

# DOWNTOWN

Façade Improvement Program



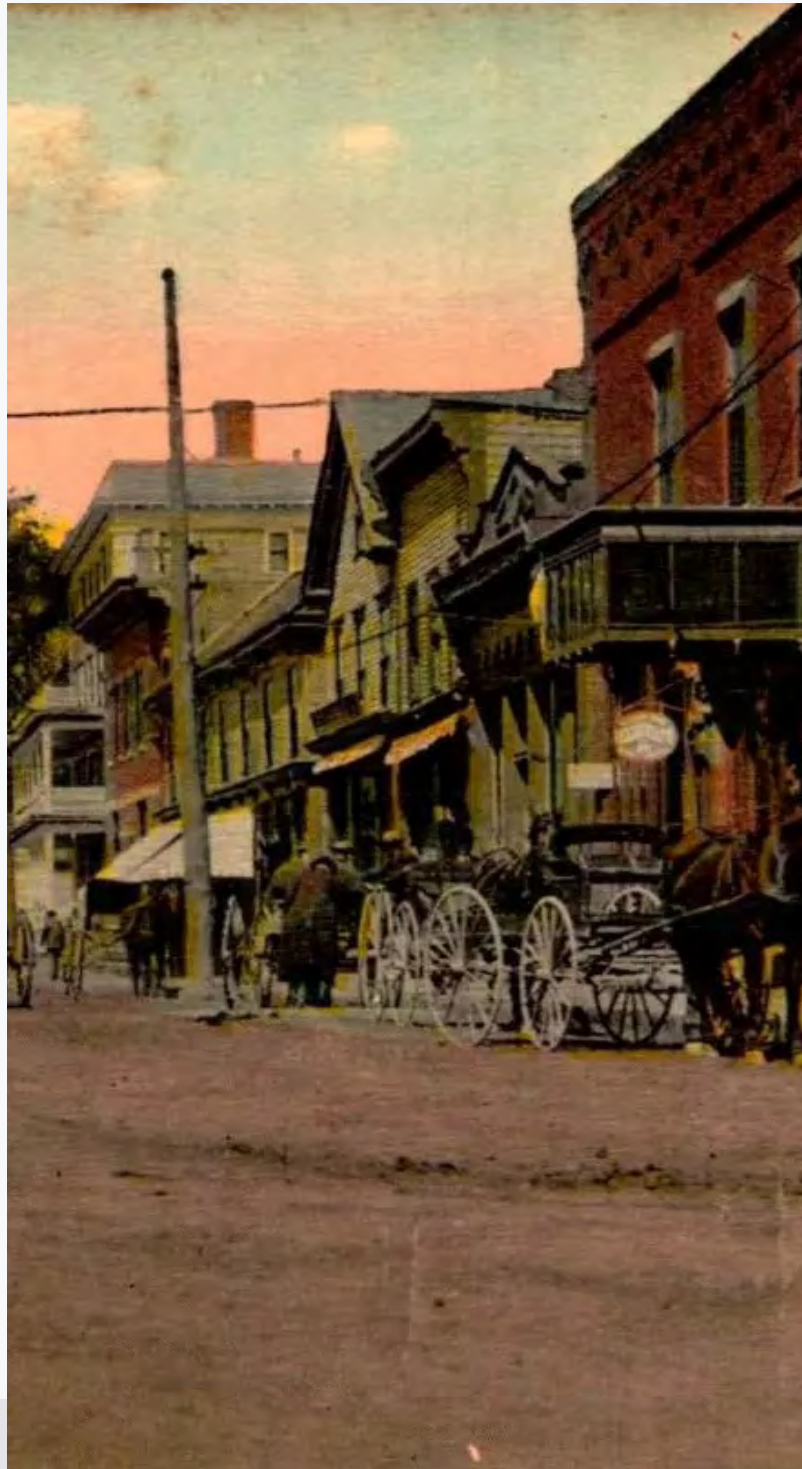
MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF  
**ST. STEPHEN**

RESTORING THE IMAGE OF THE COMMUNITY ONE BUILDING AT A TIME

# Program Purpose

Since incorporation in 1871, downtown St. Stephen has served as the cultural center of the community. But in the last half-century, downtown buildings have been demolished and the architecture degraded. The 2025-2035 Municipal Plan calls for a façade improvement program to preserve character-defining elements of historic buildings and improve the looks of all downtown buildings. The expected public benefits are increased business sales, start-ups, investments, tourism, and civic pride. This grant program incentivizes property owners to invest in their buildings. It does not require them to make all of the changes that are eligible for funding. Incremental changes (e.g. new lighting and signs on vinyl building) are encouraged.

