



# Facade RENEW

## Storefront Improvement Program

### Application Guidelines

#### 2014



# Introduction

---

The New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) is pleased to launch Facade RENEW, NORA's Commercial Business Development Grant Program that supports the revitalization of select retail corridors throughout the City by investing in high-quality facade improvements that enhance the appearance of retail storefronts and commercial buildings, eliminate economic blight and address non-conforming design standards.

## Facade Improvement activities (not a complete list):

- Removal of vinyl or aluminum siding
- Facade restoration and/or repair
- Replacement of signage
- Installation of exterior lighting
- Basic cosmetic work (painting, masonry cleaning)

For the purpose of this program, eligible expenditures shall include expenses related solely to those facade improvements as outlines in the above and/or determined by NORA.

**Due to program priorities, only the following commercial corridors are eligible to apply:**

- Bayou Road
- Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard
- St Claude Avenue

Through a competitive application process, Façade Renew will provide financial and technical design assistance to retail property and business owners in the targeted commercial districts listed in the above for qualified storefront facade improvements. The Program will operate as a matching grant to business and/or property owners aiming to improve exterior elements of their commercial properties. The Program will reimburse up to 75% of the total project costs with remaining 25% paid by the participating business and/or property owner. Program participants will be reimbursed for all approved eligible expenses following the satisfactory completion of the improvement project. All façade improvements made with grant dollars will be required to be maintained for a minimum of 5 years.

After evaluating submitted applications, NORA will select appropriate proposals to fund. Once a proposal has been selected, NORA and the selected grantee will enter into an agreement citing grantee responsibility.

By applying to Facade RENEW for storefront improvements, the applicant is requesting:

1. Funds to be invested on commercial properties along approved corridor that supports eligible facade improvement activities
2. To manage and maintain all improvements once construction is complete and an agreement is signed, understanding that all improvements made with grant dollars will be required to be maintained for a minimum of 5 years.

# Corridor Eligibility

## Funding for facade improvements is available for the following commercial districts:

- **Bayou Road:** between N Broad and Esplanade Avenue
- **OC Haley Boulevard:** between Calliope Avenue and Jackson Avenue
- **St Claude Avenue:** between Mandeville Street and Franklin Avenue
- **St Claude Avenue:** between Congress Street and Poland Avenue

## Priority Areas:



# Program Eligibility

---

## Applicant Criteria:

Eligible grant applicants must be:

- Owners of commercial properties located along NORA's designated commercial corridors.
- Owners of a small business(es) located along NORA's designated commercial corridors.

### All grant applicants must ensure:

- Property taxes are current
- No debts arrears are owed to the City
- Legal entities are in compliance with the City of New Orleans and NORA

## Grant Making Criteria:

**Maximum Allowable Award:** Façade RENEW provides a one-time matching reimbursement grant for eligible storefront facade improvements. Program awards are not to exceed 75% of project costs, including professional fees, for a maximum matching grant amount of \$37,500.

**Example:** The applicant has been approved for a maximum grant with total project expenses equaling \$50,000; she/he would be eligible for a \$37,500 reimbursement grant. [ $\$50,000 \times 75\% = \$37,500$ ].

NORA will not provide any reimbursement to the applicant for additional project expenses above \$50,000.

**Minimum Allowable Award:** NORA has not set a clear minimum amount at this time due to unclear and untested market demand. We estimate the local market will support smaller scale projects concentrated along ground floor storefronts equaling no greater than \$10,000 of total project costs.

**Example:** If an applicant has been approved for a storefront improvement grant with total project expenses equaling \$10,000; she/he would be eligible for a \$7,500 reimbursement grant. [ $\$10,000 \times 75\% = \$7,500$ ].

NORA reserves the right to adjust the minimum allowable award amount once Façade RENEW has launched and gained traction.

