

Program Overview

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority (“Build EBR”) offers the Facade Improvement Program as a grant to support small businesses and commercial property owners in improving storefronts and building exteriors located within designated target areas. The program is designed to advance corridor revitalization, strengthen neighborhood commercial districts, and support businesses operating in historically disinvested areas.

The Facade Improvement Program supports small-area redevelopment and place-based economic development by removing financial barriers that often prevent property and business owners from making critical exterior improvements. The program was launched through the **J.P Morgan Chase Advancing Cities initiative** in partnership with the **Imagine Plank Road Master Plan**, and builds on those efforts to advance corridor revitalization, strengthen neighborhood commercial districts, and support long-term economic investment in targeted areas. The program aims to:

- Improve the appearance, safety, and functionality of commercial storefronts;
- Catalyze private reinvestment and long-term corridor revitalization;
- Strengthen retail and service opportunities that serve surrounding neighborhoods.

Grant funds may cover up to 100 percent of eligible facade improvement costs, subject to program caps and design approval. To reduce upfront financial burdens on business and increase program accessibility, Build EBR may issue grant payments directly to qualified contractors through an approved scope of work and milestone payment plan.

Award amounts may vary based on corridor priority, project impact, and alignment with redevelopment goals. Shopping centers may be eligible for multiple awards when improvements are made to multiple storefronts.

All funded projects are subject to design standards, scope approval, and post-completion maintenance requirements to ensure quality, durability, and long-term community benefit.

Eligibility & Program Requirements

Building owners, or small business owners occupying storefronts within an eligible building who have obtained written authorization from the property owner, are invited to participate in the Facade Improvement Program. Grant funds may be used only for eligible exterior façade improvements located within designated Target Areas.

For purposes of this program, the following requirements apply:

1. A small business is defined as an independently owned business with fewer than 100 employees.
2. Each storefront may be eligible for a grant award of up to \$10,000, subject to available funding and project approval. A storefront is defined as a distinct business space with a unique street address and access.
3. Grant awards may cover up to 100 percent of eligible project costs, subject to program caps, design approval, and funding availability. Award amounts may vary based on corridor priority, project impact, and alignment with redevelopment goals. Build EBR reserves the right to adjust award amounts at its discretion.
4. As a condition of eligibility, property taxes on the subject property must be current, and applicants must not have any past-due debts owed to the City-Parish at the time of application and award.
5. Grant funds may be issued directly to qualified contractors or through approved milestone payments. Labor performed by the business owner or property owner is not eligible for reimbursement or payment under the program.
6. All applications will be evaluated by a Grant Review Committee using an objective, point-rated scoring system (see Application Review Form). The Committee shall include representatives from Build EBR, City-Parish government, community stakeholders, and design or planning professionals.
7. Applicants are required to submit a minimum of three (3) cost estimates from separate, qualified construction companies for review prior to Committee consideration and award.
8. Eligible Areas:

Eligible properties must be located within or directly along the Plank Road Corridor, as defined by Build EBR. This corridor serves as a priority investment area for revitalization, small business support, and implementation of the Reimagine Plank Road Master Plan.

Build EBR reserves the right to define specific boundary limits within the corridor and may refine eligible areas based on funding availability and program priorities.

These corridors have been identified as strategic focus areas for reinvestment, façade activation, and catalytic economic development. Projects within these areas will be evaluated based on their alignment with adopted redevelopment

strategies, corridor improvement initiatives, and Build EBR’s place-based investment goals.

Build EBR reserves the right to define specific boundary limits within each corridor and may adjust priority areas over time to align with funding availability and redevelopment objectives.

Program Requirements

1. Eligible Location

Properties must be located within a designated Target Area, including Build EBR’s emphasized redevelopment corridors (Plank Road, Scenic Highway, Florida Boulevard) or within the Cortana Corridor Economic Development District (CCEDD). Build EBR reserves the right to designate additional priority areas as needed to advance redevelopment objectives.

Properties must be located within an approved Target Area as defined under the “Eligible Areas” section of these guidelines. Build EBR reserves the right to refine or update designated priority areas in alignment with redevelopment objectives and funding availability.

2. Multiple Storefronts

Shopping centers or multi-tenant buildings may receive multiple awards for improvements to distinct storefronts, subject to program limits and funding availability.

3. Health & Safety Compliance

Buildings must meet applicable City-Parish health and safety standards at the time of award and upon project completion.

Properties must be in compliance with applicable City-Parish health, safety, and building standards at the time of award and upon project completion.

Properties that are subject to active condemnation orders, unsafe structure notices, or unresolved blight enforcement actions are not eligible for funding unless such violations are fully resolved prior to award approval.

4. Code & Regulatory Compliance

All improvements must comply with applicable land use regulations, zoning requirements, building codes, and City-Parish ordinances.