*“A facelift for downtown buildings to attract more people and tourism.”*  
*- a resident articulating what St. Stephen needs in their municipal plan survey response*



# Grant Matching Funds

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Façade improvement program grants are available up to \$7,500 but they can only be used to cover 50% of the total cost of any project. The other half must be matched by the proponent's own funds, a loan, or another grant.

For example, non-profit organizations with properties in [NB Register of Historic Places](#)

may be eligible for an additional [Built Heritage Program](#) grant.

Another possible way to cover the matching funds is through a micro loan from the [Community Business Development Corporation \(CBDC\)](#). Call (506) 466-5055 to verify CBDC lending terms and to obtain a micro loan application.

## Who Administers this Program?

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Applicants may be either a property owner or their authorized agent. Applications are emailed to the Municipal District of St. Stephen (MDSS): [info@chocolatetown.ca](mailto:info@chocolatetown.ca). Building and project questions can be addressed to the Planning Division at (506) 466-7369. Future St. Stephen can offer businesses support with navigating programs and forms ([president@futureststephen.ca](mailto:president@futureststephen.ca)).

The MDSS will formally recommend applications to Council that meet this program's criteria. Council has the authority to approve or deny any application, or apply conditions. Funding is dependent on available budget. Any funded building alterations must obtain a valid [building or development permit](#). Grant applications are found in 'Appendix A'.

# Facade Example



SOURCE: TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER

## WHAT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

Applicants may budget any amount for their project, however, successful applicants may receive up to 50% of a project value to a **maximum of \$7,500 per applicant**. In general, funding is available for:

- contractors and skilled labour
- building materials (e.g. cladding, windows)
- paint, lighting fixtures, and signs
- professional fees (e.g. architect, engineer, historian, or graphic designer)





# Property Eligibility

## WHAT CAN I GET FUNDED FOR?

Modern or non-historic properties are eligible for this grant program if they are located within the designated [Downtown Overlay \(O-DT\) Zone](#). Historic properties are eligible(\*) if they are listed on the [NB Register of Historic Places](#) and are located anywhere along King Street or Milltown Boulevard, including outside of downtown.

Only changes to the exterior façade, visible from a public street or the St. Croix River, are eligible for funding from this program. If an exterior alteration requires an interior component, only the exterior portion of work may be funded. One application per property may be considered each calendar year.\*\* Projects must address one or more standard elements of a building's façade, such as:

- Cladding, trim, or paint colour\*\*\* (page 5-8)
- Windows and doors (page 9-10)
- Signs may be considered when part of a multi-faceted renovation project (page 11-14).
- Lighting (page 15-16)

(\*)Projects that destroy or degrade any historic character-defining elements are not eligible for funding.

(\*\*) Council may consider more than one (1) application per year per property if there are multiple storefronts.

(\*\*\*) Painting-only projects may only be considered by Council where they represent significant transformations.

# Cladding & Trim

## *NEW CLADDING & TRIM MATERIALS*

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New façade cladding and trim considered for funding includes traditional brick, stone, and real wood. In general, vinyl, metal, or aluminum siding materials will not be considered. However, certain high-quality facsimiles of traditional building materials may be acceptable, including the following:

- Fibre cement siding boards (e.g. lap siding, shingles, or board and batten profiles)
- Thick-gauge steel or aluminum cladding with an embossed wood grain finish, where the thickness is no less than 0.019" (0.48 mm)
- Thick-gauge vinyl siding with an embossed wood grain finish, where the panel is no less than 0.046" (1.17 mm) in thickness

All facsimile materials must closely replicate the profile, shadow line, and texture of traditional wood cladding. Smooth-faced or glossy-finish products will not generally be considered; Council may, upon being provided a sample, approve such products in exceptional circumstances where the applicant demonstrates that the material is otherwise consistent with the character of the building and of exceptional quality.



