of cost estimate for projects over \$500 or one (1) cost estimate for projects under \$500. All cost estimates should be itemized. Note: *The WPB Review Board reserves the right to reject questionable estimates at anytime.*
3. Photos of the existing building and area surrounding the proposed project.
4. Design drawings, which graphically indicate the proposed improvements. Drawings must include all elevations, dimensions and other appropriate measurements and information.
5. A written authorization from the property owner, if different from the applicant. The authorization must state that the applicant has the authority of the building owner to make the proposed improvements and participate in the program. Property owner must initial drawings or sketches indicating approval of suggested improvement.
6. Project specifications, including color samples, designs for awnings and/or signs.
7. Timeline for project completion and/or completed Work Summary Worksheet if applicable.

Applications can be submitted digitally (preferred) or in hard copy to:
WPB Façade Rebate Program
Attention: Jessica Wobbekind, Program Manager
1414 N. Ashland, Chicago, IL 60622 or jessica@wickerparkbucktown.org

Review Process

1. WPB staff will verify the application is complete and that the work proposed is eligible for rebate. The applicant will be notified within (5) five business days of receipt of application.
2. If application is complete and eligible for rebate, WPB staff will arrange a meeting (if needed) to review application and project scope. This meeting will take place within (15) fifteen business days of receipt of complete application. If application is found to be incomplete or not eligible for rebate, WPB staff will notify the applicant within (5) business days of incomplete application and corrective actions if necessary.

3. After meeting with WPB staff, application materials will be forwarded to the Guide Development Committee of WPB. If the proposed façade project does not include significant architectural changes, the application will be reviewed by the Committee and approved by the WPB Commission which meets monthly. If the proposed façade project includes extensive architectural changes or other modifications, the Guide Development Committee may defer final decision making to the WPB Review Board (see below for explanation of Review Board). The WPB Review Board will meet once a quarter. If application is not approved, a notification letter including feedback of reasons will be sent to the applicant within (5) five business days of the decision.
4. If the application is reviewed by the WPB Review Board, it will then be forwarded to the WPB Commission for final approval. Applicants will be notified of the decision within 5 (five) business days of Commission meeting where the application was voted upon.

Inspection Process

Upon completion of the work, the applicant is to send WPB staff:

1. a signed letter from the applicant certifying that the work to be reimbursed was completed no more than 90 days prior to the date on which the application was originally submitted; and
2. an up-to-date Work Summary Sheet; and
3. copies of required permits, invoices, cancelled checks, and a notarized contractor's affidavit and waiver of lien.

If all reimbursable work is completed at the time of your application, please submit all of the above materials along with your application. If the documentation is in order, WPB staff will conduct a field inspection. The inspection ensures the applicant's compliance with the WPB Façade Rebate Program Policy as well as the original information submitted in the application.

Rebate Process

Upon satisfactory inspection, including receipt of all information listed above, WPB will authorize a rebate check for the participant. Because funds for a project cannot be reserved indefinitely, rebate will be subject to cancellation if not completed by the deadline indicated in the application. A check will be issued and mailed within (15) fifteen business days of successful inspection, commission approval, and document review.

Program Definitions and Additional Guidelines

Positive Impact

Changes that are apparent from the commercial street that improve the aesthetic appearance of a storefront and/or building which in turn create a

cleaner more inviting look to the commercial district. Some examples include, but are not limited to: changing windows or door style to create a more open and inviting entryway or reconfiguring traffic pattern of an entry way; replacing deteriorating signage with clean uniform signage and installing outdoor lighting; removing brick that was previously installed over windows.

Storefront

Any commercial retail business front within WPB's boundary that has direct and immediate pedestrian access from the public way.

WPB Review Board

The WPB Review Board consists of (5) five members to include one WPB Commissioner and will meet once a quarter to review applications. The WPB review board will represent an experienced, diverse cross section of members, whose intent will be to ensure the proposed improvements are consistent in the nature with the unique qualities and characteristics of the neighborhood.

Façade

The façade is the entire exterior front surface of a building from sidewalk grade to the roofline. (Material used for the renovation of the façade should match and complement the design of the building.) Avoid mixing materials and avoid imitations of materials. Solid or permanently enclosed or covered storefronts are prohibited, as are window treatments that significantly decrease the amount of window area. All damaged, or otherwise deteriorated elements of storefronts, display windows; entrances, upper façade or upper signs should be repaired or replaced. Additions to a building should use materials similar to those used in the existing building (i.e., matching size, color and texture or original materials). Each building unit, whether existing or proposed, should be an integral element of the total site design. It should reflect and complement the character of the surrounding area.

