

2026 Little Village Special Service Area #25 (SSA#25)

Façade Rebate Program Guidelines and Application

1. Description

The Façade Rebate Program provides incentives in the form of a rebate for physical improvements to storefronts and facades along with public way. The goal of the Façade Rebate Program is to beautify and revitalize the SSA district, attract and retain businesses, enhance the streetscape, and provide design guidelines that enhance the character and qualities of the district. The Façade Rebate Program is a subject to the approval of and administered locally by the Little Village 26th Street Area Chamber of Commerce the SSA Service Provider agency and under the oversight of the Chicago Department of Planning and Development.

2. Rebate amounts

Approved applicants who make improvements that follow the guidelines of the Façade Rebate Program may receive a rebate according to the following guidelines:

- Façades, up to a 50% financial rebate for eligible exterior improvements worth at least \$10,000.00 with a maximum rebate amount not to exceed a total of \$5,000.00.
- Awning and Signage Improvements, up to a 50% rebate for awnings, hanging and projecting signage, and only a 50% rebate for other signage. Rebates for all signage shall not exceed \$1,000.00.

Façade Rebate Program grant eligibility is defined in more detail in Section 4, Program Eligibility. However, the rebate:

- Cannot be granted before the application is approved
- Cannot be used for improvements started before the rebate is approved
- Cannot be awarded until improvements are completed in the allotted time, paid in full, and all necessary documentation has been submitted to the SSA Service Provider agency

Applications will be considered in the order that they are received until all the Façade Rebate Program funding is disbursed for the fiscal year. If the list of applications received before the next SSA Commission review exceeds the amount of funding for the program a lottery will be held to determine the order in which the projects will be funded and a wait list for funding, should it become available. In order to maximize the number of eligible projects that receive assistance, the SSA Commission reserves the right to award a Rebate at an amount less than the allowable maximum.

3. Eligible Properties: SSA boundaries

Only properties within the boundaries of SSA #25 are eligible for rebates through the Façade Rebate Program. See the description below and attached map.

4. Program Eligibility

1. Rebate requests will not be granted for façade improvements that were started before the application is received and approved.
2. The application must be approved by the SSA Commission before construction can begin. If the applicant moves ahead with the project before receiving the approval, the applicant accepts the risk that the project may not be approved for a rebate.
3. Applicant must fully and timely comply with all the requirements and deadlines set forth in the Application.
4. Applicants must be the entity paying for the improvements.
5. If the applicant is a tenant, written consent of the property owner is required.
6. Only owners and tenants of street-level property located within the SSA boundaries are eligible for the Program.
7. The property must be free of liens and legal questions as to ownership of the property, excepting any mortgage liens.
8. Applicants must have proof of proper zoning and City permits for the improvements.
9. To the extent that the owner or tenant is supplying their own materials or labor for the improvements, profits and overhead are not eligible expenditures for the rebate.
10. Applications are considered on a rolling basis through the calendar year. There is no guarantee that funding will be available upon request for a rebate.
11. If multiple applications are received before the next available SSA Commission review AND the combined rebate requested in all applications exceeds the available Program funding, a lottery will be held to determine the order in which the projects will be funded, and a wait list for rebates as future funding becomes available.
12. The Department of Planning and Development has declared that SSA Commissioners are eligible to participate in the Façade Rebate Program, provided they meet all other Program eligibility criteria and abstain from reviewing and voting on ALL Façade Rebate Program applications during the period beginning when their application is submitted until their Rebate check is approved and processed.
13. If any change in ownership of the property or business participating in the Façade Rebate Program occurs during the improvements, eligibility for the Façade Rebate Program will be suspended until a meeting with the SSA Service Provider agency staff and new ownership is completed and any changes to the original application are approved in writing. There is no guarantee that new ownership will be approved for the same rebate amount as the previous owner. All such applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

14. Properties that received a Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF) grant in the previous 3 years or are currently enrolled in the SBIF program are ineligible from applying to the Façade Rebate Program.
15. If the same façade improvement project already received funding from a different grant or incentive program it is ineligible for additional funding through the Façade Rebate Program.
16. No property owner or business can receive more than one grant in three calendar years from disbursement of the original grant.