## *REPAIRING BRICK & STONE*

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Existing brick and stone cladding may be refreshed in a few ways:

**Repointing** - All mortar between bricks or stones decays over time. Repointing means adding new mortar to the external surface to fill in gaps that have formed. It's the way to make a wall look new again.

**Paint Stripping** - Removing paint and other materials from the outside of walls. Several methods are possible. Sandblasting damages brick and is not eligible.

**Resetting** - Damaged bricks or stones must be removed, replaced with new material, and the gap must be re-mortared. Repairing stone has different requirements than bricks; if you have a stone wall, contact a professional who specializes in stone.

**Painting Brick** - If brick is already painted prior to this application, then painting of the brick façade may be considered for funding under this program. Otherwise, any proposals to paint brick that is currently in its original unpainted form will be rejected.

## *REPLACING WOODEN CLAPBOARD & SHAKES*

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Wood siding degrades over time and must be replaced or repaired periodically. Applications may include replacing degraded shingles, clapboard or board and batten, and may include a wholesale replacement of cladding. A repair of a certain section is also eligible.

## *REPLACING TRIM*

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Adding, repairing, or restoring exterior trim may be eligible for funding, including, but not limited to: cornices, door trim, window trim, corner boards, friezes, baseboards. Original trim can't be replaced unless it is already past the point of repair (e.g. wood members are rotten) or it is not an authentic traditional building material (e.g. brick, stone, or wood). New trim must be consistent in style throughout the façade; it must not employ various shapes, sizes and colours. Also, any new trim must be in keeping with the building's architectural style, if applicable.

# Paint Colour

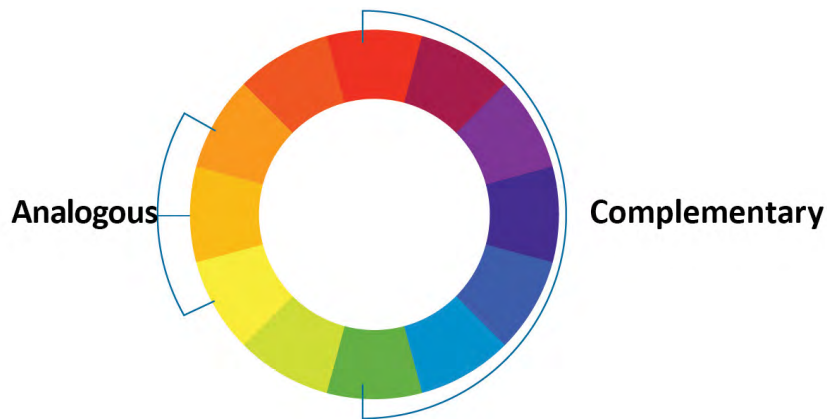
## *GUIDE TO PAINT COLOURS*

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There are no local by-laws requiring certain paint colours for building façades within the Municipal District of St. Stephen. That said, selecting the right paint colour can positively impact the look and feel of a building and affect its overall public presence in the downtown streetscape. Below are some recommended guidelines.

**Palette** - Paint stores are accustomed to helping clients select colours and would generally be able to find an appropriate palette for a building façade. Even when working with professionals, you may wish to have a starting point you're comfortable with. Select a colour you like from things around you (e.g. plants, clothing, wood, metal). Take a photo and bring it to your designer or paint retailer. The colour combinations that are possible are essentially infinite, but there are a few standard methods that yield appealing results.

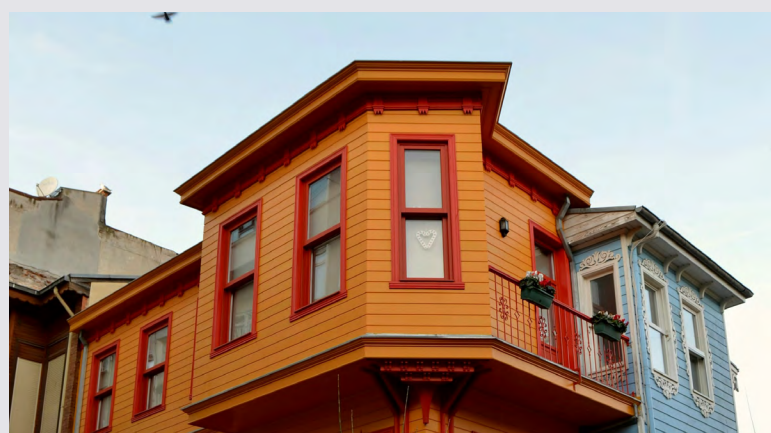
**Complementary** - Paint colours can be vibrant or jarring depending on the context. Complementary schemes use colours which are the highest possible contrast from each other, such as red/green. Colours on opposite sides of the colour wheel are complementary. See the diagram on the next page for an example.



