

Storefront Renovation Grant Program

Northfield, Massachusetts



Program and Application Guide



About the Storefront Renovation Grant Program

The Storefront Renovation Grant Program provides grants to commercial property owners and their tenants to improve building facades and pursue other exterior beautification projects. The program's goals are to:

- 1) Help existing businesses attract more customers;
- 2) Increase investment in Northfield's Village Center Districts to preserve buildings, attract new businesses to vacant storefronts, and elevate Northfield's historic charm; and
- 3) Support Northfield's long-term economic sustainability as the recovery from Covid-19 continues.

Applications will be available beginning on February 2, 2023 and will be accepted on a rolling basis until all funds have been fully allocated. Grants of up to approximately \$25,000 per property will be available. An estimated 8-10 grants will be made. Grants will be distributed in two parts: Half of the grant will be provided up front (a "down payment"). The second half of the grant will be paid by the Town to the recipient as a reimbursement after expenses have been incurred by the recipient. This is a competitive program and there is no guarantee of funding, even if the applicant is eligible. All final grant awards will be made at the discretion of the grants committee.

Eligible Applicants

Commercial property owners and commercial tenants may apply (with authorization from the property owner required). Nonprofit organizations operating places of business in Northfield that are open to the public are eligible to apply for funding for the commercial enterprise space if all other eligibility criteria are met. Applicants must be current on all Town obligations, including but not limited to taxes, licenses, bills, etc.

Eligible properties include buildings with first-floor commercial space. The property where work is being proposed can be occupied or vacant. Applications for vacant properties require a plan for renting or filling the property.

Properties located in Village Center Districts will receive preference, but any commercial storefront in Northfield is eligible to apply for a grant through the program. To determine whether your address is located in a Village Center District, please review the zoning map: www.northfieldma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf991/f/uploads/zoning_1.pdf

AMENDMENT MADE MAY 9, 2023 - Clarification on eligibility of home-based businesses: A business that is located on a residential property may be eligible to receive grant funds from the Storefront Renovation Program only if there is a clear distinction between the residence itself and the place of business. A proposed project must be clearly *and* exclusively for commercial purposes and not for residential or other purposes. This program is intended to aid brick-and-mortar businesses that are open to the public. Business owners who operate predominantly on the internet and/or do not have customers on site as a part of normal operations are not eligible for the program.

Eligible Projects

Your application may include requests for one or more of the eligible projects listed below:

- Exterior Painting
- Awning replacement or installation
- Lighting replacement or installation
- Signage repair or installation
- Hardscape repair or replacement
- Door/window repair or replacement
- ADA accessibility improvements
- Window displays visible from the outside
- Roof repair or replacement
- Design/Architectural services
- Other non-permanent exterior enhancement (such as outdoor dining or window box installation).
- Other projects not listed as "ineligible" in the list below will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If you are applying for multiple projects at one property, submit one application. If you are applying for projects at more than one property, submit separate applications for each property.

Ineligible Projects

We anticipate the following projects will not be eligible. If you have questions about a project, please contact us.

- Interior work (aside from window displays)
- New construction
- Property purchases
- Property line fencing
- Security Systems
- Work on residential properties
- Regular maintenance/service work (such as gutter cleaning, snowplowing, or gardening)
- Home-based businesses
- Reimbursement for work completed prior to date of grant agreement
- Properties with outstanding fees or taxes

Application and Grant Process

1. Determine if you're eligible for the Storefront Renovation Grant Program by reviewing the program guidelines. If you are applying for projects at more than one property, submit a separate application for each property. Prepare your application, including the application form and collection of supplemental documentation (drafted illustrations showing the proposed improvements, quote sheets showing contractor/supply estimates, a photo of the street-facing side of the building, and a lease and property owner approval form if applicable). Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, beginning February 2, 2023 until funds are fully allocated.
2. Submit your application for review to Mallory Sullivan, Grant Development Director, by email at grantdevelopmentdirector@northfieldma.gov or bring your application to Town Hall, 69 Main Street. Applicants will be notified that the application has been received and whether anything is missing. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Additional documentation may be requested on a case-by-case basis to ensure the application can be accurately evaluated. Applications will also be reviewed for completeness and to determine what local, state, and federal regulations are applicable.
3. Receive response from review committee. The Town of Northfield has full discretion on selection of applications. Application review will take an estimated 3-4 weeks.
4. Upon approval, submit Form W-9 and signed grant agreement. You must wait for approval before beginning work, contracting, or purchasing goods.
5. Within 12 months of approval, participate in project check-ins with Storefront Improvement Program Committee, complete project(s), submit grant completion report, and submit documentation for reimbursement.

Applicant Requirements

Matching funds requirement: The program works as a matching grant, where the applicant covers 10-20% of the total project costs and the grant matches the remaining 80-90% of the estimated total project costs, not to exceed approximately \$25,000. See the table in the Frequently Asked Questions section of this document for the specific grant/matching funds requirement.

Post-Award Requirements:

If you've been awarded a grant, you will need to take the following actions:

- Submit signed grant agreement and a form W-9 (so the Town can issue reimbursements).
- Following applicable procurement protocol (see appendix), hire contractors and/or make purchases.
- Obtain permits as required.
- Complete project(s).
- Submit requests for reimbursement. Complete requests include: Copies of invoices from contractors or receipts from purchases; Proof of payment (such as a canceled check, credit card statement, or money orders); and an invoice to the Town stating what the request is for.
- After work is completed, you will submit a grant completion report (a template will be provided).