ADA Compliance

In order to insure people's access to purchase goods and services, all applicants who participate must meet, at the minimum, accessibility standards as put forth by the American's With Disabilities Act (ADA) prior to receiving rebate.

Cleaning Masonry

Brick and stone are not to be sandblasted since these materials are porous and can be damaged. Such materials should only be chemically cleaned or steam cleaned and meet EPA standards or higher. Specifications regarding the cleaning of historic buildings shall be submitted as part of the contractor's proposal.

Tuckpointing

Masonry surfaces should be properly tuckpointed to avoid moisture seepage and excessive wear on the masonry. New mortar should be compatible with color/texture and form of original mortar. With historic buildings, specifications must be submitted with the contractor's proposal.

Exterior Lighting

The use of lights to illuminate building facades is highly encouraged and may be done with projecting, or concealed, fixtures. Such fixtures should be inconspicuous and harmonious with the building's design. All fixtures, receptacles and equipment should be in accordance with the City of Chicago Building Code and Public Way Ordinance, and all required permits must be obtained by the applicant.

Signs

A sign's major purpose is to identify a business and not advertise its merchandise and services. Signs should not be large and overbearing, or cluttered with excessive information. They should be simple, and should be coordinated with neighboring signs. Portable signs, large signs on upper facades, monument, neon, and halogen signs will be considered on a case by case basis, but are generally not approved under this Program. Rooftop signs on or above the parapet or cornice of the building, billboards, and other outdoor advertisements signs painted or mounted on structures, except as otherwise described, are prohibited. Exceptions of an aesthetic or historic nature shall be considered for approval on a case-by-case basis.

Awnings and Canopies

Awnings and canopies can be attractive improvements to a storefront, and a good location for the store's name. They also provide shelter from the sun and rain. All awnings must be approved by the appropriate City Departments.

Windows and Doors

Windows and doors should be tight and have sashes of proper size and design. Window frames with rotten wood, broken joints or loose mullions should be replaced. All broken and missing windows should be replaced with new glass. Display windows, entrances, signs, lighting, sun protections, etc., should be compatible and harmonious with the original scale and character of the structure. **No storefront should be covered or boarded up. No security gates of any kind will be allowed. WPB and Chicago Police Department recommend electronic security systems. If existing exterior security gates or bars are present, they will need to be removed.**

Parking Lots

Parking lots facing shopping streets and serving adjacent stores may be eligible for landscaping, lighting and decorative fences along the edges that screen or buffer the area from pedestrian shoppers. Such lots must receive

special approval from the WPB Review Board and Commission to participate in the program. Parking lots facing side streets only, or not visible from the main shopping street, are not eligible under the program.

Wall Murals and Graphics

Wall murals and graphics can be attractive improvements to a building and also to an overall shopping area. Murals and graphics also can help establish a unique identity. If the side of a building, proposed for a graphic or mural is highly visible from the main shopping street, such artwork may be considered an eligible expenditure.

Permit Information

(Note: Information on permits is subject to change. Please consult the City of Chicago and/or a licensed architect/contractor for official information about permits. The Wicker Park-Bucktown Chamber of Commerce and its agents accept no responsibility for information that is no longer accurate.)

Building Permits

Building permits are issued by the Department of Buildings, City Hall Room 800, and 121 N. LaSalle Street. Please visit www.cityofchicago.org or call 312-743-3600 for more information.

Barricade Permits

This is handled by the Street Permit Section of the Department of Buildings.

Tuckpointing and cleaning of brick masonry normally do not require a permit, but if public safety is involved, a barricade permit should be secured.

Awnings and Canopies

Awnings and canopies that extend over the public way necessitate a permit from the Compensation Unit of the Department of Revenue, 333 South State Street, Room LL30, 312-747-3819. After securing a canopy permit application from the Bureau, and obtaining the signature of the local alderman, the applicant submits the completed application to the Department of Revenue for further processing. These permits can only be issued after the passage of an enabling ordinance by the City Council. Allow twelve weeks for issuance of the permit. A permit for an awning, or canopy, that extends less than two feet over the public right of way, can be secured through the Department of Buildings.

Electrical Permits

Electrical permits are secured by a licensed electrical contractor for light fixtures, neon signs and lighted window displays (For more information, contact the city of Chicago at 312-744-3449).