

Erie County Storefront Revitalization Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Who should I contact if I have questions about this program?

Send all questions via email to storefrontinfo@erie.gov or use the Contact Us form on our website. You can expect to receive a response within 72 hours. All attempted phone inquiries will be re-directed to the Erie County Storefront Revitalization website for email communications with program administrators.

2. When is the application deadline?

June 16, 2022 is the official deadline. However, we will accept applications until the available funds are depleted, at which point the application will become inactive.

3. What if my application is incomplete?

Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. Our system will not allow the application to be submitted until all required documentation is either uploaded or mailed in. ****Please note that there is a 4MB file size limit for each attachment.***

4. What if my photos and documents are larger than the 4MB file limit size?

Due to the large number of attachments required for this online application, we must limit the file size due to computer server constraints. For photographs, please set your camera to a lower resolution. You may also save files as a PDF to flatten by choosing "Reduce File Size" in the file "Save As" menu option within Adobe Acrobat. Additionally, there are free web applications available that will reduce PDF or photo file sizes. Your local Erie County Public Library might also be able to assist you. If you are for some reason unable to reduce your file sizes, you should consider downloading the paper application and submitting through the US Mail to the program administrator address listed at the end of this FAQ.

5. How should I label my files before uploading?

As an example, if your business is named "Joe's Lawn Company", please use the following naming format as a guide: <JoesLawn-Lease>; <JoesLawn-2019Taxes>; <JoesLawn-PayrollAffidavit> and so on. This will both ensure that you have all of your attachments ready to upload prior to starting and your application and the attachments will be kept together with your application.

6. How much money can my business qualify for?

Businesses must be located within the municipal boundaries of Erie County, New York. The maximum award for each storefront project is \$40,000 per each qualified, commercially zoned small business. Please refer to the Storefront Revitalization Fact

Sheet on our website for specific information on eligibility. Payments will be made directly to construction contractors once storefront work is complete and approved.

7. What if my total project cost is substantially higher than \$40,000?

The intent of this program is to complete a meaningful street-facing project for \$40,000 or less. Applicants are responsible for submitting a proposal that delineates a scope of work that will be fully completed with the awarded \$40,000 according to program guidelines.

8. Can more than one storefront business apply from the same building?

Yes. Multiple *street-facing* independent, for-profit businesses can apply from within the same commercial building if each has a separate business certificate, proof of lease or building ownership, and meets all other eligibility requirements. Multiple street-facing projects in the same building or business district will receive special consideration to maximize the positive impact of this program. *(There is a place on the application to denote that you are applying with other businesses on the same street or within a common commercial district).* All cooperative project applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

9. How long must I be in business to be eligible for this funding?

Your eligible business must have been in operation since at least March 17, 2020.

10. How do I certify the payroll for my business?

You must submit proof of payroll through a tax form or other certified payroll summary from a payroll service for the periods of 2019 and 2020. If you do not have any employees, you must submit a self-certifying affidavit stating that you do not have employees.

11. What if I don't own the building where my business is operating?

You will be required to provide a signed "*Building Owner Consent Form*" found on Attachment A of the Application form. It is also required that you submit a copy of your lease agreement with the building owner and proof that business property taxes are paid in full.

12. Will my application get special consideration if I am a minority or woman-owned business, or a service-disabled veteran business owner?

Yes. Certified minority, women and service-disabled veteran business owners will be given special consideration on their project applications. Proof of certification must be uploaded with your application.

13. When can I begin work on my storefront project?

Once you receive written notification that your project has been approved for funding, you will be assigned an architect provided at no cost through the Erie County Storefront Revitalization Program (not paid by you). Your assigned architect will review and

approve the project scope prior to the start of work on your project. Please note that any work started prior to your grant award notification letter will not be reimbursed by this grant. Your architect is responsible for approving all work invoices before contractors will be paid.

14. What types of facade improvements are eligible?

Improvements are permitted for exterior work only. Refer to the Fact Sheet for eligible improvements.