5. Eligible Improvements

Improvements eligible for the rebate must be:

1. Visible from the public right-of-way and have a positive impact on the building-front appearance
2. Completed in accordance with the specifications described in the approved application, following the scope in the application, reflecting submitted costs and by a contractor whose bid was submitted with the application

Eligible Improvements	Ineligible Improvements
a. Tuck-pointing and masonry b. Exterior Lighting c. Window/door replacements d. Landscaping e. New café corrals or full replacement of café corrals. f. Awnings (lower rate per Section 2) g. New Signage or sign graphics (Lower rate per Section 2) h. Parking lot landscaping, decorate fencing, buffers, lighting, signage that face the main shopping street i. New security shutters j. Improvements done to vacant buildings. k. Improvements to residential structures.	a. Roofing improvements b. Interior improvements c. Rear, side, alley, or secondary improvements not visible from the public right-of-way d. New construction or additions e. Improvements that are considered regular building upkeep or maintenance f. Improvements planned for new buildings (constructed less than 5 years before application date), except for sidewalk cafes, awnings, and/or signage g. Flower boxes and planters h. Sidewalk café furniture considered temporary in nature, such as tables and chairs i. Parking lot improvements that face side, streets, alleys or are not visible from the main shopping street.

6. Application Process

A Program application package must be submitted to the SSA Service Provider agency. Incomplete applications will not be considered for approval by the SSA Commission or its designated Review Committee. The Application package must include the following items:

1. Completed application form, including the Summary of Cost Estimates form and signed Statement of Understanding.
2. \$50 non-refundable application fee in the form of credit card, check, or money order made payable to the Little Village 26th Street Area Chamber of Commerce.

3. Photographs of existing building and the proposed project area.
4. Detailed plans and specifications for the proposed project.
5. Detailed cost estimates from at least two contractors for each Improvement task. Specify which contractor you prefer for each task. The Commission reserves the right to reject any questionable estimates, as well as implement such additional Program rules and regulations as it deems reasonable. If the applicant plans to complete construction themselves, they must submit two estimates in addition to their own.
6. Owner's deed.
7. Tenant's lease, if applicable.
8. Current (within 90 days prior to the application date) lien report policy showing the property is free of liens, excepting any mortgage liens.
9. Certificate of Good Standings from the state of Illinois for all tenanted business
10. A list of applicable City permits to be obtained; and
11. Written consent from and contact information for the property owner, if the applicant is not the owner.

7. Review Process

Completed applications must be submitted prior to the next meeting of the SSA #25 Commission. The SSA #25 Commission meeting dates are posted on the Service Provider's website.

After the completed application is received, it will be reviewed by the SSA Commission or its designated Review Committee. This entity will review and accept or reject each application in its sole and absolute discretion. The applicant may be asked to clarify design elements if requested by the Commission. The application may be voted on in the first SSA meeting. If the Commission has questions about the application a vote may be postponed until a future meeting.

In order to determine what projects warrant the rebate the following are the criteria for review:

- Proposed projects meet the program guidelines
- Project provides a positive impact on the beautification of the public way
- Projects that demonstrative the greatest need of public assistance
- The size of the requested rebate
- Projects that have not previously been funded.
- Applicants who demonstrate that the funding assistance will enhance the façade improvements
- Buildings throughout the SSA boundaries in order to accomplish geographic diversification of limited funding

Within 10 (ten) business days of the Commission meeting at which the application was voted upon, the applicant will be sent an approval letter in the mail stating the rebate amount he/she can expect to receive for the proposed project (the "Approval Letter") or an explanation of why the application was not approved.

