Reinventing Star's Uptown Economy

Through

- Façade Improvement Grants for Existing Businesses
- Renovation Grants for New Retail Businesses
- Historic Preservation

The Town of Star and the Star STEP Committee met, planned and dreamed for more than a year before finalizing the strategies that are designed to revitalize Star's economy. This packet reflects the work completed by the Tourism and Entrepreneurship Committee. Now the Star STEP strategies are in the implementation stage and the committee has been renamed the Star Design Committee.

Committee Members include:

Marla Coulthard, Co-Chair
Katie Dunlap, Co-Chair
Angela Bernard
Lisa Currie
Jane Hancock
Gay Roatch
Judy Stevens
Donna Strong

Star STEP Co-Chairs
Donna Strong & Marilyn Phillips

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Star STEP Design Committee
Façade and Sign Grant Program and Application

The purpose of the Façade and Sign Incentive Grant, offered by the Town of Star STEP Program is to encourage **EXISTING BUSINESSES** to improve the appearance of their property and therefore the overall appearance of the Uptown area. Projects that will make the most visible contribution to the uptown district will receive top priority as long as all guidelines are met.

Façade is defined as: the face of a building, the front or side of a building. First priority is placed on the front entrance of the building adjoining the street.
Signs are eligible for funding if they are attached to the applicant's building.

Grants are issued for 50% of the actual project cost or **maximum $5,000** per façade project as determined by the Star Design Committee and approved by the Star Town Board.

Applicants for Façade Incentive Grants must not begin work on their project before the grant application is reviewed by the Design Committee and approved by the Town Board.

Application should be sent to:

Town of Star
Façade & Sign Grant
PO Box 97
Star, NC 27356

Goals:
Revitalization of building facades within the central business district of Star.

- Encouragement of good design projects, which utilize existing structures and properties in order to achieve a more pleasing appearance for the shopper, merchant, and/or investor.
- Preservation of historical characteristics.
- Proper direction to a more aesthetic appearance and informative signage application (including awnings, color schemes, etc.)

Eligibility:

1. Any owner or tenant of a commercial building located within the boundaries of the Town of Star that has an active business or plans to start a business.
2. Owners and tenants may request Façade and Sign Incentive Grants, however, all tenants must have the owner's signature on the application.
3. A project is ineligible for funding if work has started before the application can be reviewed.
4. Signs are eligible for funding if they are attached to the applicant's building.

Guidelines:

1. The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* for rehabilitation and the following façade and signage guidelines will be used as a reference in making façade improvements.
2. Rehabilitation of facades within the Town should be considered an appropriate solution with respect to the architectural integrity of the entire building and the neighboring streetscape.
3. Façade Improvement Grants may only be used to finance exterior improvements.
4. Facades and signage will be eligible for grant assistance, subject to review by the ERC. Top priority will be given to front facades and projects that are highly visible within the boundaries.
5. All façade and/or signage projects must meet all applicable local, state, and federal codes, ordinances, standards, and guidelines.
6. Roof replacement may be considered for funding dependent upon the overall rehabilitation project.
7. The ERC will make recommendations to the applicant that must be adhered to in order to receive grant funding. Any revisions must be reviewed in order to be eligible.
8. **For a façade or sign project to be considered for grant funding, the grant application must be submitted and approved before work on the project begins. A photograph of the proposed work area must be submitted with the application.**
9. **Applications are reviewed and recommendations made with the Star Town Board having final approval authority on all projects.**

Time Limitations:

The Project must be completed within six (6) months after the applicant has been notified of grant approval; however, the applicant may be granted an extension through written request to the Town of Star.

Grant Process:

1. Owner/tenant completes the application, including design plans and/or sketches, photograph of the work area, and owners permission, if necessary, and sends or takes it to Town Hall.
2. The SSDC reviews the application and, if approved, makes a recommendation to the Town Board for funding. A letter of either approval or denial is sent to the applicant. If the application is rejected it may be resubmitted by the owner/tenant with modification. Any member of the SSDC may excuse themselves from the discussion and selection process to alleviate the appearance of any conflict of interest.
3. Upon project completion, copies of the paid statements must be sent to the SSDC.
4. The SSDC will inspect the work. If all criteria are met and the work done follows the project plan, the SSDC will request the Town to issue payment.

Star STEP Façade & Sign Grant Program
Application Form

Applicant's name _____

Address of property _____

Name of the property owner _____

Telephone and email _____

Use of building: _____

_____

Total Cost of Renovations: _____

Owner/Tenant Investment: _____

Required Documentation:

- Design plan of renovation project. Drawings, photos and estimates will be helpful.
- Owner's written permission, if applicant is a tenant.

Construction activity shall not begin prior to funding authorization from the Town of Star. Any construction activity that commences prior to the Town's funding commitment may disqualify the project from receiving any Retail Renovation Grant Program funds.

Funds will not be disbursed if the completed project does not meet the renovation plan, minimum standards established by SSDC or if incomplete cost documentation is submitted.

_____

Signature Date

Star STEP Design Committee
Retail Renovation Grant Program

The purpose of the Retail Renovation Grant Program (RRGP) is to allow the Star STEP Design Committee (SSDC), to recommend to the Star Town Board approval of funds for any property or business owner with qualified **NEW RETAIL** projects to help by sharing the costs associated with renovating or preparing commercial space for retail shop, restaurant, gallery or similar occupancy.