**Analogous** - Colours which are next to each other on the colour wheel are analogous, and tend to be serene and comforting, such as blue/green or red/orange. See the diagram above for an example.

**Tints, Shades, and Tones** - If you are looking for a solid, subtle scheme that is harmonious and simple, select a single colour and then add white (tints), black (shades) or grey (tones). Schemes which use a few variations on a single colour are often called monochromatic. Complementary, analogous and tints, shades and tones are just a few of the options.

**Historical Colour** - It may be possible to determine historically correct colours which would have been applied in St. Stephen and Milltown during the community's early days. Contact the [Charlotte County Museum](#) or [Charlotte County Archives](#) and ask to speak to researchers of local history for more information.



# Windows & Doors

## *WINDOWS*

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Façade windows and doors are not secondary concerns to the look and feel of a building. They do a lot to project a welcoming feel to visitors on a street and are of high importance to this program. A long blank wall “deadens” the sidewalk and street, whereas a storefront which balances transparency and colour invites people to come in.

### **General Guidelines**

- Original-styles of historical windows should be included in a replacement to preserve a building’s character-defining elements.
- Vinyl window and door frames are not acceptable on the ground floor as they cannot be painted; matching with paint colours will be impossible.
- Windows must be clear-glazed (e.g. not coloured, boarded up, or covered by decals).
- Windows should be double or single hung; and not sliders or horizontal windows.
- Vinyl frames are only acceptable for upper-level windows.
- Air conditioning units or mechanical units should not block façade windows.
- Upper level windows should be symmetrical in their placement.

## Replacing Single Pane Windows

Single pane windows should be replaced with windows that fit the buildings' architectural character. For many of the heritage styles found in St. Stephen, multi-pane mullions provide a way to revive the buildings' architectural style. Replacement windows should fit in the existing opening of the building, and should match the original width-to-height ratio, orientation, alignment, and style of the original building.



## DOORS

Doors to first floor businesses should be high quality glass, wood, or aluminum doors. Replacement doors should fit in the existing opening of the building, and should match the original width-to-height ratio, orientation, alignment, and style of the original building.

# Signs

## *SIGNAGE PRINCIPLES*

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Signs and storefronts tend to change much more frequently as businesses come and go while building façades tend to remain static over time. This program intends that façade signs will emphasize and respect downtown's historic character, while visibly advertising the business to those on the sidewalk and on the street. St. Stephen already has comprehensive rules for signage in its Zoning By-law which make it easy to select appropriate sign types.

### **General Guidelines**

The following sign installations qualify for funding:

- Projecting wall signs
- Wall signs
- Awning signs
- Window signs
- Civic numbers

Not counting civic numbers and window signs, a façade improvement may include displaying up to 3 sign fixtures in total, with maximums for each type:

- 1 projecting wall sign
- 2 awning signs
- 2 flat fixed wall signs

Buildings which are on a corner lot may be incentivized to have one extra sign facing the corner for a maximum of 4 sign fixtures. No fabric or banner signs of any type will be allowed in this program. Requests including LED screens, corrugated plastic, plywood (unless cut, routed and painted), will also be rejected.

## PROJECTING WALL SIGNS

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- Projecting wall signs should be mounted so that all signs on the street are at approximately the same height as a nearby building.
- Clearance under projecting wall signs must be at least 3 m.
- Signs must be mounted between first and second storeys; they must be centred to the adjacent windows horizontally. Signs must be at least 10 cm from any electrical boxes or conduits.
- Sign faces can't be larger than 0.75 m<sup>2</sup> in area and must be at 90° from the façade (except for signs on corner-lot buildings).
- Guy wires must be properly installed and may not block views of the sign itself.
- Projecting wall signs can't be free swinging (include a catch)



## Signage Examples



# Signs (continued)

## *WALL SIGNS*

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Fixed flat wall signs can add to the character of a storefront if they are correctly placed and do not detract from a building's architectural details—pin-mounted lettering is ideal, though routed (CNC or laser-cut) wood or painted wooden signs boards are eligible for grants. Wall signs are mounted parallel to a façade.

- Wall signs together may not be larger than 12% of the store front surface area and each wall sign is no more than 60 cm (2') tall.
- Wall signs may not extend beyond the eaves at the top of the building or beyond the sides of the façade's wall.
- Wall signs may be either painted/routed wood or laser cut letters
- Wall signs may not be internally illuminated or utilize LEDs.

## *AWNING SIGNS*

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Awnings, also known as canopies, define a welcoming outside space at the sidewalk, and provide a refuge from rain and sun.

- Clearances under awnings must be at least 2.5 m (8.2 ft) from the grade and not project more than 1/3rd into the sidewalk.
- Lettering on awning signs must be more than 30 cm (12") tall.
- Sign lettering may not extend beyond the edges of the awning.

Awning must use high-quality, durable fabrics that degrade slowly and keep their colour for many years. Poor-quality canopies will fail quickly and must not be used. Vinyl-laminated, polyester-reinforced fabric, or woven acrylic canvas, are all eligible materials that can be used for durable, long-lasting awnings.

## *WINDOW SIGNS*

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Window signs should be in a uniform place in each business along the street scape. Such signs should match the colour scheme of the building façade, and must be at a uniform height.

- Window signs are only allowed on the ground level.
- Window signs must not cover more than 10% of the glass of the windows or doors on the ground floor of the building's façade.
- Window signs should only display the business name, logo, and/or a description of products sold or services provided inside.

## *CIVIC NUMBER SIGNS*

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They may seem inconsequential, but civic numbers can provide a unified look between buildings in a business district. Civic number signs are eligible within this program if they fit the following:

- Numbers must be mounted in the transom (above the front door) if possible. If the numbers can't be mounted in the transom, they must be mounted in a position at least 2–2.5 metres above grade.
- Digits (e.g. 5423) must be at least 100 mm high.
- Digits must be in clearly legible letterforms.



# Lighting

## *LIGHTING PRINCIPLES*

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The purpose of façade lighting is to make storefronts as welcoming at night as they are during the daytime. Exterior lights should be arranged to illuminate:

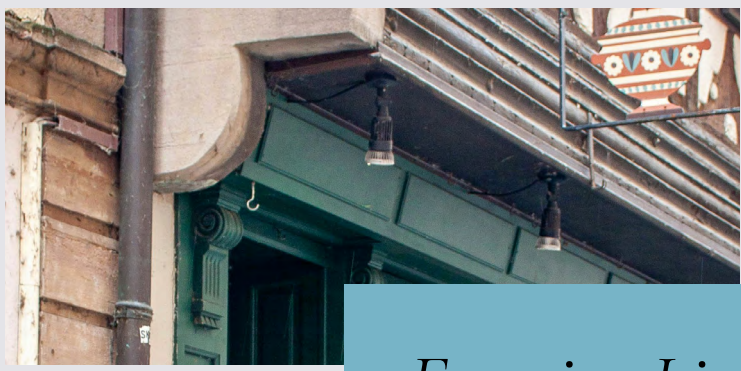
- Signs (especially wall signs)
- Trim and other architectural details
- Entrance(s) to the building

Carefully arranged lighting fixtures can make an entire building façade glow. Lights must not be distracting, intermittent, or be directed to shine glare in the eyes of people on foot or in vehicles.