# Design Criteria

## Eligible Activities:

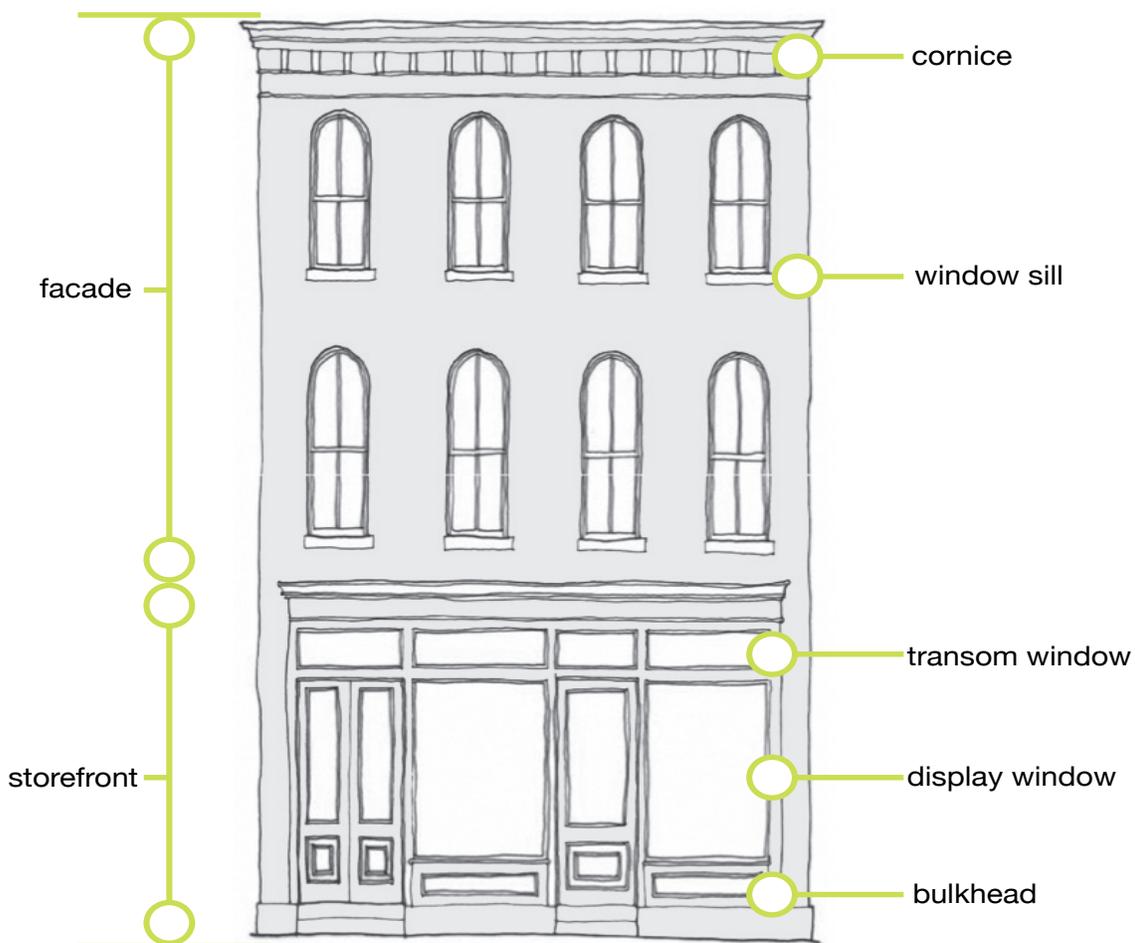
Funds may be used as described below in a list of eligible activities:

### Façade Improvements:

- Brick re-pointing
- Removal of vinyl or aluminum siding
- Façade restoration and/or repair
- Renovation of covered entrances
- Window replacement
- Renovation of cornices; gutters and downspouts
- Painting, when completed in conjunction with other façade work

### Storefront Improvements:

- Replacement of signage with exterior lit signs
- Replacement or installation of new awnings or canopies
- Installation of new exterior lighting
- Storefront window replacement
- Masonry cleaning
- Basic cosmetic work, such as painting when in conjunction with other façade work
- Installation of new open-grid, roll-down security gates



## Ineligible Activities (not a complete list):

- Installation of vinyl or aluminum siding
- Interior furnishings
- Non-permanent fixtures
- Business / personal property, equipment and supplies
- Interior lit signs, or interior window coverings
- Upper-story additions to existing buildings
- Roof reconstruction
- Structural foundations
- Billboards
- Security bars
- Razor/barbed wire fencing
- Sidewalks and paving

### **For the purposes of this program:**

Eligible expenditures shall include expenses related solely to exterior improvements as outlined in the program guidelines and determined by NORA

## Guidelines for Commerical Buildings:

- All projects receiving funding must meet certain design standards. NORA will utilize the “Guidelines for Commercial Buildings” within the City of New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission Design Guidelines approved by City Council Resolution 1-1770.
- Prior to commencing any work, all projects must receive approval from NORA, HDLC, Pubic Works, Safety and Permits, the Planning Commission as well as any other pertinent entity with oversight responsibility.
- All work must be done in accordance with all applicable local, state and federal codes, and rules and regulations for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.
- The appropriate level of HUD environmental review must be completed.
- NORA will conduct site specific environmental reviews and will notify recipient when the review is completed. Costs cannot be incurred on the project until NORA has determined the environmental reviews are complete and the project receives a Notice to Proceed.
- Expenditures related to ordinary repair and maintenance or improvements required as a result of municipal code violations are deemed ineligible by NORA.

