

New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell announces expansion of enhanced façade program for businesses

Mayor Jon Mitchell announced today an expansion of a new program supporting the City's small businesses, opening the door to more applicants and generating even greater commercial revitalization across the City.

The City's Enhanced Façade Improvement Program enables eligible commercial property owners, tenants, and nonprofit organizations to receive a grant of up to \$40,000 for eligible commercial façade improvements. Applicants are required to provide a 25% match of the total award.

The program is off to a fast start, with 11 businesses applying for funding in its first month. Despite this early success, small business support organizations and city councilors who been actively promoting the program have noted that the match requirement may put the program out of the reach of small businesses. While the City has a separate, long-standing façade improvement program that issues grants of up to \$2,000 without a match requirement, those grants have at times proven insufficient for making significant upgrades to business properties.

In response to the feedback, the City is expanding the program to make it more accessible for the smallest businesses, while preserving the accountability mechanism that a match requirement provides. Specifically, the City will exempt the first \$10,000 of a project's cost from the 25% match. Additional costs above \$10,000 will be subject to the match requirement. The maximum total grant will remain at \$40,000.

Mayor Mitchell said the expansion of opportunity for applicants came after collaborative discussions with city councilors.

“I want to thank Councilors Ian Abreu and Maria Giesta for reaching out to me with constructive feedback on how we might improve the façade enhancement program,” Mayor Jon Mitchell said. “I agree with them that adjustments to the match requirement will broaden the impact of the program, while still ensuring that ARPA funds will leverage private investment.”

Mayor Mitchell announced the Enhanced Façade Improvement Program on March 29, as the City’s first investment of funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

The façade enhancement program is designed to revitalize commercial neighborhoods, stimulate private investment and customer patronage, and preserve and beautify New Bedford’s commercial districts.

Eligible improvements include replacement or restoration of original architectural details; signs and awnings mounted to the building façade; new storefront construction within an existing building; window replacement and window framing; painting and/or residing of buildings; exterior lighting, and more.

“By putting money in the hands of our small businesses, we seek to accelerate their growth and the well-being of the neighborhoods in which they operate,” Mayor Mitchell said in March. “When small businesses succeed, a city thrives.”

Businesses, commercial property owners, nonprofit organizations and other eligible entities can download a program application on the City’s ARPA website: www.newbedford-ma.gov/arpa.