



PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Façade Improvement Program Pilot

1. Program Overview

The Clermont County Port Authority (“Port Authority”) Façade Improvement Program Pilot (the “Program”) aims to support the revitalization of commercial properties throughout Clermont County in qualifying communities. The Program is designed to stimulate private investment in high-quality building improvements that create and enhance community image and character in Clermont County.

The Program is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and all funded activities must meet applicable CDBG eligibility and national objective requirements as determined by Clermont County Community Development.

The purpose of the program is to:

- Enhance the visual appearance of commercial corridors in designated LMI areas.
- Stimulate private investment
- Support local businesses and property owners
- Contribute to economic development and community vitality

Total funding available for this pilot program is \$100,000. Funding awards will be announced on a rolling basis.

2. Funding Details

- **Funding Source:** HUD CDBG
- **Total Program Budget:** \$100,000
- **Maximum Award per Project:** \$20,000
- **Minimum Applicant Match Requirement:** 10% of total project cost (cash match required unless otherwise allowed)

Example:

- Total project cost: \$22,000
 - Grant request: \$19,800
 - Applicant match (10%): \$2,200
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3. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants may include:

- Owners of Commercial property located within Clermont County
- Owners of Businesses located within Clermont County (with property owner authorization)
- Nonprofit organizations owning or occupying commercial space located within Clermont County

Applicants must:

- Be in good standing with local, state, and federal regulations with respect to all property owned by or on behalf of such applicant
 - Not have outstanding code violations, taxes, or liens (or be actively resolving them) pertaining to any property owned by or on behalf of such applicant
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4. Eligible Properties

Eligible properties include the following structures located in designated LMI areas in compliance with HUD and CDBG guidelines (refer to **Appendix Item A – CCPA Façade Improvement Program Pilot Eligibility Map**):

- Commercial and mixed-use buildings (ground-floor commercial required)
- Properties located within eligible CDBG areas

Ineligible properties include:

- Residential-only properties
 - Properties used for ineligible CDBG activities (as defined by HUD)
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5. Eligible Improvements

Eligible facade improvements may include:

- Exterior painting and cleaning
- Uncovering and restoration of historical facades
- Replacement/repair of cornice, parapets, shutters and other architectural features
- Masonry or siding repair and restoration
- Removal of inappropriate façade materials
- Storefront window and door replacement/repair
- Addition of appropriate detailing which leads to a substantially enhanced appearance
- Awnings and canopies
- Installation and improvement of signage (per local code)
- Lighting improvements (exterior)
- Accessibility improvements (ADA-related exterior work)
- Architectural features and design enhancements
- Permit fees and architectural fees up to 10% of grant award.

Note: All improvements must be visible from the public right-of-way.

6. Ineligible Activities

Program funds may **not** be used for:

- Interior renovations
- Routine maintenance not tied to visible improvements
- New construction or building expansions (unless specifically allowed)
- Acquisition costs
- Work started prior to grant approval
- Equipment not permanently affixed to the building
- Portable equipment
- Furniture
- Inventory
- Temporary signage
- Improvements completed prior to environmental clearance

Note: No funding shall be provided for work initiated prior to written authorization to proceed.

7. Match Requirement

Applicants must provide a **minimum 10% match** of the total project cost.

- Match may be in the form of cash investment
 - Documentation of match funds will be required prior to award
 - In-kind contributions may be accepted on a case-by-case basis subject to approval by the Port Authority and Clermont County Community Development. In-kind contributions must be:
 - Necessary and reasonable for project completion
 - Directly related to eligible façade improvements
 - Supported by verifiable documentation
 - Assigned a reasonable and supportable market value
 - Allowable under applicable federal regulations
 - Match funding must be dedicated to façade project, specifically; other renovation or maintenance to building is not eligible
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8. Application Process

Step 1: Pre-Application Consultation (Optional but Recommended)

Applicants are encouraged to meet with Port Authority and Community Development staff to discuss project eligibility, scope of project, and mechanics of program requirements and procedure. Applicants will be advised regarding applicable federal requirements including environmental review, procurement, and labor standards

Step 2: Application Submission

Applicants must submit:

- Completed application form
- Project description and scope of work
- *Cost estimates (minimum of 2 contractor bids)
- Photos of existing conditions
- Proof of ownership or owner authorization
- Evidence of matching funds
- W-9 form
- Additional documents as requested by Port Authority staff

*Projects receiving CDBG funding may be subject to Federal Davis-Bacon and Related Acts prevailing wage requirements. Applicants and contractors are responsible for ensuring that cost estimates and bid proposals include all applicable federal prevailing wage rates when required. Current federal wage determinations may be obtained online from the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage Determinations website (SAM.gov): <https://sam.gov/wage-determinations> or by contacting our office. Contractors should be provided the correct wages before submitting bid proposals.

