



Design Guidelines: Façade Renovation Program

WCDC
Wilkinsburg Community
Development Corporation

Wilkinsburg Main Street Program

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Introduction

Purpose of Design Guidelines

This document lays out basic standards for restoring, improving, and maintaining the core commercial district of Wilkinsburg. Well-designed façade improvements positively impact Wilkinsburg's built environment and sense of identity. Quality of design is an important aspect of urban life. These Design Guidelines are intended to help accentuate the historic details of our business district while presenting a fresh, exciting face to the community.

These guidelines are to be used by business and property owners in Wilkinsburg taking initial steps to design and redevelop property through the Façade Renovation Program. The Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation (WCDC) Design Committee refers to these guidelines as a resource when reviewing applications for façade renovation grants.

Because special financial support from select government resources will be used, it is essential that all façade improvements funded through the Façade Renovation Program comply with the Design Guidelines. This program is administered by the WCDC staff with the assistance of other related community groups.

Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation

The Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation (WCDC) is a non-profit organization first established in 2007. The WCDC works collaboratively with Wilkinsburg's business community, property owners, residents, and borough government.

WCDC's mission:

The mission of WCDC is to promote the revitalization of Wilkinsburg through business and residential development, organizational and individual civic leadership, and ethnic and cultural diversity.

WCDC initiatives aim to:

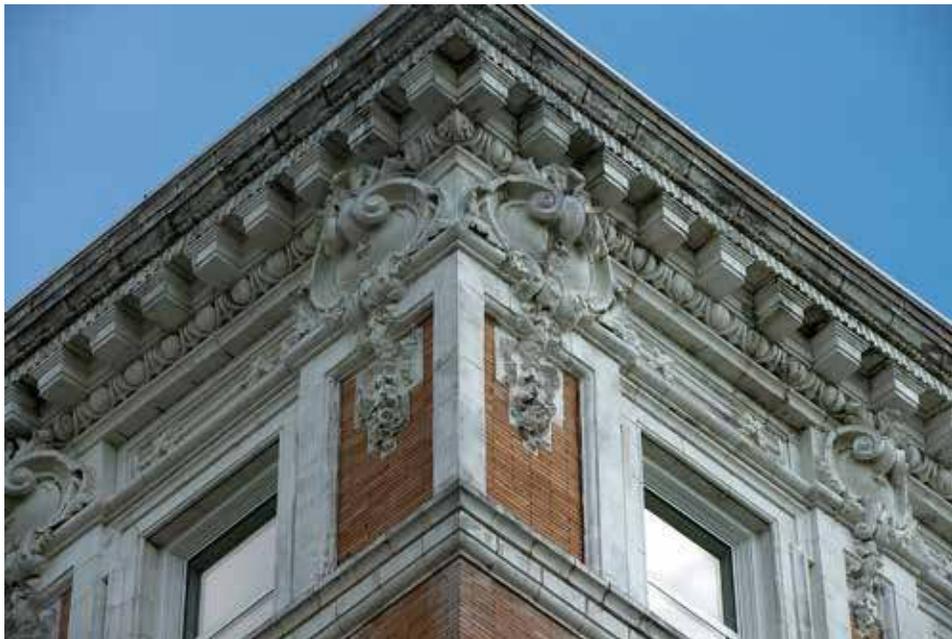
- Revitalize the business corridor.
- Support local youth and education efforts.
- Help the community develop a renewed image and strong sense of identity.
- Emphasize safety and cleanliness.
- Advocate for green space and sustainable practices.
- Pursue opportunities for redevelopment, vacant property recovery, and storefront renovations.
- Promote cultural activity and community engagement.
- Provide resources to business owners and residents.

Wilkinsburg and the Façade Renovation Program

Wilkinsburg has a long and distinguished history dating back more than two hundred years. The Borough of Wilkinsburg is a 2.1-square-mile municipality adjacent to the east edge of the City of Pittsburgh. The first residents settled the area in the 1780s. After holding several different names and forms, the Borough of Wilkinsburg was officially established in 1887.

Wilkinsburg once maintained a remarkably dense population, made up of largely middle- and upper-class residents. However, the Western Pennsylvania economic decline in the 1980s resulted in Wilkinsburg struggling to maintain a thriving business district and led to huge population losses. Today, the borough faces many challenges of lingering economic difficulty. The community, however, offers many assets that show real promise: Wilkinsburg has a walkable business district, a meaningful history that ties in with the region's valuable architecture, close proximity to the City of Pittsburgh, and dedicated community members.

Developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Wilkinsburg commercial buildings shared a number of related architectural elements that helped to unify the overall appearance of the business area. This approach produced an integrated design that enhanced the shopping experience, and strengthened the collective image of Main Street. But over the years the business district has deteriorated to a point of critical need. Safety and security is at risk, and renovation is long past due. The purpose of these Design Guidelines is to provide basic standards for restoring, improving, and maintaining the core commercial district of Wilkinsburg. By using these standards we will revitalize the area, provide new business opportunities, and increase the relative property values in the area.



Shields Building, 822 Wood St., Wilkinsburg. ©Martha Rial

Wilkinsburg Business District Design Guidelines

Basic Principles for Design

Façade redesign must function to:

- Maintain and restore commercial buildings' historic elements.
- Gracefully accommodate new uses for older structures.
- Recreate appealing façades for local businesses.
- Initiate construction and renovation projects with attention to a sense of architectural flow and visual continuity in the business district.
- Aim for improvements that make commercial buildings more environmentally efficient.
- Ensure that choice and design of materials reflect these priorities.

