

**CITY OF NEW LONDON  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM**

**CITY CENTER DISTRICT SIGN IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM  
FY2009-2010**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**PREPARED AND ADMINISTERED BY:  
THE OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING**

Revised to May 25, 2010

## NEW LONDON CITY CENTER DISTRICT SIGN IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Sign Improvement Program is to provide funds for low cost but highly visible sign and awning improvement projects that will enhance the appearance and attractiveness of the storefronts and building facades of those properties located within the downtown area designated as the City Center District and Expanded Area.

### **II. ADMINISTRATION**

The New London Sign Improvement Program will be administered by the Office of Development and Planning. The Façade Review Committee will determine eligibility for admittance to the program and approve all design plans. The Façade Review Committee shall include the City Planner, a City Building Inspector, a member each from the City Center District, New London Main Street, and the Historic District Commission. In addition, a New London architect and a building contractor will also be members of the Review Committee. The New London Economic Development Coordinator will act as program coordinator and as an alternate member.

Improvements using these funds will be made in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings and in accordance with the City's Memorandum of Agreement between the City, the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council in Washington, D.C.

### **III. PROGRAM AND TERMS**

This program will provide up to \$1,999.00 in the form of a grant to reimburse qualified property owners and/or business owners in the Expanded City Center District for the cost of first and second floor storefront signs, building identification signs, multiple tenant signs, and awnings. This program is designed to fund only those sign improvement projects in which the total project cost is not greater than \$1,999.00. Projects costing greater than \$1,999.00 will not be considered under this Program.

This is a reimbursable funding program. Approved grant amounts will be provided to the applicant only after all work has been completed and all services and materials have been paid for.

### **IV. PROGRAM OVERSIGHT**

All applications shall be processed at the Office of Development and Planning. Eligible applications shall be reviewed by the Façade Review Committee in accordance with the Program Objectives and Priorities as outlined below:

- A. The Program is specifically aimed toward those buildings located in the area of downtown designated as the City Center District and Expanded Area. Highest priority shall be given to those projects which have high visible impact.
- B. The objective of the Program is to provide interesting and tasteful identification for businesses, storefronts and building facades located in the designated area.
- C. Priority will be given to those sign proposals that most improve the attractiveness of the building and increase visual interest.
- D. Priority will be given to proposals that are consistent with the guidelines found in the Downtown Design Guidebook, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, Office of Development and Planning Sign Design Guidelines, and the New London Zoning Regulations.

#### **V. ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS**

Grants up to \$1,999.00 are available to first and second floor storefront business owners for business signs or awnings, and for property owners for building identification signs, multiple tenant signs, or awnings. All businesses and properties must be located in the City Center District or the Expanded Area. Businesses located on the second floor of an eligible property must occupy space with windows facing the street of the principal address of the business. Only commercial properties are eligible for signs and awnings. Properties located within the Expanded City Center District that are fully residential are only eligible for one building identification sign. All applicants must meet the following additional eligibility requirements.

Eligible improvements shall include the following:

- 1. New, replacement, or refurbished exterior wall signs
- 2. New, replacement, or refurbished exterior hanging signs
- 3. New, replacement, or refurbished building identification signs e.g. "Shea Building"
- 4. New, replacement, or refurbished building multiple tenant signs
- 5. Business identification signs on existing awnings
- 6. New, replacement, or refurbished awnings

#### **VI. APPLICANT AND PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY**

- A. Applicants may be individual property owners, including partnership and corporations, and/or business owners and operators occupying first and

second floor storefront space in the designated area with the written approval of the property owner.

- B. Each applicant is eligible for one grant only for one sign only. An individual property may be eligible for more than one grant if the applicants are qualified separate entities and the improvement proposals meet the eligibility guidelines. For example, a property with two storefront businesses may be eligible for three grants – one to property owner and one for each of the storefront business operators. A property owner who also operates a storefront business under separate ownership may be eligible for two grants. Duplication of signs is not permitted. All signs must comply with building and zoning requirements to be eligible for review by the Review Committee.
- C. Business owners with businesses located on the second floor are eligible only if the space occupied has windows facing the street of the principal address of the business. All other business owners whose occupied space is above ground level are not eligible. Said business owners should consider working with their property owner for a multiple tenant sign.
- D. All real estate and personal property taxes due to the City of New London for the property at which the sign(s) are requested must be paid in full.
- E. No applicant can be involved in litigation brought by the City of New London or against the City of New London.
- F. Applicants who have outstanding loans through the Revolving Loan Fund Program or similar City loan programs shall be paid-up to the date of application submitted. And, further, shall be paid-up after completion of the project and at the time a request for reimbursement is made.
- G. No applicant shall be eligible if they have been cited for existing zoning, building or property maintenance code violations.
- H. Applicants whose building or storefront façade do not meet the current Zoning Regulations for signs, Section 615, are not eligible for funding until corrections are made to bring the non-conformity into conformance. Signs for existing businesses that have building and/or zoning permits on file are exempted. An applicant who is applying for a new, replacement, or refurbished sign may incorporate in their application the cost to remove signs for businesses that no longer exist on the condition that the façade under or around the sign is improved in accordance with the established guidelines. In no case shall the total cost of the project be greater than \$1,999.00.