8. Construction

Once the application has been submitted and necessary permits have been obtained from the City of Chicago, the applicant may proceed with the improvements in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted in their application. However, if the applicant moves ahead with the project before receiving the Approval Letter, he/she accepts the risk that the project may not be approved for a rebate.

In order to ensure a timely project construction period, and to ensure the awarded funds are distributed within the same calendar year as the project is approved, all improvements should be completed within 180 days of the date of the Approval Letter. Failure to complete such work within the 180-day deadline shall, notwithstanding anything to the contrary elsewhere in the Application or related program materials, constitute a material breach of the Program requirements resulting in the withdrawal of funding for the applicant's project without further notice of any kind. Requests for deadline extensions must be made to the SSA Service Provider in writing before the initial 180-day project period is closed, per Section 9, Emergency Amendment and Extension Process (below).

9. Emergency Amendment and Extension Process

If unforeseen circumstances are to arise during the construction process that would result in the improvements not being completed and extension to the deadline may be granted. If the applicant does wish to request an extension if a project is not completed or a request for reimbursement is not sent within 180 days due to: delays in construction, unforeseen circumstances, or changes to project scope, contractors, or costs the applicant must submit an explanation in writing to the SSA Service Provider requesting approval for changes. Changes to the approved scope, contractors, and award amount, as well as deadline extensions may require approval by the SSA Commission. Construction deadline extension requests must be submitted with an estimated date of completion. The SSA Commission's decision as to grant an extension or changes to previously approved work shall be in its sole and absolute discretion. If the applicant moves ahead with the project before a vote is made, he/she takes the risk that the project may no longer be eligible for a rebate.

10. Rebate Request and Distribution

Once the Improvements have been completed, the applicant must request the rebate by submitting the following documentation to the SSA Service Provider in writing (the "Rebate Request"):

1. Written verification that all agreed-upon work has been completed correctly
2. Before and after photographs showing the completed work
3. Copies of all required City permits
4. Copies of all paid invoices from the selected vendor(s)
5. Copies of the cancelled checks or credit card receipts for all eligible work that shows all work has been paid for in full.

After the Rebate Request has been received, a member of the SSA Commission or Service Provider staff will inspect* the project to verify compliance with the Program guidelines and pre-approved plans. A rebate check will be sent within 60 days after the final inspection has taken place, provided the inspection confirms compliance, and pending fiscal year availability of funds. In some cases, applicants who complete work in the later part of the fiscal year may not receive funds until the first part of the following fiscal year.

The SSA #25 Commission member's inspection is limited to a review of the completed Improvements only in connection with the applicant's application under this Program, and in no way shall be deemed an inspection as to whether the repairs were completed in good order and satisfactory condition. It shall be the applicant's responsibility to verify adequacy of all repairs, and applicant's failure to verify the repairs shall not relieve applicant of any expenses or responsibilities resulting from such failure, nor shall the SSA or its representatives have any liability or obligations to applicant arising from such failure

11. Design Guidelines

These design guidelines are intended to ensure that Improvements funded by the SSA will benefit the public way by improving the physical appearance and the sidewalk appeal of commercial streets within the SSA's boundaries. In keeping with the recommendations in the area's master plan (if applicable), the design guidelines seek to enhance the pedestrian environment, emphasize historic building elements, reduce non-transparent facades, and reinforce community identity through harmonious design while still allowing individual businesses to assert their unique presence and identity on the street.

Storefronts/Windows

No storefront may be covered or filled in and window openings should not be reduced in size. If original openings have been previously filled in they should be restored to their original size and configuration. Storefronts in the same building should have a consistent design and relate to the entire building as a whole. Display windows, entrances, signs, lighting, and other improvements should be compatible and harmonious with the original scale and character of the structure. Clear glass should be used for storefront windows. Glass block, tinted, spandrel, mirrored, or opaque glass should be avoided. Funding exterior security gates is discouraged. If existing exterior security gates or bars are present, they should be removed. Window signage, graphics, or other design elements should not obstruct the transparency of the storefront; **a minimum of 60% of the street-facing building façade between 4 feet and 10 feet in height must be comprised of clear, non-reflective windows that allow views of indoor commercial space or product display areas.**

Parking Lots

Parking lots facing shopping streets and serving adjacent stores may be eligible for landscaping, signage, lighting, and decorative fencing along the edges that screen or buffer the area from pedestrian shoppers and produce a more harmonious pedestrian environment.