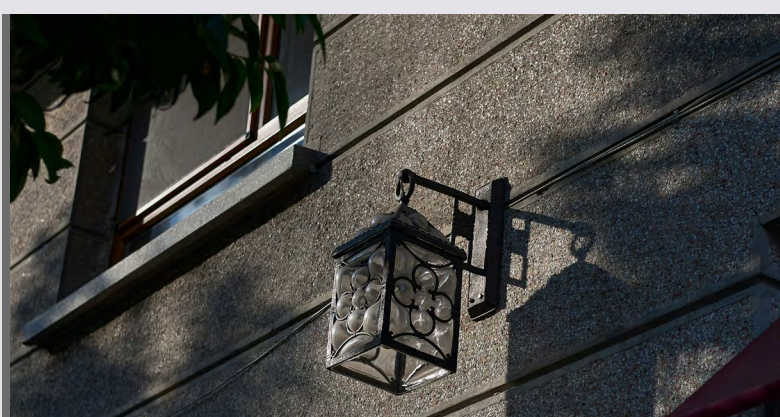
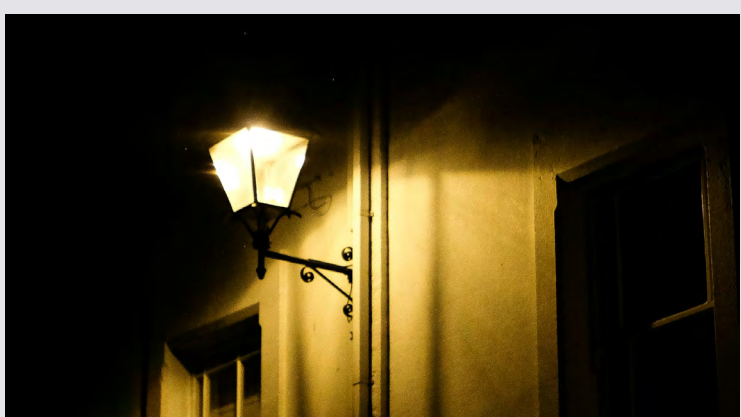
## *GOOSENECK LIGHTS*

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“Gooseneck lights” are an attractive way to light a wall sign or entrance without throwing light where it is not desired. These exterior lights have a downwards swooping “neck” and they evoke a traditional appearance but they are also compatible with more modern downtown buildings as well. Several other methods of exterior lighting are acceptable (see ‘Exterior Lighting Examples’).



*Exterior Lighting Examples*



# APPENDIX A: APPLICATION

## SECTION 1: APPLICANT INFORMATION

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Owner Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner Name (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address (if different from property): \_\_\_\_\_

Community: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 2: PROPERTY & PROJECT DETAILS

Type of Property:

Retail  Restaurant  Office  Mixed-Use  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Year Building Was Constructed (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Is the building listed on the NB Register of Historic Places?  Yes  No  Unsure

Describe the current condition of the building façade:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Improvements (check all that apply):

Cladding/Siding  Trim/Cornice  Masonry/Brickwork  Painting

Windows/Doors  Masonry/Brickwork  Signs

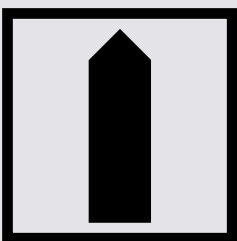
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Provide a detailed description of the proposed work:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Total Project Cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Grant Amount Requested (max \$ \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_% of project cost): \$ \_\_\_\_\_



**20  
26**

*Photo Credits:*

*Alex Henderson*

*Town of Bridgewater*

*Unsplash.com*

**Email complete form to: [info@chocolatetown.ca](mailto:info@chocolatetown.ca)**

**SECTION 3: REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS**

- Photos of existing façade (minimum 2 photos, different angles)
- Design plans/renderings or detailed hand drawings of proposed improvements
- Written estimates or quotes from contractors or professional services (receipts not required at this stage)
- Proof of property ownership or written consent from property owner

**SECTION 4: APPLICANT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

By signing below, I certify that the information provided in this application is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that:

- Approval of funding must be granted prior to any expenses being eligible for reimbursement.
- Payment of grant money is subject to 100% completion of work and submission of all required documentation (receipts).
- Façade improvements or signage require a building permit or sign permit prior to carrying-out the work.
- I am required to maintain the façade improvements for a minimum of five (5) years after completion.

Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Property Owner (if different): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 5: FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

Date Application Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Application #: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

BIA recommendation (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Council decision:  Approved  Denied

Terms & conditions of Council's decision (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Approved: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_