Step 3: Review & Evaluation

Please see **Item 17 Application Evaluation & Scoring Criteria**. Generally, applications will be reviewed based on:

- Project impact and visibility
- Readiness to proceed
- Alignment with community goals
- Leveraging private investment
- Compliance with CDBG objectives

Step 4: Award Notification

Port Authority and Community Development staff will do their best to notify applicants of funding decisions in writing within three weeks of the date the application is received. Funding awards are contingent upon completion of all federal review requirements by the Community Development Division and execution of a formal grant agreement by the Port Authority.

9. Project Requirements

Approved projects must:

- Obtain all required permits and approvals
- Comply with local zoning and design standards
- Begin and complete work within specified timelines (e.g., 6–12 months)
- **Meet all applicable HUD CDBG requirements, including without limitation:**
 - **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**
No project activity constituting a choice-limiting action may occur prior to completion of environmental review and written authorization to proceed.

- **PROCUREMENT:**
All procurement activities must comply with applicable federal procurement requirements, including full and open competition.
 - **CONTRACTOR ELIGIBILITY:**
Contractors must not be suspended or debarred from participation in federally funded programs.
 - **LABOR STANDARDS:**
Clermont County Community Development shall determine whether Davis-Bacon labor standards apply.
 - **SECTION 3:**
Projects may be subject to Section 3 requirements pursuant to HUD regulations.
 - **RECORD ACCESS:**
Applicants must permit access to records and project sites for monitoring purposes.
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10. Design Review

Projects may be subject to design review to ensure consistency with:

- Projects involving structures of potential historic significance may require review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
 - Downtown or corridor design standards
 - Community character and aesthetic goals
 - Local zoning regulations
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11. Disbursement of Funds

Funds will be disbursed after:

- Work is completed
- Inspections are approved
- Applicant and/or Port Authority have been invoiced, per terms of a Construction Contract (see Item 14)

Required documentation shall include:

- Contractor invoice(s)
 - Before-and-after photos
 - Lien waivers
 - Certified payroll reports
 - All federal documents signed by Contractor
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12. Compliance Requirements

As a HUD CDBG-funded program, all projects must comply with applicable federal requirements, which may include:

- Environmental review (NEPA)
- Section 3 requirements
- Davis-Bacon wage requirements (if triggered)
- Uniform Relocation Act (if applicable)
- Fair housing and nondiscrimination laws

Note: Applicants shall maintain all project records for a minimum of five years after project closeout or longer if required by applicable regulations.

13. Program Timeline

- Application Open Date: 7/1/2026
 - Application Deadline: 5/30/2027
 - Award Announcements: Rolling Basis
 - Project Completion Deadline: 8/30/2027
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14. Program Administration

The program will be administered by the Clermont County Port Authority.

A **Project Agreement** will be executed between the Port Authority and the property owner/business owner receiving assistance through the program. The purpose of this document is to:

- Establish the grant award amount and required owner contribution
- Define the responsibilities of the property owner and the Port Authority
- Incorporate applicable CDBG requirements
- Address environmental review requirements and notice-to-proceed procedures
- Establish maintenance, record retention, monitoring, and compliance obligations
- Define default provisions and other program requirements

A **Construction Contract** will be executed between the property owner, contractor, and Port Authority. The purpose of this document is to:

- Establish the approved scope of work and contract price
- Define payment procedures for owner and grant-funded portions of the project
- Require Port Authority approval of change orders
- Establish inspection and project closeout requirements
- Require lien waivers prior to final payment
- Incorporate applicable federal requirements and monitoring access provisions
- Protect all parties by clearly defining responsibilities during project construction

The Port Authority and the Clermont Community Development division reserve the right to:

- Approve, deny, or partially fund applications
 - Modify program guidelines as needed
 - Cancel the program at any time due to funding or policy changes
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15. Contact Information

Clermont County Port Authority
101 E. Main St., Batavia, OH 45103
513-732-7825

sgafvert@clermontcountyohio.gov

<https://clermontcountyohio.biz/clermont-county-port-authority/>

16. Disclaimer

Funding is subject to availability of HUD CDBG funds and compliance with all federal, state, and local requirements. Approval of funding does not guarantee pay-out if program requirements are not met.