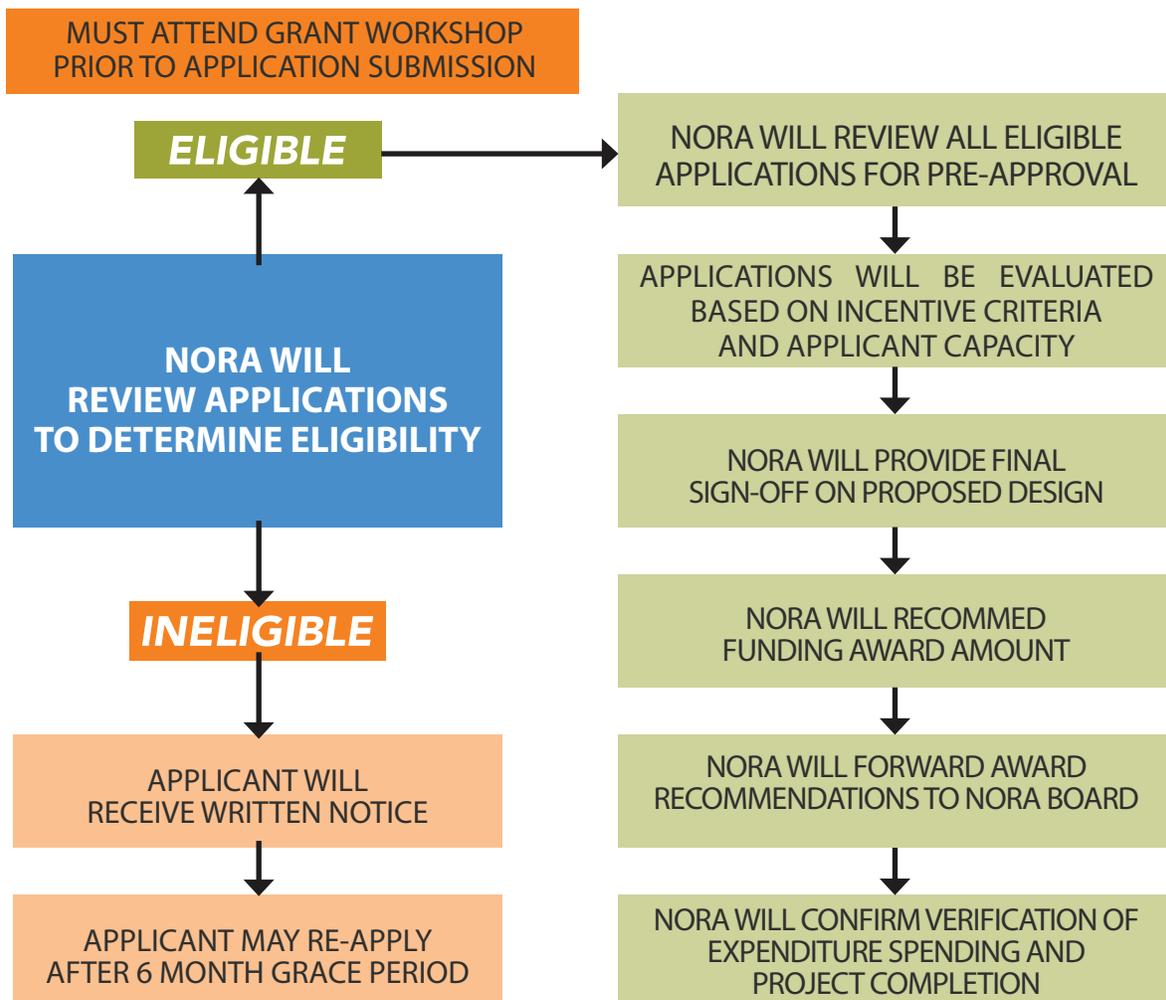
# Application Process

**Applicants are encouraged to contact NORA to review the proposed project prior to submitting a completed application**

NORA will only accept one application per qualified organization on a rolling basis during the periods of **January 1, 2014 to December 1, 2014**. Grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis and subject to funding availability. Therefore program investments may not be available to all eligible applicants and for all eligible corridors. NORA will monitor funding availability as awards are made and provide timely status updates.

Applications should be submitted on the **first Friday of each month** by e-mail or U.S. Mail. E-mail submissions are preferred. Postmarked submissions should be mailed to: **Facade RENEW Storefront Improvement Program, c/o New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, 1409 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd., New Orleans, LA, 70113**. E-mail submissions should be addressed to: [mslee@nola.gov](mailto:mslee@nola.gov).

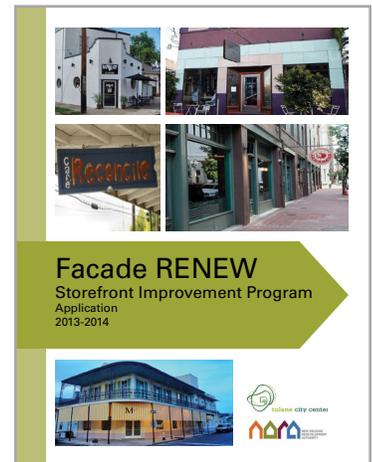
The application evaluation and selection processes are as follows:



# Application Process continued

NORA prioritizes proposals along corridors that support the revitalization of commercial corridors throughout the City by stimulating public-private investments in high-quality improvements that enhance the appearance of retail storefronts, mitigate economic blight and address non-confirming design standards.

Applications are accepted every **first Friday of the month** and reviewed every **third Wednesday of the month**.



## All applicants must submit the following information:

- Completed application
- Photographs of existing facade
- Plans and/or elevations of proposed improvements
- List and/or description of materials to be used
- Detailed cost estimates/bids for proposed improvements from at least two licensed contractors for each type of work to be performed
- No debts arrears are owed to the City
- At least one cost estimate for design services (if applicable)
- If applicant is property owner: Proof of Property Ownership
- If applicant is not property owner: Owner Consent Form

# Program Expectations

---

## Grantee Responsibilities:

Partners will be responsible for the following:

### 1. Project Maintenance:

Before the project is complete, the Grantee must enter into a maintenance agreement with NORA to ensure that the improvements are properly maintained and in good repair for at least five (5) years. The specific maintenance services to be provided will be outlined in the agreement but may include the removal of graffiti and repairing vandalism.

Projects not completed in a manner consistent with the agreed upon scope for work will be deemed ineligible. NORA has an obligation to be a careful steward of public funds; therefore, reserves the right to recover grant funds if the improvements are altered, removed, destroyed or not maintained within fifteen (15) years from the date of project completion.

### 2. Reimbursement Requirements:

All grantees must complete, sign and submit a W-9 for the disbursement of funds. Applicants who qualify for funding must document all expenditures and provide NORA with proof of payment (receipts, paid invoices, etc.) for all eligible improvements within 30 days of completion.

### 3. Promotional Rights:

All projects will display signage indicating NORA's involvement in the improvement work.

### 4. Regulatory Approvals:

The Grantee will be responsible for obtaining necessary regulatory approvals where applicable. All work must comply with city, state and federal regulations. Applicants should contact the Department of Safety & Permits for assistance with permitting.

### 5. Project Compliance:

All work must be completed by licensed and bonded contractors, that legally operate in the City of New Orleans. The applicant is responsible for obtaining necessary site permits for all work. Applicants are encouraged to hire minority, women-owned emerging small business certified contractors. If you need assistance locating an Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certified contractor please visit the DBE Certification Directory housed with The Office of Supplier Diversity at: [www.nola.gov/economic-development/supplier-diversity](http://www.nola.gov/economic-development/supplier-diversity).

### 6. Environmental Review:

All work is required to undergo an environmental assessment and impact review. Reimbursement of Facade RENEW funding is contingent upon the successful completion of an Environmental Review, therefore no work can begun until the assessment is complete. NORA will work with all grantees throughout the entire Review process.

