



2026 City of Hopkins Façade Improvement Program Guidelines

PURPOSE

The City of Hopkins is offering a Façade Improvement Program for downtown businesses. The purpose of this program is to provide technical and financial assistance to commercial property and business owners within the core of Downtown Hopkins in order to upgrade and improve the facades and appearance of commercial/retail buildings. The goal of this program is to strengthen the vitality of Mainstreet by improving the pedestrian experience, increasing building transparency, preserving historically significant architecture, and beautifying buildings through façade revitalization efforts which will have a lasting impact on downtown Hopkins.

ELIGIBILITY

Businesses located on commercial properties in Downtown Hopkins between 5th Avenue and Shady Oak Road and between 1st Street North and 1st Street South are eligible. All improvements must result in permanent, external building improvements that add to the goals listed in the section above.

Eligible Applicants/Projects

- The applicant must be the property owner or a commercial tenant with written permission from the property owner to make façade improvements to commercial or retail buildings
- There must be no delinquent bills, charges, or taxes due to the City
- Projects must be located in the designated area of eligibility
- All projects must result in permanent, external building improvements
- Property must have conforming uses under the zoning code
- All façade improvements must follow the requirements of the Hopkins Building Code, Hopkins Zoning Code, and the Façade Improvement Program
- Applicants must be registered and in good standing with the Minnesota Secretary of State

Eligible Improvements:

- Exterior painting or re-siding
- Restoration of exterior finishes and materials
- Masonry repairs and tuck pointing
- Removal of architecturally inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes and materials
- Restoration of architectural details or removal of materials that cover architectural details
- Repair, replacement, or installation of windows and doors (replacements must be architecturally appropriate)
- Window and cornice flashing and repair
- Canopy or awning installation or repair
- Murals, subject to City approval of the design
- Installation or repair of exterior signage in conjunction with other eligible façade improvements

- Removal of barriers to access the building from outside for people with disabilities
- Exterior lighting

Ineligible Improvements/Activities include any improvements not listed in eligible improvements above, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Improvements in progress or completed prior to preliminary approval
- Routine maintenance that is not part of an eligible façade improvement project
- Improvements not visible from the street
- Signage only, without other eligible façade improvements
- Billboards
- Roofing
- Mechanical and HVAC systems
- Interior work
- New construction
- Pylon, temporary, or roof signs
- Interior window displays
- Security systems (including metal roll down gates, window bars, cameras)
- Trash and mechanical enclosures
- Fencing
- Landscaping
- Improvements to parking areas
- Purchase of property

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Commercial property owners, or business owners with the approval of the property owner, may apply for financial assistance of up to 50% of the cost of improvements, with the remainder paid by the applicant. Financial assistance awards shall be no less than \$5,000 and no greater than \$25,000. There is no maximum limit on project cost, although the financial assistance is capped at \$25,000. Funding for the 2026 program is provided by the City of Hopkins and Hennepin County’s Love Local Storefront grant funding. Applicants who are selected may receive one or both sources of funding, and each source has different terms. The City of Hopkins funding will be structured as a forgivable loan, which is detailed in the following section. The Hennepin County funding will be structured as a grant, which is also detailed below. Applicants will not apply for one specific type of funding, and City staff will allocate the funding types to selected projects.

Example:

Scenario	Total Project Cost	Award Amount	Applicant Pays
1	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
2	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
3	\$65,000	\$25,000	\$40,000

FORGIVABLE LOAN TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The minimum cost of the improvements must be at least \$10,000 (\$5,000 forgivable loan and \$5,000 applicant match). There is no maximum limit on project cost, although the forgivable loan is capped at \$25,000. The forgivable loan will be structured as a 10-year loan with no payments, with 10% of the original loan amount being forgiven each year for 10 years. If the building is sold within 10 years, the balance of the loan must be repaid by the property owner.

HENNEPIN COUNTY FUNDING

Selected projects that receive funding from Hennepin County's Love Local Storefronts grant program will receive a grant (not a forgivable loan), with no payback required. Per Hennepin County's guidelines, the property must contain at least: one for-profit independent, locally owned retail, food and beverage, or service business with 50 or fewer employees that is open to the public, or one non-profit organization with an enterprise that is open to the general public and operates in a manner similar to a business with regular hours. If an eligible property is not occupied when the property owner applies for funding, there must be a signed lease agreement in place with business that meets the project eligibility criteria above. Non-profit enterprises that primarily serve the non-profit's members rather than the public (i.e. employee or school cafeteria or coffee shop within a larger facility), or that do not maintain regular business hours (i.e. fundraising events or pop-up sales) are ineligible for this funding source. National franchise chains, even if locally owned, are also ineligible for funding source.