17. Application Evaluation & Scoring Criteria

All complete applications will be evaluated by the Clermont County Port Authority and Community Development staff using the following point-based system. The maximum possible score is **105 points**. Three staff members score each application and the average of those scores will determine funding eligibility.

Funding decisions will be based on average score, program priorities, and available funding.

A. Visual Impact & Public Benefit (0–25 points)

Evaluates how significantly the project will improve the appearance and perception of the property and surrounding area.

- **21–25 points:** Transformational improvement; main street corridor; strong positive impact on corridor/downtown
 - **11–20 points:** Moderate improvement; visible from public right-of-way; contributes to area aesthetics
 - **1–10 points:** Minor or limited visual improvement; non-contributing structure to main street corridor
 - **0 points:** Minimal to no visible impact
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B. Project Readiness (0–20 points)

Assesses how prepared the applicant is to begin construction upon award.

- **16–20 points:** All bids secured; design finalized; permits/zoning confirmed; ready to proceed immediately
 - **8–15 points:** Most documentation complete; minor items outstanding
 - **1–7 points:** Early stage; limited documentation or planning
 - **0 points:** Incomplete or not feasible in current form
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C. Financial Leverage & Match (0–15 points)

Rewards projects that exceed the minimum 10% match and demonstrate strong private investment.

- **15 points:** 50%+ match
 - **12 points:** 40 - 49% match
 - **9 points:** 30 - 39% match
 - **6 points:** 20 - 29% match
 - **3 points:** 11-19% match
 - **0 points:** 10% match
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D. Economic Impact (0–15 points)

Considers the project's contribution to economic vitality.

- **13–15 points:** Significant impact (e.g., job creation/retention, business expansion, vacancy reduction)
 - **8–12 points:** Moderate impact (e.g., stabilizing existing business, improving customer attraction)
 - **1–7 points:** Limited or indirect impact (e.g., stabilizing vacant blighted structure with no plans for tenancy in near term)
 - **0 points:** No clear economic benefit
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E. Alignment with Community Goals (0–10 points)

Evaluates consistency with local plans, downtown revitalization efforts, or corridor strategies, if available.

- **8–10 points:** Strong alignment with adopted plans or priority areas
 - **4–7 points:** General alignment with community development goals
 - **1–3 points:** Weak or unclear alignment
 - **0 points:** No alignment demonstrated
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F. Property Conditions & Need (0–10 points)

Assesses the current condition of the building and urgency of needed improvements.

- **8–10 points:** Property is deteriorated or in highly visible disrepair; strong need for improvement
 - **4–7 points:** Property shows moderate wear or outdated appearance
 - **1–3 points:** Property in fair/good condition; improvements mostly aesthetic
 - **0 points:** No demonstrated need
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G. CDBG National Objective Compliance (0–5 points)

Evaluates how clearly the project meets HUD CDBG national objectives (e.g., benefit to low- and moderate-income persons, slum/blight elimination).

- **5 points:** Clearly meets and documents a national objective
 - **3–4 points:** Likely meets objective but documentation is limited
 - **1–2 points:** Unclear or weak connection
 - **0 points:** Does not meet CDBG requirements
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Bonus Considerations (Up to +5 points)

At the discretion of the review committee, bonus points may be awarded for:

- Historic preservation or adaptive reuse
 - Projects within priority redevelopment districts
 - Businesses demonstrating commitment to inclusive economic opportunity initiatives
 - Projects that incorporate sustainability or energy-efficient design
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Scoring Summary Table

Category	Max Points
Visual Impact & Public Benefit	25
Project Readiness	20
Financial Leverage & Match	15
Economic Impact	15
Alignment with Community Goals	10
Property Conditions & Need	10
CDBG National Objective	5
Subtotal	100
Bonus Points	+5
Total Possible	105

Funding Priority & Tiebreakers

In the event of tied scores, priority may be given to:

1. Projects with higher match percentages
2. Projects located in targeted redevelopment areas or directly in main street corridors
3. First-come, first-served based on complete application submission date

18. Minimum Score Threshold for Funding

To be considered eligible for funding, applications must achieve a minimum score of:

60 points (out of 100 base points)