Other Policies:

- All local, state, and federal regulations apply. Projects are subject to pertinent local review and special permits.
- Projects must be completed 12 months from the date listed on the grant agreement.
- Funding source: American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.
- By accepting a grant, you agree for the project(s) to be monitored by Town staff as determined necessary.
- Proposed project(s) must be new or propose substantial repair or enhancement. Maintenance projects (such as costs associated with ongoing service contracts) are not eligible.
- Whenever possible, Applicants are strongly encouraged to use local contractors to their renovation.

Questions

Questions may be directed to Mallory Sullivan, Grant Development Director by email (GrantDevelopmentDirector@NorthfieldMA.gov) or by phone (413-498-2901 ext. 111).

Frequently Asked Questions

How much can I apply for?

There is no minimum grant size. The maximum grant size will be approximately \$25,000. The program works as a matching grant, where the applicant is responsible for paying for 10%-20% of the total project costs and the grant provides the remaining 80-90% of the project costs. The amount of the match depends upon the property type, as defined in the table below.

Property Type	Match
Vacant property <i>Property Owner Applicant</i> <i>Commercial Use</i>	<p>If the project is completed and the property is occupied for commercial use within 12 months of the grant award date, the grant recipient is eligible for a grant covering 80% of the project cost (up to ~ \$25,000) and the recipient is responsible to pay for at least 20% of total project costs.</p> <p>As an incentive, grant recipients who complete their projects and have the space occupied by a commercial tenant within 5 months of the grant award date are eligible for a grant covering 90% of the project cost (up to ~ \$25,000) and the grant recipient is responsible to pay for at least 10% of total project costs.</p>
Occupied property – commercial use <i>Property Owner Applicant</i>	<p>If the grant recipient is the property owner, they are eligible for a grant covering 80% of the project cost (up to ~ \$25,000) and are responsible to pay for at least 20% of total project costs.</p> <p>If the grant recipient is a commercial tenant, they are eligible for a grant covering 90% of the project cost (up to ~ \$25,000) and are responsible to pay for at least 10% of total project costs.</p>

What is the matching requirement?

The program works as a matching grant, where the applicant covers 10-20% of the total projects costs and the grant matches the remaining 80-90% of the estimated total project costs, not to exceed approximately \$25,000. Final grant amounts will be determined by the review committee. Please note that the grant amount is determined at the time of the award and cannot be increased even if the project budget increases. The maximum grant amount a grant recipient is eligible to receive in reimbursement cannot exceed the amount stated in their grant agreement. If the final project cost is less than originally anticipated, the recipient is eligible for 80% or 90% of the actual project cost. Please see the table on the previous page for the specific grant/matching funds requirement.

I own more than one commercial property. Can I apply for more than one grant?

Yes. If an applicant plans to apply for projects at more than one property, separate applications must be submitted for each property. If you apply for more than one grant, we recommend noting which is higher/highest priority.

I am a business owner, but I lease my space. Can I apply?

Yes, business owners who lease a space can apply. A property owner approval form must be signed by the property owner and submitted with the application. with permission from the property owner. If your landlord does not agree to the program, you still may be eligible for certain non-construction project components, such as purchase of planters or benches.

What is the source of funds for the Storefront Renovation Grant Program?

The program is funded through Northfield's allocation of the American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

Where can I find an application?

Application details are available at Town Hall and at www.northfieldma.gov

What information am I required to submit as part of the application?

Required information includes: Completed application form, Drafted illustrations showing the proposed improvements, Quote sheets showing contractor/supply estimates, Photo of the street-facing side of the property, and Property owner approval form (if applicable).

If I apply, will I receive a grant?

This is a competitive program and there is no guarantee of funding, even if the applicant meets the eligibility criteria.

How are applications being evaluated?

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria: Eligibility, Project Narrative, Project Budget, Drafted illustration of work, Village Center District location, Vacancy Status, and Applicant Compliance. An evaluation rubric is part of the application package and should be reviewed by applicants prior to submitting an application. Applications will be reviewed by a review committee including the Town Administrator, Grant Development Director, and a member of the ARPA Committee

Evaluation Rubric

The Review Committee will use this evaluation rubric to assess each application.

Evaluation Criteria	Favorable	Unfavorable
Eligibility	Applicant is a Northfield commercial property owner or business located in a commercial district.	Applicant is not an owner or tenant of a commercial property (INELIGIBLE)
Project Narrative	The proposal has been clearly defined and provides useful details.	The proposal lacks definition and/or detail.
Budget	The applicant has provided a realistic budget, has included quotes, and has sufficient matching funds available.	The applicant has not provided a realistic budget, and/or has not included quotes, and/or has not indicated that matching funds are not available.
Drafted illustration of proposed work	The illustration provides sufficient detail and/or explanation so that the application can be understood.	The illustration does not provide sufficient detail and/or explanation.
Village Center District	The property is located in a Village Center District.	The property is not located in a Village Center District.
Vacancy Status	The property is currently vacant.	The property is currently occupied.
Applicant Compliance	Applicant is current on all Town obligations.	Applicant is not current on all Town obligations.
Level of Improvement	The proposed scope of work will result in a significantly improved façade and have a lasting community impact (on aesthetics, accessibility, and/or energy efficiency).	The proposed scope of work will result in a minimally improved façade and/or is not likely to have a lasting community impact (on aesthetics, accessibility, and/or energy efficiency).
Readiness	The applicant has evidenced that the project(s) will likely be completed within six months (such factors may include: having a detailed and comprehensive scope of work, having collected quotes).	The application suggests the project(s) will take longer than six months to complete.

Notes: