



## Downtown Improvement and Business Assistance Program

### 1. Program Overview

The City of Biddeford administers the Downtown Improvement and Business Assistance Program to provide financial assistance to downtown businesses and property owners who wish to make physical improvements to the interior or exterior of their buildings and to encourage establishment of new business downtown. The program is designed to create visual improvements or assist businesses in the downtown, (see attached map for eligible area).

The Program is divided into two funding sources: Biddeford Business Assistance Loan Funding and CDBG Spot Slum and Blight/Job Creation Grant Funding. Applicants may apply to one or both funding sources. The funds are dispersed on a first-come, first-serve basis by the date received in the Planning and Development at City Hall provided the activities meet the criteria listed below.

The CDBG funding source has a maximum award of \$30,000 per-project with a dollar for dollar match by the applicant. The CDBG source is grant funding. An applicant may seek additional loan assistance funds through the Southern Maine Finance Authority (SMFA), from a fund designated for such purposes in Biddeford. These funds can be used for a variety of facade improvement and slum blight activities listed in the "Eligible Projects" section below. The Business Assistance loan funding is unrestricted in size, but may be limited based on available resources.

### 2. Administration

The Biddeford Planning and Development Department will vet the initial applications for appropriate funding sources, and submit to City Council or its designee for approval, with all projects subject to approval from the Historic Preservation Commission where required. The work performed under approved projects shall conform to all federal, state and local codes.

### 3. Program Guidelines and Eligibility

- a. Business Assistance and CDBG Spot Slum and Blight /Job Creation Funds (24 CFR 570.202) are available on an on-going basis until existing funds are exhausted.
- b. Maximum grant award for CDBG Spot Slum and Blight/Job Creation Funds is \$30,000. Loan funding is restricted only by availability.
- c. Grants are available for up to 50% of the total cost of the improvement project and therefore must be matched at a ratio of 1 to 1. *The amount of grant funds, when appropriate, shall be up to 50% of the actual total. **UNLESS the actual total is greater than the estimated total, in which case the grant fund reimbursement shall be up to 50% of the estimated total.***
- d. The grant applicant may be the property owner or tenant. If the applicant is a tenant, he or she must have the property owner's signed approval of the proposed building improvements. No more than one matching grant per funding source per building will be awarded during the grant period.
- e. Building owners must be willing to provide proof of property ownership.

- f. All City real, personal property taxes and sewer charges must be paid to date.
- g. Funds may only be awarded to any property within the eligible district (see map below), on Main Street or connecting streets.
- h. Grant funds will be paid **only upon completion and inspection of the project. The awardee's match must be spent first.**
- i. All projects must be completed within one (1) year of award. A request for an extension may be granted if delay is due to a legitimate cause verified by the City. Requests for an extension must occur before the one-year deadline has elapsed.
- j. When CDBG Spot Slum and Blight/Job Creation Funds are awarded, all federal requirements shall be met and coordinated through the City's Community Development Coordinator (see the additional requirements regarding process and record keeping below).

#### **4. Eligible Projects**

##### **Business Assistance Loan and/or CDBG Job Creation Grant Funding:**

- a. Signage
- b. Awnings
- c. Storefront improvements
- d. Restoration of original/historic appearance, including windows, doors, and trim where applicable
- e. Repair or replacement of windows, doors, and trim
- f. Cleaning and/or painting of wood surfaces
- g. Cleaning and/or repointing of surface brick or stone
- h. Removing paint from brick or stone
- i. Exterior lighting
- j. Removal of "modernization" efforts and/or inappropriate non-historic alterations/additions
- k. Cleaning and repair or installation of approved siding
- l. Roofing visible from street-level
- m. Removal or repair of fire escape
- n. Hardscapes
- o. Interior leasehold improvements may be eligible for loan funds if the improvements are part of larger project that includes exterior facade improvements.
- r. Capital equipment needs, provided they are permanent improvements to the structure in question.

##### **CDBG Spot Slum and Blight or Job Creation Grant Funding:**

- a. Rehabilitation, including that of historic structures that eliminates code violations that are detrimental to public health and safety such as;
  - 1. Faulty wiring
  - 2. Falling plaster
  - 3. Lead based paint
  - 4. Asbestos
  - 5. Leaking roof
  - 6. Severely Leaking windows
  - 7. Mold

- 8. Deteriorated heating or cooling systems
  - 9. Contamination
  - 10. Exit and entrance improvements to meet life safety requirements
  - 11. Similar conditions as listed above.
- b. Rehabilitation, including solving building issues that inhibit access for people who have disabilities such as:
    - 1. ADA improvements
    - 2. Barrier removal

All activities for Slum and Blight funding must be limited only to Code violations that are detrimental to the health and safety of occupants or potential occupants.

## **5. Job Creation**

A special activity for qualifying for CDBG funding that may be used for building rehabilitation by property owners and businesses is Job Creation. The eligibility requirements and type of improvements that can be made under this activity are similar to those outlined above. Job Creation allows another avenue for accessing CDBG funding. Under this activity the following are required:

- a. Jobs created must be one full-time position (40 hours per week, or that which is to be considered full time in order to receive full-time benefits), or two part-time positions that are equivalent to one full time position.
- b. The applicant must create one or more jobs (as described above) within 18 months of approval of application. If the required jobs are not created, the awardee will be required to repay CDBG grant funding to the City.
- c. The applicant must guarantee appropriate job training for each job or jobs created.
- d. All new jobs created are to be provided only to low- to moderate-income Biddeford residents according to HUD income requirements.
- e. Documentation of income of new hire(s), before employment in the new position, must be acquired and maintained by the awardee and provided to the Biddeford Community Development Coordinator upon request. Monitoring by the Community Development Coordinator will be conducted for compliance and documentation will be requested per HUD requirements.

## **6. Ineligible Projects**

- a. New building construction
- b. Routine maintenance
- c. Routine interior improvements

## **7. Application Process**

- a. To apply for Business Assistance or CDBG Spot Slum and Blight/Job Creation Funding fill out the attached application. Include available drawings and descriptive project information, and the design of the project and products to be used. The City will meet with you if awarded to determine which funding source(s) are available and applicable.
- b. Provide both material and labor cost estimates for each item (see attached form for more details). Deliver your completed application(s) to the Planning and Planning and Development at City Hall. The Planning and Economic Development staff will contact

you to acquire additional application information for final review. All funding awards are pending approval from the Historic Preservation Commission and City Council approval. For those seeking to apply for CDBG Spot Slum and Blight or Job Creation Grant Funding, please see the additional requirements regarding process and record keeping below.

- d. One building may receive multiple improvement grants, provided each award is dedicated to separate business storefronts. However, no more than one matching grant per building will be awarded within a 90-day period and other applicants will take precedent over multiple application awardees after an initial award.
- e. Successful applicants will sign an agreement with the City. The agreement will provide the terms of the loan or grant and program requirements and timelines. **No improvements begun prior to this signed agreement will be eligible for reimbursement.**
- f. Upon completion of the project, the business/property owner shall submit invoices from the contractors for work completed. Business and property owners must sign a statement that all work has been completed to satisfaction.
- g. The Planning and Economic and Development Department will complete an inspection to determine that the work was completed in accordance with the scope of work included in the contract.
- h. Payment is made to the contractor and business and/or property owner.

**8. Required Procedures and Record Keeping for CDBG Spot Slum and Blight Grant Funding**

- a. A letter from Code Enforcement is required. A site visit will be performed, confirming the specific condition(s) of blight or physical decay, and that this/these conditions are detrimental to public health and safety, and/or a condition exists that is an ADA issue or requires Barrier Removal. The Code Enforcement Officer will issue the letter of declared Slum and Blight or the need for ADA access or barrier removal per the City's Downtown Anti Blight Ordinance.
- b. The applicant must submit an architectural drawing of the concept and design specifications, paid by the applicant, for review.
- c. A Rehabilitation Specialist will review all scope of work, specifications, and determine that costs are allowable to the CDBG award, and inspect the work when completed. The work must be completed in accordance with the work specifications and code requirements.
- d. An environmental review process is required. As part of the process, the City is required to forward the project to the State's Historic Preservation Office for review. This review includes the project in its entirety not just the scope using CDBG grant funds. No commitments can be made or contract signed until the Environmental Review is complete, reviewed and on file in the Community Development Office regarding the project. Please allow 60 days for this process to be completed.
- e. The applicant will be required to produce 3 cost estimates including materials per activity and the lowest and most responsible estimate will be selected to ensure that costs are reasonable and necessary.
- f. Certified Payrolls (if laborers are used) will be required and reviewed by the Community Development Coordinator and kept on file.

- g. The Community Development Coordinator will ensure, by reviewing the Debarred Contractor's List, that no contractors will be awarded that are debarred/suspended from receiving CDBG funding.
  - h. Davis Bacon Wage Rates must be used where applicable and will be issued by the Community Development Coordinator prior to any work being implemented. All payrolls must be received and reviewed by the Community Development Coordinator, and in compliance prior to any sign off or payment to a contractor regarding completion of work.
  - i. All requested documentation must be on file in the Community Development Coordinator's Office  
An inspection of the site for completion of work, as specified in the executed agreement with the City, and a Document of Completion signed by the Rehabilitation Specialist and property owner (tenant if applicable), will be completed before payment is made to a contractor and property or business owner.
  - j. A Receipt of Payment and Release of Liens, that includes a release from the billing for additional time and/or materials, will be signed by the Contractor, Rehabilitation Specialist and property owner (tenant if applicable).
9. For awardees of CDBG Spot Slum and Blight Funding, a valid business must occupy the property within 12 months of date of contract. Failure to do so will require the CDBG grant portion of the project cost to be repaid by the awardee.

**10. Historic Preservation**

All projects will occur in Biddeford's designated Historic District, therefore all Facade Improvement Program projects will be subject to Historic Preservation standards. The application for Historic Preservation Certificate of Appropriateness can be obtained from the City's Planning Department or downloaded here:

[http://www.biddefordmaine.org/vertical/sites/%7BFAD9934F-594E-4DFE-8950-698C92DACFDD%7D/uploads/Certificate\\_of\\_Appropriateness\\_Application.pdf](http://www.biddefordmaine.org/vertical/sites/%7BFAD9934F-594E-4DFE-8950-698C92DACFDD%7D/uploads/Certificate_of_Appropriateness_Application.pdf).

**11. Compliance with City and CDBG Rules and Regulations**

In addition to the rules and process cited above, all projects shall be required to meet the requirements of the City of Biddeford Community Development Block Grant Policies and Procedures Manual.

12. Applications will be reviewed in a 3-step process. First, by the Planning and Development Department. Second, by Citizen Advisory Committee, and third, by City Council. All CDBG funded projects will be reviewed by HUD for approval and release of funds. Applicants for loan funding should submit applications to Southern Maine Finance Association for approval.



## Downtown Improvement and Business Assistance Program Application

1. Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Please check one: \_\_\_\_ Property Owner \_\_\_\_ Tenant (See "Required Documents" list on p. 2)
3. Business Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_
4. Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Mailing Address (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_
6. Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_
7. E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Description of the project (See "Eligible Projects" list on p. 4)
  - a) Please provide a brief written description of each proposed activity, along with materials to be used. (For example: (1) Paint entire street facade with 3 colors, a base wall color, a trim color and an accent color (2) Remove existing internally illuminated sign and replace with a new Historic Preservation Commission-approved sign. (3) See list of Slum and Blight activities) Attach additional sheets as necessary. **Note:** All projects must comply with Code and Historic Preservation requirements. Slum and Blight activities must have a letter of Slum and Blight Determination from the Code Enforcement Office.
  
  - b) Please attach a photo of where each proposed activity will take place as well as design sketch(es) showing what it should look like when finished. Please include any information that will help in the processing of your application (see "Required Documents" list on p. 2).
9. Total Estimated Cost of Improvements: \_\_\_\_\_  
On a separate page, provide a cost breakdown for labor and material, based on an estimate from a qualified and insured contractor or design professional for each proposed activity (see "Required Documents" list on p. 2).
10. Funding  
Total Grant Amount Requested: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Matching Funds: \_\_\_\_\_

Source of Matching Funds: \_\_\_\_\_

If awarded verification of Matching Funds will be required.

11. *I have read and understand the attached Program Overview and Guidelines. I understand that this is a matching grant program and that the money is granted on a reimbursement basis, following completion of work. I also understand that improvements not pre-approved by the Biddeford Economic and Community Development Department will not be funded.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

12. **Property Owner's Acknowledgement (if Applicant is a Tenant)**  
*I am the Property Owner of the above address. I have been informed of the Applicant's intention to perform the improvements described in the attached documentation, and I hereby approve the proposed improvements.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Property Owner's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

13. **Property Owner's Contact Information (if different from Applicant)**

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return your completed application along with documentation listed below to:

Biddeford Economic and Community Development Department  
Downtown Improvement Program  
P.O. Box 586  
Biddeford, Maine 04005.

- Facade Improvement Grant applications are accepted on a rolling basis after the program is announce until current funds are exhausted.
- Applicants will be notified of decision within two weeks of receipt of application.

**Required documentation:**

- 1) Business tenants must provide copy of the lease.

- 2) Provide a cost breakdown for labor and material, based on an estimate from a qualified and insured contractor or design professional for each proposed activity. Then, provide a detailed estimate from your chosen contractor along with an explanation for why this is the lowest responsible and responsive estimate.
- 3) Preliminary sketch or other graphics of the proposed improvements.

