



Williamston
DOWNTOWN INC.
Vibrancy Grant Program
General Guidelines

Purpose

Our Vibrancy Grant Program is an incentive-based measure. It is intended to facilitate, encourage, and provide an economic incentive for the:

- Renovation of building facades in the Williamston Central Business District
- Implementation of appropriate design standards for the rehabilitation of historic buildings both within and near the National Register Commercial Historic District
- Incorporation of compatible design standards in the renovation of non-historic buildings within the Central Business District
- Preservation of the unique architectural and commercial character of Downtown Williamston while promoting commercial growth and inviting design aspects

Grant Awards

- The Vibrancy Grant Program will provide a 1:1 dollar match for approved projects up to a ceiling amount of \$2,000.00 per project.
- An exception to the ceiling amount may be granted for a three-story façade. In such cases, a \$3,000.00 grant ceiling is allowed only if the project proposal includes façade renovation at the third story level.
- Vibrancy grants are paid only when the approved project is complete in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted. A preliminary dollar amount of the grant is determined at the time of application.
- The final award amount is based on documentation of actual costs.
- A project that alters submitted plans without prior approval will be disqualified for payment. Designs not completed as submitted will also be disqualified.
- The 1:1 match is based on the estimated cost submitted when the application is submitted. Award payment will be based on this cost up to \$2,000.00.
- **All projects must be approved before work may begin. Any project that has already started or items that have already been purchased will not be eligible for Vibrancy Grant funds.**
- **Applicant must begin work within 90 days of grant approval with completion of approved work within 6 months of application approval.**

Eligibility Requirements

- Any property owner or business tenant in a commercial building in the project area is eligible to apply. Government buildings and private dwellings are excluded from consideration.
- **Applicant must be a member of Williamston Downtown, Inc. and the applicant must attend the Williamston Downtown, Inc. Board meeting to explain their project.**
- Any property or business tenant that has received a Vibrancy Grant award (or previous Façade Grant) may not apply again until 3 years after their last project was completed.
- Either the property owner or business tenant of a building may submit an application. Property owners and business tenants may apply jointly. In any case, only one application may be submitted for each building.
- A business tenant applicant must obtain the property owner's written consent for a façade renovation and submit it with the application. A property owner should attach any provisions for renovation undertaken while a property is occupied.
- All façade design proposals must meet applicable zoning and code requirements of the Town of Williamston and comply with Vibrancy Grant Program guidelines.

- **Improvements must be consistent with the historic district and in compliance with the National Historic Rehabilitation Guidelines.**
- Only exterior façade renovations are eligible for consideration under the Vibrancy Grant Program. The costs of limited interior alterations such as display window changes may be included only if they are a necessary part of the façade design.
- Renovation proposals of limited scope and cost are eligible subject to meeting guideline requirements.
- Priority consideration will be given to proposals that make highly visible and significant design contributions, and which contribute to the program goal of preserving the architectural, historic and commercial character of Williamston.
- A property does not have to be occupied at the time a grant application is submitted. However, projects in vacant buildings should seek to complete projects that minimize the evidence of vacancy.
- If remedial work to the building (in areas other than those included in the façade proposal) is required for occupancy, a separate, detailed description of the work, including zoning approval, must be attached to the Vibrancy Grant application.

For Façade Improvement

- A building façade is considered as the business storefront of a single structure or an individual storefront that is part of a larger building with two or more storefronts. The Façade is further defined as the face or front of the building. Roof improvements are not an allowable cost except when covering public walks or public areas. Each individual façade of a building can potentially qualify for a Vibrancy Grant.
- A property owner may submit an application for each eligible façade in a single building. Likewise, a business tenant whose business occupies two or more adjacent storefronts with differing property owners may apply for a grant for each façade.
- Applications for two or more adjacent facades to be renovated at the same time as a single project by a single owner may be consolidated in a single application form.
- If the number of eligible facades in a building is in question, reference to previous business occupancy, provision for utility services, presence of dividing walls or tax records may be used in determining the number.
- Rear entrance façade projects are also eligible under the program, but must be submitted as a separate application and adhere to the following stipulations:
 - Renovation of a rear business entrance must clearly identify and provide ready public access to the business from an adjacent street or parking area.
 - Proposed designs must be of a significant nature and contribute to the building's appearance.
 - Designs must be compatible with the overall character of the building; however, they do not need to replicate the historic and architectural characteristics of the structure's front.
 - A business must qualify for the same number of rear entry Façade Grants as there are corresponding and eligible front facades for the business.

For Other Improvements

Williamston Downtown, Inc.'s Vibrancy Grant does not only cover façade renovations, but other improvements that enhance the overall character and visibility of a storefront. Other improvements are awarded with strict and careful consideration and must adhere to the following criteria.

