Downtown Waxhaw Building Exterior Improvement Grant Guidelines

Program Overview

Waxhaw's Building Exterior Improvement Grant program is an incentive-based measure intended to encourage and provide economic inducement for the:

- Renovation of commercial, industrial, residential and institutional buildings within the approved program boundary.
- Implementation of appropriate design standards for the rehabilitation of historic properties (see the Waxhaw, North Carolina Historic Landmark Standards at www.waxhaw.com); and
- Preservation of the unique architectural character of downtown Waxhaw.

In 2010, the Board of Commissioners (BOC) began setting aside money to be used for improving properties in downtown Waxhaw. Downtown Waxhaw is an asset to the Town and the region, and it is well documented that a vibrant downtown can bring economic benefits to the larger community.

The purpose of the Building Exterior Improvement Grant program is to assist property owners as they invest in historically appropriate rehabilitation projects that will serve to increase the vitality of Downtown Waxhaw. It is intended that this program will spur interest and investment in the downtown and thereby benefit the greater community.

Projects related to exterior building improvements are eligible to apply, but priority will be given to projects that improve the structural integrity of the building.

Funding

Building Exterior Improvement Grants will match up to 50% of the cost of rehabilitation. A minimum of $2500 must be spent. For the fiscal year 2026-27, the Town has set aside $30,000 for reimbursements for façade improvements. Consult with staff liaison and/or Business Development Director to determine availability.

- The final award amount is based on documentation of actual costs.
- Building Exterior Improvement Grants are paid only when the approved project is completed in accordance with the approved plans and specifications submitted with the application and the appropriate tax documents have been submitted to the Town.
- Reimbursement checks will be made by the Town once the completed work is approved and documentation of payment is provided.

Examples of Improvements

Improvements may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Structural repairs – including roofs

- Removal of false fronts, metal canopies and additions that detract from a building's architectural or historical character. Evidence must be provided (in the form of photographs, publications, period-specific examples, etc.) to verify that the rehabilitation will replicate a previous version of the same building wall/façade.
- Safe cleaning of brick storefronts – chemical stripping, scraping and water wash. Power washing is not recommended. Sand blasting is prohibited.
- Exterior painting/repainting.
- Historic reconstruction – storefront, door, or window repair or replacement, masonry repointing, etc.
- Approved awning installation.
- Approved sign and/or exterior lighting installation. Simple sign changes are eligible but by themselves are given low priority.

What Projects are Eligible?

Any non-residential, residential, non-profit or church structure built 50 or more years ago and within the program boundary (see attached map) approved by the BOC is eligible for Building Exterior Improvement Grant funding. If you are unsure about the eligibility of your property, contact the Waxhaw Planning and Inspections Department at 704-843-2195. Additional stipulations include:

- Only one application is required for each building submittal. Either the property owner or the tenant of a building may apply, or both may apply jointly.
- If a building has multiple units, each tenant with a separate entrance may apply. Where a single tenant occupies multiple units, the tenant is eligible for one application only.
- A tenant applicant must obtain the property owner's written consent for building exterior renovations and must submit that permission with the application.

Criteria

- All building design proposals MUST:
  - Meet the applicable zoning and code requirements of Waxhaw.
  - Comply with these Building Exterior Improvement Grant Guidelines.
  - Receive Building Exterior Improvement Grant application approval and, where appropriate, be issued a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Waxhaw Historic Preservation Commission (WHPC); and
  - Adhere to the Waxhaw, North Carolina Historic Landmark Standards.
- Only exterior façade and roof renovations are eligible.
- A property does not have to be occupied at the time a Building Exterior Improvement Grant application is submitted.
- Priority consideration will be given to proposals that make highly visible and significant design contributions and which contribute to the program's goal of preserving the architectural and historic character of downtown Waxhaw.
- A building may receive one grant, and tenant shopfronts may receive one grant per shopfront. However, no more than one grant per building or shopfront shall be awarded within one fiscal year.

Process Overview

1. **Pre-submittal Meeting** – Property owner/tenant (applicant) reviews the Building Exterior Improvement Grant package and meets with the staff liaison to discuss the proposed work.

2. **Estimate of work** – The applicant contacts two contractors for itemized cost estimates of the proposed work.

3. **Application Submittal** – The applicant submits grant application with photographs of the building and itemized contractor estimates to staff liaison. Applications must be submitted a minimum of two weeks prior to the WHPC regular monthly meeting for consideration.