- I. Applicants who have outstanding water and sewer bills for any properties located in the City of New London are not eligible unless a payment plan has been established with the Public Utilities department.
- J. All applicants must be current in their City Center District taxes.

## VII. PROCEDURE

- A. Complete the Sign Improvement Program Application and submit it with all the required application materials to the Office of Development and Planning. Processing of applications will be on a “first come first serve” basis as received after July 1, 2009. All applications must be complete to be considered for review. Completed applications will be eligible for review and approval as long as funds are available but in no case will applications be accepted after June 1, 2010.
- B. Completed applications will be reviewed by the Façade Review Committee to determine eligibility and approval under the design guidelines and based upon established priorities. The Review Committee shall have complete authority in determining the appropriateness of all sign features. This shall include, but is not limited to, the sign’s size, height, dimensions, copy, letter type, materials, colors, location, lighting and electrical features.
- C. Projects approved by the Review Committee will be issued a *conditional approval*. The applicant must then obtain the required zoning and building permits, and submit copies of the permits to the Program Coordinator.
- D. Upon final approval of the application the applicant is required to complete and sign all necessary Sign Improvement Agreements and/or Contracts.
- E. Upon completion of the improvement project the applicant must submit to the Office of Development and Planning a Sign Improvement Completed and Request for Reimbursement Form. Said form shall be submitted no later than May 15, 2010.
- F. Upon verification that all improvements as proposed have been completed and all services and materials involved in the project have been paid in full, the applicant will be approved for reimbursement.

## VIII. GENERAL CONDITIONS

- A. Applicants must submit precise improvement costs. All costs must be accounted for and must be reasonable in terms of current labor changes

and material costs. The sign improvement grant amount approved by the Façade Review Committee cannot be increased.

- B. Changes in sign improvement projects due to unanticipated but necessary additional work must be reviewed by the Façade Review Committee. Cost overruns due to such unanticipated work may not be eligible for additional funds. And in no case shall the total cost exceed \$1,999.00.
- C. The storefront and/or façade must be visible from a public way.
1. A storefront is that portion of the ground floor building front occupied by a use which is separate from the adjoining buildings and at which the principal entrance is located. A second floor storefront is that portion of the second floor of the building which has windows that face the street of the principal address of the building.
  2. A façade is the separate face of the building including parapet walls and facing a city street or a vacant unoccupied lot located between the building and a city street or a municipal parking lot.
  3. A project shall be complete when all the work as proposed has been verified as complete and all costs associated with the work has been verified as paid in full.
- D. **The funds for this program are not available for any project that will cost greater than \$1,999.99. Upon completion of the project applicants will be required to certify that the total project costs are not in excess of \$1,999.99. Any project which exceeds \$1,999.99 will be ineligible for reimbursement.**
- E. The applicant and owner of the property agree upon executing an agreement with the City of New London, to indemnify and hold harmless the members of Façade Review Committee, the City of New London, the Office of Development and Planning and its employees, contractors and agents against any claims, suits, liabilities or judgments for injury or injuries to persons, injury or destruction to owner's building(s), grounds or adjacent building(s) or grounds, loss to or interruption of the business or commence of the owner, applicant, and/or the owner's tenants or agents due to work performed under said agreement.
- F. The Façade Review Committee will have great latitude over administering each project as to work to be done. The highest priority of this program is to promote positive interest in downtown buildings, storefronts and businesses through the installation of attractive well-designed signs.

- G. An applicant may appeal decisions of the Façade Review Committee for the applicant's project only. Appeals of the decisions of the Façade Review Committee shall be taken to the Planning and Zoning Commission.