# Project Selection Guidelines

---

Projects selected by NORA will be based on adherence to Program principles and design guidelines. NORA will use the following guidelines in evaluating proposals:

- Preference for selection will be given to projects that address the following:
  - Rehabilitation of historic properties that are in danger of loss due to neglect
  - Rehabilitation of vacant buildings or retail space that will improve the corridor
  - Rehabilitation that addresses immediate health and safety concerns
- The committee will give preference to projects that will have the greatest potential to positively impact the corridor.
- The committee will assess applicant's ability to develop and present a complete design concept.
- The committee will assess the applicant's ability to complete the proposed project. Applicants will be required to present a project budget and financing plan that outlines how the project will be funded.
- The committee will distribute available funds as equitably as possible. Therefore, one property shall not receive more than one grant before NORA has reviewed other project proposals.
- Project proposals will only be approved by the committee if applicants consent to signing and filing a restrictive covenant against the property. A restrictive covenant, to be recorded in the public records of Orleans Parish, will require that all improvements be maintained for a minimum five years.
- If the application is denied, the applicant may re-apply after a 6 month grace period and must contact NORA to discuss the application in the context of the Program goals.
- Applicant must attend a Grant Workshop sponsored by NORA (schedule to be updated regularly).
- All approved work must be completed within 12 months of the date on the contract.

# FAQs:

---

## **Q: What should be the first step in applying for funding?**

**A:** All applicants must attend a pre-application grant workshop. NORA will hold these workshops monthly or on an as needed basis. NORA staff will provide an overview of the program requirements and application process.

## **Q: What will the improvement projects look like?**

**A:** Each project will be designed to reflect the character and context of the approved commercial corridor and its surrounding community. Facade improvements may include the removal of vinyl or aluminum siding, facade restoration or repair, replacement of signage, installation of exterior lighting and/basic cosmetic work.

## **Q: Are there any limitations on improvements to signage?**

**A:** Any new signage must comply with the current design guidelines established by the City's Historic District and Landmarks Commission (HDLC) found in document entitled 'Guidelines for Commercial Buildings': [www.nola.gov/~media/.../Guidelines/11%20Commercial.ashx](http://www.nola.gov/~media/.../Guidelines/11%20Commercial.ashx). Expenses related to the removal of a non-conforming sign and subsequent replacement with a new conforming sign (if applicable) are eligible, as long as the removal and/or replacement is not required as a result of a violation notice or citation.

## **Q: What is the total dollar amount that I can apply for?**

**A: Maximum Allowable Award:** The program provides for a one-time reimbursement, up to \$50,000 per property, for eligible storefront facade improvements. The applicant is eligible for a 75% reimbursement on expenses equal to or less than \$50,000.

**Minimum Allowable Award:** NORA has not set a clear minimum amount at this time due to unclear and untested market demand. We estimate the local market will support smaller scale projects concentrated along ground floor storefronts equaling no greater than \$10,000 of total project costs.

## **Q: Can part of the grant cover professional services?**

**A:** Yes, if the applicant chooses to use the design services of a licensed Architect, Landscape Architect or Professional Engineer. Up to 10% of the matching grant is eligibility for reimbursement for design services not to exceed 75% of the total project cost.

### **For example:**

- Total Project Cost **\$25,000**
- 75% of Total Project Cost = Total Matching Grant Eligibility: **\$18,750**
- 10% of Total Matching Grant Eligibility = Design Services Eligibility: **\$1,875**
- Total Matching Grant Eligibility minus Design Services Eligibility = Remaining Matching Grant Funds for Project Cost: **\$16,875**

# FAQs:

---

**Q: Can improvements to multiple buildings be submitted under a single application?**

**A:** Yes, improvements made to multiple buildings on a single parcel are eligible for a grant. Improvements made to a single building located on multiple parcels are only eligible for the maximum award amount.

**Q: How am I responsible for work done by a contractor?**

**A:** Awardees must obtain three written cost estimates from local or state licensed contractors for each type of work to be performed. It is recommended to add a 10% contingency for unexpected costs and overages. The project cost plus the contingency cannot exceed the maximum matching grant amount permitted.

**Q: Are there any building design guidelines that must follow?**

**A:** Yes, the City's 'Guidelines for Commercial Buildings' shall apply to renovation or reconstruction of existing structures and must be consistent with recommendations set forth in master plans for the area in which the property is located. Examples include, but are not limited to: exterior painting or surface treatment, decorative awnings, window and/or door replacements or modifications, exterior wall lighting and architectural features.