4. **Staff Review** – Staff reviews application for completeness and adherence to Town standards including the Waxhaw Land Development Code, the Waxhaw, North Carolina Historic Landmark Standards, and NC Building Code. The staff liaison will notify the applicant if there is any missing information.

5. **WHPC Review** – The WHPC reviews the application (and Certificate of Appropriateness application simultaneously, where applicable) at a WHPC regular meeting. The WHPC will request any further information if needed. If no further information is required, the WHPC may make a recommendation to the BOC to approve, approve with suggested modifications, or deny the request.

6. **BOC Review** – Following the WHPC recommendation, the application will be added to the next Board of Commissioner agenda for review. The BOC may request additional information, approve, approve with modifications, or deny the application.

7. **Notification** – Each applicant will receive a letter notifying them of approval (or denial) of the application and notifying them of any permit requirements. All application fees associated with a Building Exterior Improvement Grant issued by the Town of Waxhaw will be waived, however, the applicant must still obtain any required permits.

8. **Work Begins** – Following approval of the application, work may begin. Work must be completed, as originally described in the submitted application, within three months of approval.

9. **Extension of Deadline**– A written request may be made to staff to extend the deadline by up to three additional months. If more time is needed, the applicant must provide a written statement requesting extension for review and approval for an additional three months. The applicant shall not exceed six months for completion of the project unless they appear before the BOC to request an extension and can prove a hardship in writing.

10. **Modification of Grant** – A written request may be made to staff for a modification to the scope or cost of the project. Minor modifications to scope may be approved administratively. Major modifications must be approved by the BOC. Requests for an increase to the grant award must be approved by the BOC and be accompanied by an explanation for the overrun and a quote from the contractor.

11. **Staff Final Review of Completed Work** – An inspection conducted by the staff liaison must be completed to ensure conformance with the approved grant and all applicable Town standards. Upon approval of work by the staff liaison, the applicant may submit for reimbursement.

12. **Reimbursement** – After the applicant receives their approval letter and prior to grant money being disbursed, a W-9 form must be filled out and submitted to the Waxhaw Tax Collector. Additionally, a Misc. 1099 form will be mailed at the end of the year that the applicant must complete.

To claim grant payment, the following must be submitted to the staff liaison no later than close-of-business on the day of the deadline:

- a copy of the approved application
- paid invoices, cancelled checks, or other acceptable forms of proof of payment.

Grant award payment from the Town of Waxhaw will be issued following staff review of all documents provided.

Quotes

Two quotes must be provided with each Building Exterior Improvement Grant application. These shall include a complete description of the proposed work. These quotes must comply with the following criteria:

- The quote must be itemized for each repair.
- Materials must be specified for any replacement of materials.
- If painting, show proposed color.
- Identify method that will be used if cleaning brick storefronts or washing wood siding.

Materials

- The Building Exterior Improvement Grant Program is to encourage preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic structures, so materials used shall be those that are the same or the most comparable material available to existing materials.
- In the case of historically appropriate rehabilitation, materials shall be the same as those used on the original building.
- Substitute materials should be considered only if the original material is no longer available and after all other options for repair and replacement have been ruled out. Refer to the Waxhaw, North Carolina Historic Landmark Standards for appropriate materials.

Appropriateness

The Waxhaw Building Inspector may be consulted to:

- inspect the existing structure if it shows need of repair.
- determine if the proposed work is necessary and/or appropriate.
- access the accuracy of the quote.
- evaluate the appropriateness of the proposed building materials.

The State Historic Preservation Office Restoration Specialist may be consulted to confirm historically appropriate rehabilitation materials are used, or to recommend substitute materials if the original material is no longer available.

A Certificate of Appropriateness will be required for locally designated landmarks seeking grant funds from the Town of Waxhaw.

Denied Applications

Applicants whose grant applications are denied by the WHPC are encouraged to reapply the next grant cycle. The WHPC, or their designee, will provide a written statement as to why the grant application was denied.

Annual Review

To ensure the Building Exterior Improvement Grant program is a success, the BOC is committed to reviewing the program on an annual basis prior to budget discussions for the new fiscal year. During this review, the BOC may choose to increase funding, change the boundary, or expand the number/type of eligible properties.

I have read and understand the Downtown Waxhaw Façade Improvement Program Application and Waxhaw, North Carolina Historic Landmark Standards.

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Applicant Signature Date