PORT TOWNS

Small Business Facade Improvement Program Policy

Effective Date: [Insert Date]

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Port Towns Business Assistance Façade Improvement Program is to strengthen the economic vitality and visual appeal of the Port Towns' commercial districts—Bladensburg, Colmar Manor, Cottage City, and Edmonston—by supporting locally owned businesses in making exterior improvements to their properties. Through matching grant funding, the program aims to assist companies in enhancing storefront façades, signage, awnings, landscaping, and other visible building elements that contribute to a more attractive, welcoming, and vibrant commercial environment. This initiative is part of a broader revitalization strategy aimed at promoting small business retention, stimulating private investment, and enhancing the overall quality of life in the Port Towns communities.

II. Program Components

A. Storefront Improvements

1. Eligible Improvements:

    - Painting

    - Window repairs and replacements

    - Awnings and canopies

    - Exterior lighting

    - Landscaping and Parking Lots

2. Design Guidelines and Standards:

    - Compliance with the town's and county's architectural standards

    - Encouragement of creativity and uniqueness

    - Use of durable and high-quality materials

B. Signage Upgrades

1. Criteria for Eligible Signage:

    - Replacement or enhancement of business signage

    - Illuminated or non-illuminated signs

    - Compliance with local sign ordinances

2. Emphasis on Visibility and Branding:

    - Improved visibility for businesses

- Promotion of consistent branding within a shopping center or area to improve the overall look of the commercial center or building.

C. Monument Signage

1. Definition and Purpose:

   - Freestanding signage is located at the entrance of commercial areas.

   - Identification and wayfinding

   - Cohesive design

   - Enhanced landscaping to make a point of entry more attractive for customers and to improve the overall image of the c

2. Matching Funds Allocations:

   - Percentage-based matching funds for eligible monument signage improvements

Notes on Matching Funds: When determining the standard matching amount for a facade improvement program involves considering various factors such as the program's goals, available budget, and the level of financial commitment required from participating businesses. There isn't a one-size-fits-all answer, but here's a general guideline you might consider:

Percentage-Based Matching:

One common approach is to use a percentage-based matching formula. For example:

Standard Matching Amount: 50%

Example: If a business invests $10,000 in facade improvements, the program contributes $5,000, making the total investment $15,000.

But this may range from 60/40 matches or smaller amounts for larger projects.

Maximum Matching Amount:

You may consider setting a maximum matching amount to encourage larger investments and more significant improvements. For instance:

Maximum Matching Amount: $15,000

Example: If a business invests $30,000 in facade improvements, the program contributes $15,000, reaching the maximum matching amount.

Minimum Matching Amount:

To ensure a reasonable commitment from businesses, you might set a minimum matching amount:

Minimum Matching Amount: $2,500

Example: If a business invests $5,000 in facade improvements, the program contributes $2,500, meeting the minimum matching amount.

Consideration for Different Elements:

You may also differentiate the matching percentages based on the type of improvement. For instance:

Storefront Improvements: 40% matching

Signage Upgrades: 40% matching

Monument Signage: 25% matching

Tiered Matching System:

Introduce a tiered system based on the total investment amount, encouraging businesses to make substantial improvements:

Investment Tier 1 (Low): Up to $5,000 - 40% matching

Investment Tier 2 (Medium): $5,001 to $25,000 - 40% matching

Investment Tier 3 (High): Over $25,000 - 25% matching

Flexibility:

Consider offering flexibility in the matching amount based on the business's financial capacity, the nature of improvements, and the perceived impact on the community.

It's crucial to strike a balance between encouraging meaningful investments and ensuring the program's accessibility for a diverse range of businesses. Regular assessments of the program's performance and adjustments to the matching amounts based on the outcomes may be necessary for ongoing success.

III. Funding Structure

A. Seed Funding – Town CDC

1. Develop a seed progrm

   - Allocation for program initiation

   - Distribution among eligible businesses based on approved applications.

B. Matching Funds

1. Calculation Formula:

   - X matching funds for eligible improvements

   - Maximum and minimum matching fund amounts

2. Incentives for Maximum Participation:

- Additional incentives for businesses contributing a certain threshold.

C. Application Process

1. Eligibility Criteria:

   - Small businesses within the town limits

   - Compliance with local regulations

   - Submission of a detailed improvement plan

2. Submission Requirements:

   - Completed application form

   - Cost estimates and project timeline

   - Approval from property owner (if applicable)

IV. Community Legacy Grant Program

A. Overview of Maryland DCHD Funding

1. Comparison with Other Towns:

   - Learning from successful models in Laurel, Upper Marlboro, and Mount Airy

   - Potential benefits and opportunities for collaboration

2. Application Procedure:

   - Coordination with state agencies

   - Timelines and deadlines for grant applications

V. Program Administration

A. Program Coordinator

1. Appointment and Responsibilities:

   - Overseeing the application process

   - Coordination with local businesses and stakeholders

B. Funding Allocation Committee

1. Establishment and Composition:

   - Representation from relevant town departments and economic development partners

   - Objective review of applications and allocation of funds

VI. Reporting and Evaluation

A. Metrics for Success

1. Increased Foot Traffic:

   - Monitoring foot traffic in the business district

2. Business Revenue Growth:

   - Gathering and analyzing financial data from participating businesses

B. Feedback Mechanisms

1. Surveys and Interviews:

   - Collecting feedback from participating businesses and the community

   - Identifying areas for program improvement

C. Continuous Improvement Strategies

1. Periodic Program Reviews:

   - Evaluating the effectiveness of the program

   - Implementing adjustments based on feedback and outcomes.

VII. Compliance and Monitoring

A. Compliance with Design Standards

1. Periodic Inspections:

   - Ensuring compliance with approved improvement plans and design guidelines.

B. Program Audits

1. Independent Audits:

   - Periodic audits to ensure transparent and accountable fund allocation.

VIII. Communication and Outreach

A. Community Engagement

1. Information Sessions:

   - Hosting sessions to educate businesses about the program.

2. Public Meetings:

   - Soliciting community input and addressing concerns

B. Marketing and Promotion

1. Awareness Campaigns:

   - Utilizing various channels to promote the program.

IX. Conclusion

The Small Business Facade Improvement Program is a crucial initiative for the Town of Bladensburg, reflecting our commitment to economic development and community vibrancy. We anticipate positive transformations in our business district, fostering a stronger sense of pride and prosperity.

Contact Information:

Program Coordinator Name and Contact Information -- Common Resilience

[Additional Resources]

This policy is a guideline for implementing and administering the Small Business Facade Improvement Program in the Port Towns. It is subject to periodic review and updates to ensure its effectiveness in achieving the program's goals.