Selected projects must be substantially underway by December 31, 2026. Applicants must be registered and in good standing with the Minnesota Secretary of State. Property owners barred from contracting with the federal government or the State of Minnesota due to debarment or suspension, those involved in developing or managing residential housing, those primarily earning from passive investments, lobbying, gambling, or adult entertainment, and those whose income is mainly derived from asset appreciation and resale are not eligible to receive this funding source. Projects that receive Hennepin County funding are limited to one Love Local Storefronts grant within a two-year period. Properties that have received façade improvement awards from Hennepin County within the last three years are ineligible for this funding source. Additional terms and conditions may apply to projects receiving Hennepin County funding.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

Approved projects may be subject to general maintenance requirements as needed, including:

- Painting of trim may be required if peeling, fading, and/or flaking conditions exist
- Staining of wood surfaces may be required if fading
- Tuck pointing may be required if loose mortar or brick exists
- Stucco repair may be required if cracked, falling, or discolored conditions exist
- Awning replacement or removal may be required if faded, torn, or otherwise in disrepair
- Windows should be in good repair, caulked, and sealed as necessary

These activities may be included in the total project costs.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The final design of improvements is subject to the review and approval of the City of Hopkins. The City of Hopkins reserves the right to require all property owners to comply with city ordinances.

The City of Hopkins has the right to terminate any agreement under the Façade Improvement Program if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines. In addition, the following requirements apply:

- All work must be done in accordance with all local, state, and federal building codes, Hopkins Zoning Code, and the rules and regulations for the Façade Improvement Program.
- Labor costs are only eligible through the program if the labor is done by a third party who has no financial interest in the building (i.e. the building owner may not receive funds for labor that he/she completed on the project).
- All construction must be completed in strict compliance with approved plans and applicable local, state, and federal rules and regulations.
- All work must be completed within 12 months from the date the agreement with the City is executed.

DESIGN ASSISTANCE

Applicants with projects selected for the Façade Improvement Program are strongly encouraged to work with an architect to develop concept plans for the facade improvements. The City of Hopkins will pay up to \$2,000 for the preparation of façade concept plans if the applicant uses an architectural firm with an office in Hopkins. There is a listing of local firms on page 7. If a local firm is not listed and is located in Hopkins, please contact staff. This funding is outside of the financial assistance maximum amount of \$25,000. Therefore, projects may receive a maximum total amount of \$27,000.

APPLYING FOR THE PROGRAM – Deadline March 20, 2026 at 4:30pm

The following documents are required to be submitted to apply for the Façade Improvement Program:

1. Completed application form, including description of proposed improvements and proposed timeline for completion.
2. A Scope of Work, which will also be used as the project's bidding document.
3. Estimated budget for façade improvements and evidence supporting your ability to cover 50% of project costs (i.e. funding commitment from bank or lender, or proof of sufficient personal funds).
4. Proof of property ownership or lease.
5. Written notarized consent from the property owner to make façade improvements if the applicant is a commercial tenant.
6. Clear and color electronic photos of the existing building façade.
7. Other supporting documentation deemed necessary by the City of Hopkins.

All applications and plans are subject to the review and approval by the City. Submitting an application and plans does not guarantee approval. Additional documentation may be required after submission.

APPLICATION REVIEW

Due to the limited amount of funds for the Façade Improvement Program, all applications are subject to a competitive selection process. Projects will be selected based on their point ranking and the availability of funding. A detailed breakdown of the scoring criteria is available on page 8. A panel of City staff will review applications and evaluate them based on the following criteria:

- **Impact to the vitality of downtown Hopkins (15 points)**
 - Project is pedestrian oriented and enhances the pedestrian experience by providing a design that is inviting and on a human scale
 - Project increases pedestrian traffic and activity
- **Impact to the aesthetic character of downtown Hopkins (15 points)**
 - Project preserves, enhances, or complements the historically significant architecture of downtown
 - Project increases the curb appeal of the property
 - Project creates visual significance by improving highly visual elements of the building
- **Economic impact (10 points)**
 - Extent to which the project leverages private investment in the building
- **Readiness (10 points)**
 - Applicant has required matching funds and can start the project in a timely manner

PROCESS

1. Complete application and submit all required materials to the City of Hopkins Planning and Economic Development staff by March 20, 2026 at 4:30 p.m. central time.
2. If the project is selected, meet with City staff and a licensed design professional/architect to develop preliminary plans and a project budget for your façade improvements. The City of Hopkins will pay up to \$2,000 for the preparation of façade concept plans if the applicant uses one of the Hopkins architectural firms listed on page 7.
3. Once completed, review façade design concept with City staff and if staff approves then move into construction plans.
4. Work with an architect of your choice to prepare final design and construction plans of the project. These final plans will then be used to submit to the City for final review and approval and building permits. Depending on the extent of the proposed improvements, site plan approval may be required by the Hopkins Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council. The property or business owner is responsible for the cost of final design and preparation of construction documents. Fees for site plan review and building permits are also the responsibility of the property or business owner.
5. Enter into an agreement with the City. For forgivable loans, the City will require a promissory note and a mortgage that will be recorded against the property. The City will cover any costs associated with filing and title work. Construction may commence once any necessary permits are issued.
6. Reimbursement for work will be made either through an escrow account directly to the vendors or to the applicant after the work has been completed. For the escrow process, the funds from the agreed amount will be put into an escrow account, along with the applicant's 50% match, to be drawn down during construction. Any fees associated with the escrow account will be paid by the City. Payments from the escrow account will be made directly to vendors once the program requirements are met and after submittal of invoices to the City. Alternatively, payments may be reimbursed to the applicant after submitting invoices and proof of payment.

ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS IN HOPKINS

10K Architecture
525 15th Avenue South, #7826
Hopkins
952-594-3143
10karch.com

HTG Architects
1010 Mainstreet, Suite 100
Hopkins
952-278-8880
htg-architects.com

Wilkus Architects
15 9th Avenue North
Hopkins
952-941-8660
wilkusarch.com

DETAILED SCORING CRITERIA

Impact to the Vitality of Downtown Hopkins (15 Points)

Score Range	Impact Level	Description
0–2	Minimal Impact	Project provides little to no improvement to the pedestrian experience. Improvements are primarily routine maintenance or cosmetic in nature. Limited visibility from the sidewalk and no meaningful enhancement to street engagement. Project is unlikely to increase pedestrian activity or downtown vitality.
3–5	Limited Impact	Project includes minor pedestrian-oriented improvements with limited overall effect. Some visual enhancement to the storefront or façade, but minimal change to how pedestrians interact with the building. Modest potential to improve visibility or attractiveness with limited impact on pedestrian traffic.
6–8	Moderate Impact	Project clearly improves the pedestrian experience at the sidewalk level. Includes pedestrian-oriented features such as improved storefront transparency, enhanced entrances, pedestrian-scale lighting, or awnings. Likely to modestly increase pedestrian activity or time spent in the area.
9–11	Strong Impact	Project demonstrates a strong pedestrian focus and significantly enhances street engagement. Includes multiple coordinated improvements that improve comfort, visibility, and activity along the sidewalk. Likely to increase foot traffic, support neighboring businesses, and strengthen Mainstreet as an active destination.
12–15	Exceptional Impact	Project delivers a highly inviting, pedestrian-focused design with clear and measurable benefits to downtown vitality. Creates an active and engaging street presence that substantially enhances walkability and pedestrian experience. Serves as a catalyst for increased street-level activity and long-term downtown vitality.

Impact to the Aesthetic Character of Downtown Hopkins (15 Points)

Score Range	Impact Level	Description
0–2	Minimal Aesthetic Impact	Project results in little to no visible improvement to the building’s appearance. Improvements are primarily routine maintenance or basic repairs. Design elements are neutral, generic, or do not complement downtown character. Architectural details remain covered, deteriorated, or unaddressed.
3–5	Limited Aesthetic Impact	Project provides a modest visual improvement to the building. Some façade elements are refreshed or repaired, but changes are limited in scope. Design generally complements downtown character but does not significantly enhance it. Limited attention is given to prominent or defining architectural features.
6–8	Moderate Aesthetic Impact	Project clearly improves the building’s visual quality and curb appeal. Includes coordinated materials, colors, and design elements. Preserves or enhances some architectural features or removes incompatible materials. Improves at least one highly visible element such as the storefront, windows, or entry.
9–11	Strong Aesthetic Impact	Project significantly enhances the building’s appearance and contributes positively to the downtown streetscape. Demonstrates thoughtful design that complements or reinforces downtown’s architectural character. Improves multiple prominent façade elements in a cohesive manner. Addresses visible deterioration and replaces outdated or incompatible features.
12–15	Exceptional Aesthetic Impact	Project delivers a transformative and high-quality visual improvement. Restores original architectural features, uncovers hidden details, or introduces exceptional design quality. Creates a cohesive, visually distinctive façade that strengthens downtown’s identity.

Economic Impact (10 points)

Award as % of Project Cost	Private Investment %	Points	Example
50% award	50% private investment	2	\$50,000 total project cost / \$25,000 award
45–49% award	51–55% private investment	4	\$53,000 total project cost / \$25,000 award
40–44% award	56–60% private investment	6	\$60,000 total project cost / \$25,000 award
35–39% award	61–65% private investment	8	\$65,000 total project cost / \$25,000 award
Less than 35% award	Greater than 65% private investment	10	\$72,000 total project cost / \$25,000 award

Readiness (10 points)

Applicant Preparedness

Criteria	Points
Knows desired improvements	1
Has secured an architect	1
Has secured project bid(s)	1
Has required matching funds	2
Has secured a contractor	1

Construction Timeline Readiness

Construction Start Timeline	Points
Upon notice of selection	4
Within 1–2 months	3
Within 3–4 months	2
Within 5+ months	1