15. How do I go about getting construction bids for my storefront project?

Your assigned architect will work with you to obtain all necessary drawings and approvals and may also be able to supply an approved list of contractors for your project. If you have already selected a contractor, your architect will approve that they meet our requirements as a qualified, licensed construction contractor.

16. Can I make interior renovations to my business with this funding?

No. Only exterior building improvements are eligible for this funding.

17. What constitutes a “main street” or “well-defined commercial business district”?

A “main street” is a major commercial street containing a mix of retail stores, restaurants, services, entertainment venues and offices. A well-defined commercial business district is an area of commercial activity broader than just a single street that is also characterized by a mix of these uses. Special consideration will be given to applications in “main street”, “well-defined commercial business districts” and businesses that coordinate together to improve their storefronts for larger positive impact to an area. However, individual storefronts are also eligible for this funding. All business applicants must provide proof that they are commercially zoned. Home-based businesses are not eligible for this funding.

18. Are buildings owned by non-profit organizations eligible for this program?

The focus of this program is to fund for-profit, commercially zoned businesses. However, businesses owned by non-profit organizations that are located on a “main street” or within a “well-defined commercial business district” are eligible as long as the applicant is a for-profit subsidiary or independent storefront. Applicants should explain how the project contributes to the economic vitality of the area, and each individual case will be reviewed accordingly.

19. Are apartment buildings eligible for this program?

No. However for-profit, mixed-use retail, restaurants, services and other eligible street-facing businesses at the street level of an apartment building are eligible to apply.

20. Can this funding be used for sidewalks and driveways?

Funding is intended for building exterior improvements and *may* be considered for sidewalks and driveways if it can be demonstrated that they contribute to the greater overall improvement of the storefront revitalization project. These items will be reviewed and approved if deemed to be an appropriate use of funding by your assigned architect.

21. Can I put an addition on my existing building?

No. The intent of this funding is to make improvements to existing storefronts.

22. Can funding be used for side and rear facades?

This program focuses on storefront facades. However, side and rear facade projects are eligible, especially if they can be seen from the street or used as part of the regular conduct of business, for example a rear patio of a restaurant. Your assigned architect will review and approve these types of projects.

23. Will partial funding be considered?

At its sole discretion, Erie County may choose to award partial funding based upon application review. Funding requests may be reduced to exclude ineligible project costs or project costs that do not fully advance the goals of the program. Funding awards may also be reduced based on limited funding availability.

24. How long will it take to receive funding after my project application is approved?

Funds will be paid directly to your construction contractor(s) once the project work has been completed and all work has been certified and approved by your assigned architect.

25. How long do I have to complete my project?

Your construction project must be complete within 24 months (two years) of the project award date.

26. What if I have problems with my architect or contractor?

In the unforeseen event you have major concerns that need to be addressed by the program administrators, email us at storefrontinfo@erie.gov. Please be detailed with your concerns, and you will be contacted directly by Erie County to resolve any issues.

27. Is there a phone number I can call if I have any additional questions?

No. All questions should be emailed to storefrontinfo@erie.gov. Please only submit your questions once. You can expect to receive a response within 72 hours. All attempted phone inquiries will be re-directed to the website for email communications with the program administrators.

28. If I cannot submit my application online, where should I mail my submission?

Please mail your completed application to:

Prospect Hill Consulting LLC
682 Columbus Parkway
Buffalo, NY 14213-2411

Note: You may only submit **ONE APPLICATION** *either* electronically *or* by mail.

**ANY DUPLICATE APPLICATIONS THAT ARE SUBMITTED BOTH ONLINE AND BY MAIL
WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY DISQUALIFIED.**

Please consult the following resources at [Erie County's Storefront Revitalization Program](#) website for additional assistance with your application:

- **ONLINE APPLICATION FORM**
- **APPLICATION CHECKLIST**
- **STOREFRONT PROGRAM FACT SHEET** (Detailed information on all required application components)
- **BUILDING OWNER CONSENT FORM**
- **PAYROLL SELF-CERTIFYING AFFIDAVIT**
- **PROGRAM ORIENTATION VIDEO w/Q&A** (Available to view online after the 4/28/22 WebEx presentation)

Updated: 5/6/2022