Awnings

There are three typical types of awnings: retractable awnings, straight fixed awnings, and curved fixed awnings (“bubble” awnings). Curved “bubble” awnings are not eligible for funding from the Program. Awnings should be made of woven cloth or linen fabric, not vinyl or plastic.

Signs

Signs that are simple and compatible with each other make it easier for people to locate businesses in a commercial district, while contributing to the character of the district. Creative signage design and “theater district” style signage are encouraged. Signs should be designed as a permanent storefront element with the purpose of identifying a business and what it does, and should be designed for both drivers and pedestrians. Signs should not be overbearing, or cluttered with excessive information or marketing/advertising messages. Signs for previous businesses must be removed as part of any improvements. Portable or temporary signs, large signs on upper facades, rooftop signs on or above the parapet or cornice of the building, billboards, and other outdoor advertising signs painted or mounted on structures, except as otherwise described, are prohibited under the Program. Exceptions of an aesthetic or historic nature shall be considered for approval on a case-by-case basis.

Wall Murals and Graphics

Wall murals and graphics can be an attractive addition to a building and also to an overall shopping area. Murals and graphics also can help establish a unique identity. If the side of a building proposed for a graphic or mural is highly visible from the main shopping street such artwork may be considered an eligible improvement.

Sidewalk Cafes

Sidewalk cafes are a way to bring more activity to the public way and contribute to a more vibrant street life. Sidewalk cafes should be located in coordination with the neighboring businesses in order to minimize obstructions to pedestrians.

Historic Buildings

Historic buildings are an important part of a neighborhood’s identity and character. Facades and storefronts of historic buildings should be repaired and original features and materials should be maintained or replaced to match the originals. Improvements planned for Chicago Landmark buildings, buildings rate Orange or Red by the Chicago Historic Resources Survey (CHRS), and buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, must be completed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/index.htm> A listing of historic buildings may be found at <http://webapps1.cityofchicago.org/landmarksweb/web/home.htm> Applicants planning improvements for historic buildings are to seek advice from the Historic Preservation Division staff at the Chicago Department of Planning and Development when planning projects.

12. Resources

Note: Information on permits is subject to change. Please consult the City of Chicago and/or a licensed architect/contractor for official information about permits. SSA Service Providers and their agents accept no responsibility for information that is no longer accurate.

https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/bacp/sbc/building_permits.html

Building Permits

Building permits are issued by the Department of Buildings, City Hall, Room 900, 121 N. LaSalle St. 312-744-3600. To apply for and access permits online, visit:

<https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/bldgs.html>

Barricade Permits

Construction that will impact the public way requires a permit issued by the Chicago Department of Transportation. For more information, visit:

http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdot/supp_info/regulations_for_constructioninthepublicway.html

Awning Permits

Awnings and canopies that extend two feet or more over the public right-of-way require a Public Way Use permit from the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, 121 N. LaSalle St., 8th Floor, (312) 744-6060. A permit for an awning that extends LESS than two feet over the public right-of-way can be issued by the Department of Buildings. For more information, visit:

http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/bacp/provdrs/public_way.html

Sidewalk Café Permits

A permit is required to operate a sidewalk café during the sidewalk café season of March 1 to December 1. For more information, visit:

http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/bacp/provdrs/public_way.html

Electrical Permits

Electric permits are issued by the Department of Buildings, Electrical Inspections, City Hall, Room 900, 121 N. LaSalle St., 312-744-3400.