5. Maintenance & Five-Year Commitment

As a condition of funding, grantees and property owners must agree that improvements funded through this program will remain in place and be properly maintained for a minimum of five (5) years following project completion.

If improvements are voluntarily removed, significantly altered, or neglected within five (5) years of project completion, the grant recipient may be required to repay a prorated portion of the grant funds based on the remaining term of the five-year maintenance period.

As a condition of funding, Build EBR may record a lien, restrictive covenant, or other legally enforceable instrument against the subject property to secure compliance with the maintenance requirement and any repayment obligation. The lien may be released upon expiration of the five-year term, provided the property remains in compliance.

The same requirements apply if ownership or tenancy is transferred within five (5) years of completion.

Standard exceptions include

- Normal wear and tear, as determined by Build EBR.
- Damage beyond the control of the owner, provided repairs are made to equal or greater quality.
- Improvements replaced as part of a subsequent enhancement approved in writing by Build EBR.

6. Permits & Business Licensing

Applicants are responsible for securing all required building permits prior to commencement of work and must maintain a valid business license, if applicable.

7. Project Completion & Payment Process

Projects must be completed within six (6) months of contract execution and issuance of a written Notice to Proceed by Build EBR.

Grant funds shall be disbursed only for work completed and verified in accordance with the approved scope of work, plans, specifications, and applicable design standards.

Payments may be made directly to qualified contractors or, where applicable, through approved milestone payments to the awarded business or property owner.

All disbursements require written confirmation by the business or property owner that the work has been satisfactorily completed, as well as inspection and approval by Build EBR staff prior to release of funds.

8. Extensions

Grant extensions may be approved on a case-by-case basis due to documented weather delays, supply chain issues, or contractor scheduling conflicts. Under no circumstance shall a project exceed twelve (12) months from the date of award approval without formal written authorization.

9. Liability

Applicant understands and agrees that Build EBR serves solely as the granting and awarding entity for this façade-improvement program. Build EBR does not select, recommend, endorse, supervise, or control any construction company, contractor, skilled laborer, tradesperson, or any other individual or entity engaged by Applicant to perform façade improvements (“Contractor”). Build EBR assumes no responsibility or liability for the workmanship, quality, performance, conduct, or actions of any Contractor or their employees, agents, subcontractors, or representatives.

Applicant agrees that Build EBR shall not be held liable, nor shall any legal action be pursued against Build EBR, for any defects, deficiencies, delays, losses, or damages, known or unknown, foreseeable or unforeseeable, arising from or related to work performed by a Contractor. Applicant further agrees to waive and forego any indemnification, contribution, or similar claims against Build EBR in connection with such work.

10. Federal Compliance (If Applicable)

If federal funds are utilized for the program, applicable federal regulations, including environmental review requirements and labor standards such as Davis-Bacon, will apply in accordance with funding source requirements.

11. Environmental Review & Notice to Proceed

Where required, no contracts may be executed and no construction activity may begin until the environmental review process is complete and a written Notice to Proceed has been issued by Build EBR.

12. Design Review & Approval

All drawings, plans, renderings, or sketches must be submitted to Build EBR for

review and written approval prior to the start of construction. Approval is a condition of award.

Design Standards & Corridor Alignment

All proposed improvements must be consistent with applicable corridor design guidelines, adopted redevelopment plans, and any overlay district requirements governing the subject property. Build EBR reserves the right to require design modifications to ensure architectural compatibility, durability of materials, pedestrian orientation, and alignment with corridor revitalization objectives. Final approval of all design elements is required prior to issuance of a Notice to Proceed.

13. Photography & Public Communications

Applicant grants to Build EBR a non-exclusive, royalty-free, perpetual right to photograph, video record, or otherwise capture images of the Improvements and the Property (the “Images”) for Build EBR’s governmental, promotional, educational, reporting, and public information purposes. Such use may include, without limitation, publication on Build EBR’s website, social media platforms, marketing materials, reports, presentations, and dissemination to news media for coverage of Build EBR programs. Build EBR shall have no obligation to use any Images.

Eligible Expenses

Grant funds may be used for exterior façade and site improvements that enhance the visual appearance, safety, and functionality of eligible commercial properties within designated corridors. Eligible expenses include:

1. Signage

Removal of outdated or non-compliant signage and the design, fabrication, and installation of new signage, or renovation of existing signage, provided all work complies with current City-Parish codes and regulations.

2. Awnings & Canopies

Removal of existing awnings or canopies and the fabrication and installation of new awnings or canopies that enhance storefront appearance and meet applicable code requirements.

