

# Design Assistance Program

## Purpose

The City of Hamilton's Economic Development Division is offering a Design Assistance Program that provides professional architectural/technical services to business owners interested in renovating existing buildings or the construction of a new building. The design process typically provides the owner with some or all of the following:

- Floor plans showing existing as well as new construction
- Building façade improvements
- Preliminary building, zoning and safety code analysis.

These items will assist the owner in setting renovation priorities and in securing financing for the project.

## Qualifications

This program is targeted for small businesses, with 30 or less full-time equivalent employees. The program is available in the designated Design Assistance Program area (see map).

A financial statement from the applicant is required as part of the application process. This grant may not be used to pay for an in-house or staff designer. A licensed and registered design professional must complete all design work. Business owner must submit a copy of the business plan and new businesses must review business plan with the Small Business Development Center.

Certain businesses are ineligible for this program. They include, but are not limited to: golf courses, country clubs, financial institutions, adult oriented businesses, businesses that hold or develop intangibles for sale, pawn shops, tattoo parlors, gun stores, convenience stores, gas stations, and businesses that conduct auto sales, auto repair, bail bonds, pay day lending, cash advance, check cashing, and car title loans. Businesses, business owners, or those who have the authority to act on behalf of businesses applying for assistance through the Design Assistance Program will not be considered if they or their business have a history of violations of the Ohio Revised Code or criminal law, civil law or code violations of any political jurisdiction. Franchises are excluded from this program.

Only one grant per business address per year is allowed. Phased projects are allowed, provided the phases are in subsequent years. The minimum project investment that will be considered for this program is \$10,000. The grant amount covers the cost of professional architectural/technical services up to 5% of the total project investment. The grant amount is capped at \$10,000. Final amount is dependent on availability of funds.

Due to the limited amount of funds available annually, completed applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis. Final determination of eligibility is based on the decision of the Economic Development Department staff, who will evaluate each application based on its compatibility with the City's Strategic Plan and the economic development impact of the project.

## Application

Please fill out a preliminary application prior to project commencement. Submitting the application early ensures that project expenditures qualify for the grant. Any information that is unknown at the start of the project can be completed at the conclusion of the project. Applications should be returned to the Division of Economic Development, along with the \$250 application fee (refundable upon issuance of certificate

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of occupancy). The Division will discuss with the applicant the details of the project, review the application and define the scope of the work. Once the project is nearing completion or completed, you will be asked to submit any outstanding documentation required for the full application. See “Final Application” for more details. If you have any questions, please call the program contact listed below.

## Final Application

To complete the application, the applicant will be asked to provide the following:

- Renovation requirements
- Renovation budget
- Invoices that reflect the cost of the work completed as part of the project
- Current or proposed use and/or users for the renovated property
- Anticipated time frame for implementing the renovation
- Sources of funds for the renovation project
- Business Plan
- Financial Statement

The City reserves the right to reject any application that may not be consistent with the business districts’ plans or zoning requirements.

## Process

Submit the initial application as soon as the project scope has been defined. Business owner will select an architectural/technical professional to prepare necessary plans for the project. After design work is completed and paid for by owner, the City will reimburse owner upon receipt of a paid invoice for service. Work on the project must be substantially underway before the funds are released. The application fee of \$250 will be refunded after a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy is received by the Economic Development Division.

The City reserves the right to review any and all work completed by the architectural/technical professional and request copies of said work as necessary. The City may request a tour of the work in progress. The project for which the grant is made must be completed within 18 months, or the grant must be repaid.

## Contact

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