Special Service Area #25 Façade Rebate Program Application

Please refer to Section 6, Application Process, for the requirements for applying.

Location of Proposed Improvements

Street Address

City

State ZIP

Property PIN

Name of Business (es) at above address

Has the property or business received any rebates through this or any other programs before?

____ Yes ____ No

If yes, please name rebate and describe details:

Applicant Information

Name of Business other Entity

Name of Contact Person

Phone

Email

Mailing address

Applicant's relationship to the property where Improvements are proposed:

____ Business Owner/Tenant only

____ Both the Business and Property Owner

____ Property Owner only

Indicate whether the Applicant is an individual or a legal entity and, if a legal entity, indicate the type of entity below.

____ Individual

____ Business Corporation

____ Not-for-Profit Corporation

____ General Partnership

____ Limited Partnership

____ Limited Liability Company

____ Joint Venture

____ Sole Proprietorship

____ Other Entity (please specify below)

Property Owner Information

Leave blank if Applicant is the property owner

Name of Ownership Entity

Contact Person

Street Address

City

State ZIP

Phone

Email

Project Description

Please describe the proposed Improvements. Attach any necessary photos, plan, etc.

Project Need Statement

Please describe how funding from this Program will enhance the proposed project, why the Improvements are necessary for your business, and how the Improvements will contribute to a more attractive public way. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Summary of Cost Estimates

Attach estimates from at least two contractors for each Improvement task with your application, and summarize any estimates by task below. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

TOTAL COST OF PREFERRED BIDS: \$ _____

Task: _____

_____ \$
Preferred Contractor Cost

_____ \$
Alternative Contractor Cost

_____ \$
Alternative Contractor Cost

Task: _____

_____ \$
Preferred Contractor Cost

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Alternative Contractor Cost

Task: _____

_____ \$
Preferred Contractor Cost

_____ \$
Alternative Contractor Cost

_____ \$
Alternative Contractor Cost

Statement of Understanding

The applicant (undersigned) agrees to fully and timely comply with the guidelines and procedures of the SSA Service Provider's Façade Rebate Program and the outlined specifications as agreed to by the applicant and the local SSA Commission. The applicant understands that two cost estimates, copies of building permits, contracts, insurance, and invoices are required as documentation, and that they have read the entire Façade Rebate Program Guidelines and Application, agreeing to be fully bound by its terms and conditions. **APPLICANT RELEASES AND AGREES TO DEFEND AND INDEMNIFY THE LOCAL SSA SERVICE PROVIDER (TOGETHER WITH THEIR OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND AGENTS), THE LOCAL SSA COMMISSION, AND THE CITY OF CHICAGO FROM ALL CLAIMS AND CAUSES OF ACTION OF ANY KIND (KNOWN OR UNKNOWN) IN CONNECTION WITH THIS FAÇADE REBATE PROGRAM.**

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Applicant's Name: (Please print) _____

Applicant's Title: _____

Applicant's SSN or Company's FEIN: _____

If the applicant is not the property owner, the following must be completed by the property owner:

I certify that I am the owner of the property located at _____,
And hereby authorize the applicant to apply for and receive a rebate under the Façade Rebate Program,
and to undertake the approved Improvements outlined in this application package.

Owner's Signature: _____ Date: _____



Application Checklist

Ensure all of the following items are completed and submitted with the application.
Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

☐ Completed Application Form

☐ Application Fee

☐ Project Description

☐ Photos of Existing Building

☐ Project Plans

☐ Cost Estimates, at least 2 contractors.

☐ Supplemental Documents

List Documents: _____

☐ Owner's Deed

☐ Tenant's Lease (if applicable)

☐ Owner's Written Consent (if applicable)

☐ Lien Report showing property is free and clear of any Liens

☐ Certificate/s of Good Standing

☐ Applicable City Permits

List Permits: _____

☐ Zoning Approval (If Applicable)