Goals for the program:

- Attract new retail businesses to Uptown Star.
- Preservation of Star's historical characteristics.
- Rehabilitate buildings in the Uptown area to create a more vibrant Uptown.
- Expand the local property tax base by stimulating new investment in older, Uptown properties.
- Expand the local sales tax base by increasing sales from new or existing shops.

Application should be sent to:

Town of Star
Retail Renovation Grant
PO Box 97
Star, NC 27356

Awards: The Retail Renovation Grant Program has a limited amount of funds to be awarded with approval from the Star Town Board. The following parameters will guide SSDC in selecting projects for the Grant program:

- Projects must be on or adjacent to Main Street in Star within the town limits.
- Property or business owners must match RRGP grant funds at a 1:1 ratio ($1 private investment is matched by $1 of RRGP funds).
- Applicants must have a business plan.
- Design should be in keeping with the original character of the building. Funding is dependent upon approval of the design plan.
- Generally, renovation projects must exceed $10,000 before SSDC will consider the project.
- Maximum grant award is $10,000 for any one building.
- Grant recipients must create at least 1 full time equivalent job for each $5,000 awarded.
- Applicants proposing to construct new buildings are not eligible to receive program funds.
- RRGP funds will not be made available for use in improvements related to any illegal business, nightclub, gaming business, adult entertainment, office (business to business sales) and similar projects.
- The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* will be used as a reference in making improvements.

Eligible grant expenditures include:

- Interior demolition or site preparation costs as part of a comprehensive renovation project.
- Permanent building improvements such as flooring, walls, lighting, restrooms, electrical wiring, HVAC systems and other similar permanent features.
- Improvements to meet Fire and Life Safety codes and/or Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
- Exterior improvements including signs, painting or other improvements to the outside of a building.

- Roof replacement may be considered for funding dependent upon the overall rehabilitation project.

Prohibited grant expenditures include:

- Furniture, fixtures or equipment including tables, chairs, couches, display racks and other similar items.
- Temporary or movable cubicles or partitions to subdivide space.
- Office equipment including computers, telephones, copy machines and other similar items.
- Renovating space on a speculative basis to help attract new tenants.
- Moving expenses.
- Working capital.

NOTE …

- New retail tenants locating in the central business district should consider providing goods and services that will appeal to both residents and visitors.
- Appropriate zoning and building permits must be obtained.
- Limited funds are available and applications will be processed as received.
- The Project must be completed within six (6) months after the applicant has been notified of grant approval; however, the applicant may be granted an extension through written request to the Town of Star.

Grant Process: The Retail Renovation Grant application review process will be as follows:

1. An applicant submits to the Town of Star a complete application package with all required attachments. Applications must include:
   - Signed lease if applicable,
   - Business plan,
   - Design plan,
   - Construction estimate for the renovation work.
2. SSDC conducts a project and design review as soon as possible, with a goal to be complete within 30 working days from the date submitted.
3. If the grant application is approved by SSDC, a recommendation will be presented to the Star Town Board for consideration at their next scheduled meeting.
4. If approved, the Town will issue a letter of commitment to authorize funding, subject to the satisfactory review of the finished construction and a determination that the project meets the terms of the retail renovation program. SSDC may revoke this commitment for projects that are substantially unfinished within six months of the letter's date of issuance.
5. If the grant application is denied, the applicant will be notified in writing of the reason(s) for the rejection. A rejected application may be re-submitted, provided with modifications.
6. Funds will be paid to the applicant once the work is complete, after SSDC receives invoices for the work and after SSDC is satisfied that the completed work substantially meets the original design requirements.

Retail Renovation Grant Program
Application Form

Applicant's name _____

Address of property _____

Name of the property owner _____

Telephone and email _____

Proposed use of building: _____

_____

Estimated date new business will open _____

Total Cost of Renovations: _____

Owner/Tenant Investment: _____

I commit to create _____ new jobs when work is completed and the business opens.

Required Documentation:

- Design plan of renovation project. Drawings, photos and estimates will be helpful.
- A business plan outlining the proposed store's operations and financing.
- Verification of an occupant for the proposed space: A signed lease for a term greater than one year identifying the proposed tenant.
- Owner's written permission, if applicant is a tenant.

Construction activity shall not begin prior to funding authorization from the Town of Star. Any construction activity that commences prior to the Town's funding commitment may disqualify the project from receiving any Retail Renovation Grant Program funds.

Funds will not be disbursed if the completed project does not meet the renovation plan, minimum standards established by SSDC or if incomplete cost documentation is submitted.

_____

Signature Date

Town of Star Proposed National Historic District

The Town of Star is conducting a survey that will result in an application to the National Trust for Historic Preservation to establish a National Historic District. Among the benefits for Star beyond attraction of visitors is the availability of up to 40% tax credits for income producing properties in the designated district.

The above is a map prepared by the State Historic Preservation Office following an initial survey of properties that would be eligible. In order to get to a reasonable number of properties for a consultant to research and prepare the application, the Design Committee narrowed the district based on beginning with the uptown business district, followed by the age of the properties in each section. The goal is to get an initial district designated and then file applications to add the other districts as funds become available to do so.

Some folks fear this step will limit their choices to what they do with the properties. A copy of the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation can be found on the following page. These apply ONLY if the property owner wishes to take advantage of state and federal tax credits.

Applicants for both the Façade & Retail Renovation grants are encouraged to follow these guidelines to further the overall goals of Star's Design Committee is to maintain and restore the historic architectural character of the structures and the town.

standards for rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.