3. Building Façade Improvements

Exterior work performed on the storefront or street-facing façade, including masonry cleaning (high-pressure water or steam only; sandblasting on masonry structures is

prohibited), painting, woodwork restoration, window and door replacement, and other exterior repairs or architectural improvements approved by Build EBR.

4. Walls, Screening, Fencing & Landscaping

Installation or improvement of fencing, screening elements, and landscaping designed to soften or conceal incompatible uses or visual impacts such as storage areas, outdoor workspaces, parking areas, or dumpsters.

5. Removal of Inappropriate Façade Coverings

Removal and proper disposal of outdated or incompatible façade materials, including vinyl or aluminum cladding, boarded windows, and other non-original coverings.

6. Cladding Removal & Restoration

Materials and labor necessary to remove wood, aluminum, or stucco cladding to restore or improve the original architectural character of the building.

7. Site & Parking Area Improvements

Permanent landscaping improvements, limited paving repairs, restriping of parking areas, and related exterior site work that enhances the overall appearance and functionality of the property.

8. Accessibility Improvements

Exterior accessibility improvements that are integral to the façade or site project, including ADA-compliant entrances, ramps, or door modifications.

9. Architectural & Design Fees

Reasonable architectural or design fees directly associated with the approved façade improvements, provided services are contracted after the date of grant award.

Grant Process Overview

1. Pre-Application Submission

Applicant submits a completed pre-application to Build EBR for eligibility review and pre-qualification.

2. Initial Site Assessment

Applicant schedules a site assessment with a Build EBR project manager to evaluate existing conditions and discuss potential improvements.

3. Design & Scope Development

Build EBR may provide design recommendations, conceptual renderings, and a finalized scope of work at no cost to the applicant. Applicants may submit their own scope and renderings for review and approval by Build EBR.

4. Environmental Review (If Applicable)

Where required by funding source, the project must complete the Environmental Review process prior to formal approval. Construction may not begin until clearance is received, and a Notice to Proceed is issued.

5. Application Review & Scoring

The Grant Review Committee evaluates complete applications using the adopted scoring criteria and makes funding recommendations based on available funding and program priorities.

6. Board Approval

Recommended projects are submitted to the Build EBR Board of Commissioners for final approval.

7. Grant Agreement Execution

Upon Board approval, the grantee executes a Grant Agreement outlining scope, funding amount, maintenance requirements, and compliance obligations.

8. Contract & Submission Review

Build EBR will review submitted contractor estimates and any related agreements to ensure the proposed work complies with the approved scope, program guidelines, and applicable regulations.

9. Pre-Construction Conference

A pre-construction meeting is held with the grantee, contractor, and Build EBR to confirm scope, timeline, inspection requirements, and payment procedures.

10. Notice to Proceed (NTP)

Build EBR issues a written Notice to Proceed upon satisfaction of all conditions, including permit verification and (if required) environmental clearance.

Construction may not begin prior to issuance of the NTP.

11. Construction & Monitoring

Construction must commence within thirty (30) days of the Notice to Proceed. Build EBR may conduct periodic site visits and progress check-ins throughout the construction period.

Note: Build EBR reserves the right to halt construction if work deviates from the approved scope.

12. Project Completion & Final Inspection

Upon completion, the project will undergo final inspection by the applicable authorized Build EBR representative to verify consistency with the approved scope of work.

13. Closeout Documentation

The grantee submits a Project Closeout Form including required documentation such as contractor invoices, proof of work completion, and digital photographs of the completed façade improvements.

14. Grant Disbursement

Grant funds may be disbursed directly to the contractor or through approved milestone payments, following verification of completed work and compliance with approved plans and program guidelines. Milestone payments may be issued at defined stages of project completion (e.g., demolition, façade installation, final completion), as approved by Build EBR. Each milestone payment requires:

- Verification that the corresponding portion of work has been completed
- Written confirmation from the business or property owner that the work is satisfactory
- Inspection and approval by Build EBR prior to release of funds.

Final payment will be issued only after full project completion and confirmation that all work complies with the approved scope, design standards, and program requirements.

Priority Scoring & Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated using a point-based scoring system to ensure transparent, equitable, and strategic allocation of funds. The Grant Review Committee will score applications based on the following weighted criteria highlighted on the Application Scoring Form.

Project applications must be awarded a minimum score of 35 points to receive recommendations for approval to the Build EBR Board of Commissioners. The scores from the Grant Review Committee will be averaged to determine a minimum score.

Owner Contribution (Bonus Consideration)



Facade Improvement Program – Policies and Procedures

While not required, projects that include a voluntary financial contribution or documented sweat equity from the business or property owner may receive additional consideration during the application review process.

Funding recommendations will be made based on total score, geographic balance, available funding, and overall program goals. Build EBR reserves the right to ensure equitable distribution across target areas and may prioritize catalytic projects that advance broader redevelopment objectives.