- Window decals and other window decorations may be allowed under the Vibrancy Grant so long as they:
 - Are not political in nature
 - Are not provocative or controversial in any manner
 - Are at least \$300.00 in cost
 - Improve the overall look of the building and the corridor in front of it
 - Are on display for at least 6 months
 - Are not a holiday or special occasion decoration

- Window designs and drawings must be submitted with the application for approval. Window designs or decals already completed or in progress will not be considered for grant money.
- Plants, planters, and other greenery may be covered under the Vibrancy Grant so long as they:
 - Are placed outside of the business and do not obstruct the sidewalk or entryway to the business
 - Are well kept and do not overgrow onto the surrounding sidewalk
 - Remain on the property *and alive* for at least 1 year
 - Are at least \$200.00 in cost but no more than \$1,000.00.
 - Are not poisonous to any human or animal
 - Are generally neat looking and provide an inviting entryway to your business
 - Are approved before purchased and placed on property
 - Sign alterations may be covered under the Vibrancy Grant so long as they:
 - Are at least \$1,000.00 in cost
 - Are in compliance with sign ordinances for the downtown district
 - Are cohesive with the historic downtown aesthetic
 - Are used with quality material
 - Are designed by a sign company with drawings submitted before approval
 - Are generally neat looking and provide an inviting entryway to the business
 - Any other improvements
 - Any other improvements that you think would enhance the look of your business are welcome. However, these improvements along with sign decals, greenery, and sign alterations will be carefully considered using strict guidelines as to ensure that the project will, in fact, enhance your storefront and the overall aesthetic of our downtown district. These projects will be reviewed and approved (or denied) at the will of the Williamston Appearance Commission, the Williamston Downtown, Inc. Design subcommittee, and the Williamston Downtown, Inc. board.

General Notes

- All projects are subject to approval by the Williamston Appearance Commission, the Williamston Downtown, Inc. Design subcommittee, and the Williamston Downtown, Inc. board.
- Projects will be approved based on the overall enhancement of your storefront or façade and projects that show substantial improvement will be given first priority.
- Funds are limited and projects may be denied due to lack of funding and may be resubmitted at the beginning of the next fiscal year
- **All projects must be approved before work may begin. Any project that has already started or items that have already been purchased will not be eligible for Vibrancy Grant funds.**
- Grant funds will only be awarded after the project is completed and an invoice is submitted to the Williamston Downtown, Inc. Treasurer.
- Grant funds will only cover the 1:1 dollar match for the final invoice of a project. If the estimated project cost on your application was \$4,000.00 and the actual project only cost \$3,000.00, you will be awarded \$1,500.00. Funds greater than the 1:1 dollar match of the estimated project cost on your application will not be awarded.

For additional information or to apply for a Vibrancy Grant, please contact:

Williamston Downtown, Inc.

Zach Dickerson, Downtown Coordinator
 P.O. Box 506
 Williamston, NC 27892
 (252)-792-5142
 zdickerson@townofwilliamston.com



VIBRANCY GRANT PROJECT APPLICATION

The Williamston Downtown Inc. Board approves recommended applications once a month at its regular meetings on the Second Wednesday of each month. Your application must be in the Williamston Downtown Coordinator's office by the first Monday to be considered at a Board Meeting. Decisions by the Board are final.

Application and Review Schedule

- Applications must be received by, at least, the first Monday of any month. Any application received after the first month of any month will be processed the following month.
 - The Williamston Downtown, Inc. Coordinator will review your project application package for completion.
 - Applications, including attachments, must be complete. The project must first be approved by the Williamston Appearance Commission and Williamston Downtown, Inc. Design subcommittee which meets the first Wednesday of each month. They will give a recommendation to the Williamston Downtown, Inc. board.
- The Review Committee recommends applications for approval, or:
 - Will notify you why it did not recommend your application and specify changes.
 - The Committee may also recommend approval with minor changes attached.
 - Substantial changes will need to be resubmitted by the next deadline.
 - You will be notified if your project requires review by the Williamston Zoning and Planning office or by the Williamston Planning Board.
 - Use or building permits that may apply must be acquired before any project is started.
- Façade Grant Completion Payments
 - The Williamston Downtown, Inc. Board awards façade grants *only* after an approved project is completed.
 - The amount of the façade grant is determined after documentation of your final costs.
 - When the project is finished you will need to contact the Williamston Downtown, Inc. Coordinator's office to verify completion as specified. You must provide cost documentation at this time.
 - The deadline for scheduling final site visits is the First Monday of any month.
 - The Williamston Downtown, Inc. Board authorizes payment of grant awards only at its monthly meetings.

Return Completed Applications to:

Williamston Downtown, Inc.

Attn: Zach Dickerson

P.O. Box 506

Williamston, NC 27892

Or

Drop off at Town Hall at

102 East Main Street

Williamston, NC 27892

Or

Email to: zdickerson@townofwilliamston.com

VIBRANCY GRANT APPLICATION FORM

(Latest return date is the first Monday of any month. Any applications received after this day will be processed the following month.)

Name _____

Address _____

Contact Numbers _____

(Include Fax and E-Mail if available)

Address of Project _____

Building owner and address _____

(Only if different from applicant)

1. Describe your project- (Attach printout or extra page. Compare to any other façade projects.)

2. When would you begin? _____ Expected Completion? _____

3. What is the estimated project cost? _____

4. ATTACHEMENTS - Must be included with your complete application package.

- o Sketch or drawing – Your own drawing is OK- professional work not required.
- o Photos of your project site (before and after) – digital photos are preferred.
- o Sample of finishes – Examples: paint chips, awning swatch, siding, trim, etc.
- o Written cost estimates (if available). Final cost documentation required on completion. This amount will determine grant award amount.

Signature and date _____

Signature of building owners _____

(If applicant does not own building)

Contact the Williamston Downtown, Inc. office ahead of time about your project. A phone call may save you time and delay later on. There are no exceptions to the stated deadline. The Williamston Downtown, Inc. Board of Directors must approve all Façade Grants. Decisions are final.

Keep a copy and return this original form to:

Williamston Downtown, Inc., PO Box 506, Williamston, NC 27892

OR drop off at Williamston Town Hall at 102 East Main Street, Williamston, NC 27892