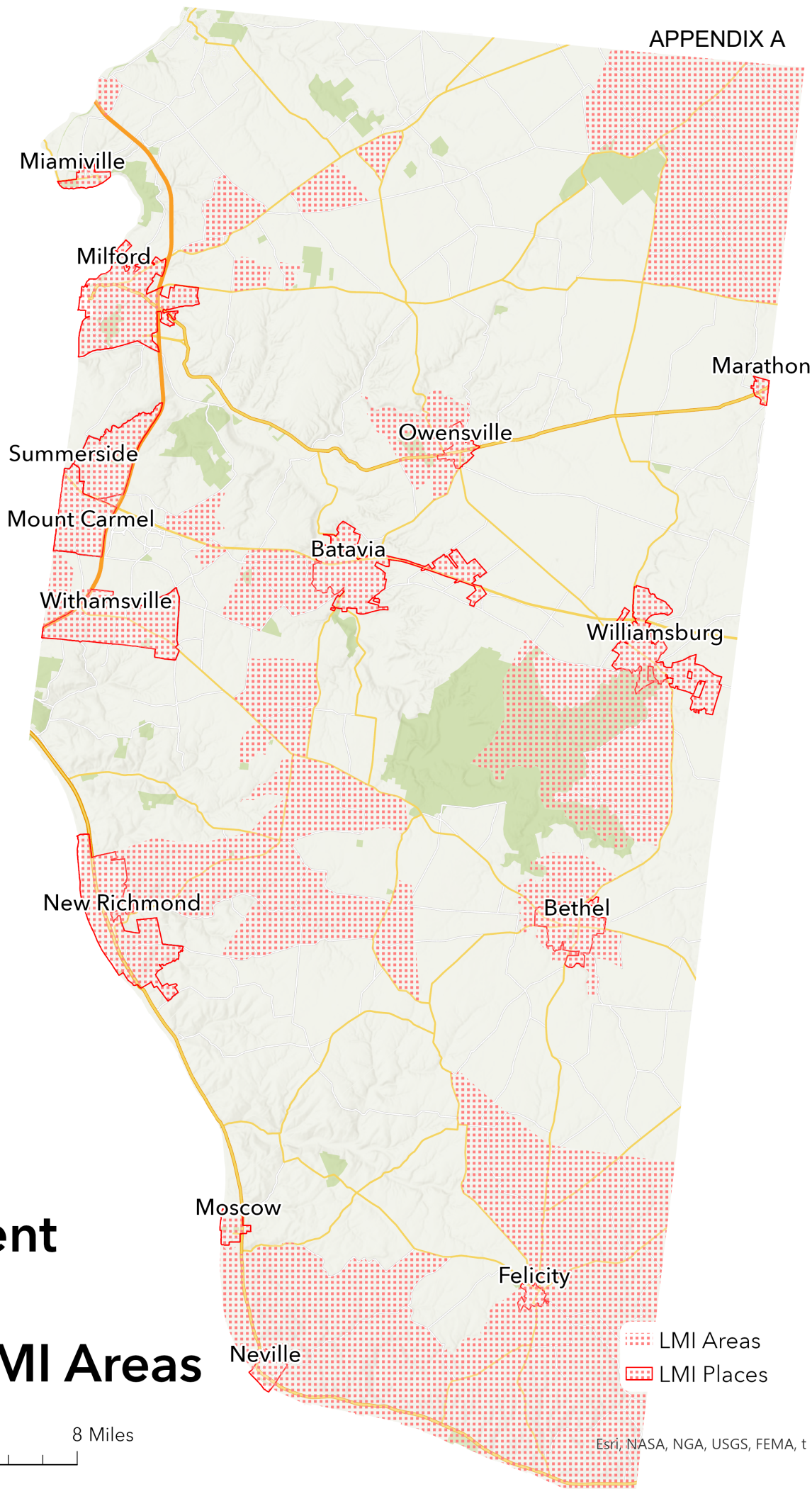
- Bonus points **do not count** toward meeting the minimum threshold
- Only applications scoring **60 or higher** will be considered for funding

A 60-point minimum ensures that funded projects:

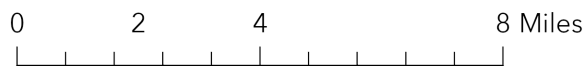
- Demonstrate meaningful visual and economic impact
- Are reasonably ready to proceed
- Meet core program and CDBG objectives
- Represent a responsible use of public funds

Funding Prioritization Above Threshold

- Meeting the minimum score **does not guarantee funding**.
 - Among qualifying applications (≥ 60 points), awards will be prioritized based on:
 1. **Highest total score**
 2. **Stronger financial leverage (higher match %)**
 3. **Project readiness**
 4. **Location within priority corridors or redevelopment areas**
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Façade Improvement Program - Eligible LMI Areas



LMI Areas
 LMI Places