Basic Principles for Renovation

Responsible façade renovation must:

- Clean, handle, and replace woodwork, stonework, and masonry in a respectful and restorative manner.
- Make sure all construction processes are safe and sustainable.
- Prioritize maintenance, building function, and code compliance projects before focusing on decorative renovations; repair, then renovate.
- Preserve original features; renovate without excessively altering or concealing building.



Elements of Traditional Commercial Buildings

In order to implement effective renovation of the historic façades in Wilkinsburg, it is important to understand the distinctive design characteristics of the business district's traditional commercial buildings. A historic theme should not be imposed on all of the buildings; many structures are altered over time, and buildings must change as their uses change.

The goal is to accommodate necessary changes while maintaining the valuable qualities of individual buildings and of the business district as a whole. This goal can be achieved by recognizing and appreciating the unique characteristics of each building, capitalizing on the surviving assets of each one, and by reinstating the traditional formula by which Wilkinsburg's commercial buildings were originally designed and built.

Like the 19th- and early 20th-century commercial structures in Pittsburgh's neighborhood business districts, the commercial buildings in Wilkinsburg's business district have considerable historic character.

These buildings are typically two- to four-story brick structures with a storefront on the first floor, smaller uniformly-arranged windows in the upper stories, and a decorative cornice at the roofline. The storefront was usually framed by brick or stone side walls, with an elaborate horizontal cornice or lintel above the storefront windows.

The traditionally designed storefront sought to be as transparent as possible by having as large an expanse of glass as possible. Transom windows above the display windows provided lots of daylight inside the store, which was important in a period without efficient interior light fixtures. The display windows spanned from one exposed brick or stone side wall to the other (unless there was also an entrance door to the upper floors), and from bulkhead panels at ground level up to the lintel or cornice that supported the brick wall above. Store entrances were usually recessed behind the plane of the façade, and secondary doorways opened to stairs that led to the apartments on the upper floors. The lintel or cornice separated the storefront from the simpler upper floors, in which the masonry wall was usually broken only by the windows and their decorative frames.

When renovating a traditional commercial building, it is important to keep these distinct qualities in mind. The WCDC encourages façade renovation projects that support the historical integrity of Wilkinsburg façades.

Storefront Renovation Types

Recommended storefront renovation methods vary depending on the age of the building and the current condition of the storefront. These four storefront types each have their own basic guidelines. The categories are:

- Original Historic Storefront (OHS)
- Altered Historic Storefront (AHS)
- Non-Historic Storefront (NHS)
- Building Without a Storefront (BWS)

Original Historic Storefront (OHS) Guidelines

An OHS is part of a commercial building built before 1940 with its original storefront and distinctive features still intact or largely intact. When renovating an OHS:

- Repair structural/functional parts of façade.
- Retain and restore historic details of building.
- Renovate to accommodate new use while maintaining original storefront.

Altered Historic Storefront (AHS) Guidelines

An AHS is part of a commercial building built before 1940 with its distinctive features dramatically altered or completely missing. When renovating an AHS, three approaches apply:

- Partially or fully reconstruct the original storefront (if the original appearance of the storefront is documented).
- Construct a new storefront that is compatible with the design of the building.
- Retain the current storefront if it is a high-quality alteration of the original that has attained historical significance of its own.

Non-Historic Storefront (NHS) Guidelines

An NHS is part of a commercial building built after 1940. When renovating an NHS, two approaches apply:

- Repair the existing storefront to match its present appearance if it is compatible with the commercial district and is of high-quality design and materials.
- Construct a new storefront according to the storefront design guidelines, remaining attentive to the historic architectural patterns within the business district and striving to be consistent with neighboring historic storefronts.

Building Without a Storefront (BWS) Guidelines

A BWS is a building not designed or originally intended for storefront commercial use (such as a residence, a garage, etc.), it may be treated in either of two ways:

- If the building is historically important, if it has a distinct historical character, or if it is of a high architectural quality, it should be renovated with as few changes to the exterior as possible to accommodate the new use; a full storefront should not necessarily be inserted into the façade.
- If the building does not have a distinct historical character or if it is of low architectural quality, it may be altered more dramatically. If possible, a full storefront should be inserted into the façade.



James Floral Façade Renovation Before & After, 712 Wood St., Wilkinsburg. ©WCDC

Guidelines for Historic Preservation and Restoration

1. Retain original materials and features. These include the glass storefront, the original door, and the building's distinctive architectural details. If it is not possible to keep or repair these, they should be replaced with materials and features that match the originals as exactly as possible. Newly designed replacements should be compatible with the scale and material of the original features.
2. Assess past renovations for quality. Remove or redesign storefront alterations with no historic merit or particular aesthetic appeal. Recognize that some additions and alterations may have gained historical significance in their own right and can remain as positive historical elements of the building.
3. Keep the building's original design in mind. Avoid alterations that attempt to make the building look older or newer than it is or change the architectural style. Original window and door openings should be retained. Original building materials and architectural features should not be covered by other materials.



Flynn Construction (former Wilkinsburg Post Office), 600 Penn Ave. ©Martha Rial

Guidelines for Structural Elements

Setback

The storefront should be designed to fit within the building's original structural frame (made up of the side walls and the lintel that spans the storefront opening). It may be set back slightly within the frame, but it should not be pulled back into the building to create an oversized recessed arcade area.

Entrances

In general, the main entrance should be recessed at least three feet from the front plane of the building. This is to visually emphasize the entryway, to accommodate the swing of the door, and to provide shelter from the elements.

Doors

The main entry door into a commercial space should be a traditional wood-and-glass door or it may be a simple metal-and-glass door. In either case, the door should be commercial in character, with a large panel of clear safety glass. Secondary doors, including doors that give access to the upper floors, should be either paneled wood or wood-and-glass doors, but not solid metal or mill-finish metal doors.

Windows and Glass

The viewing zone of the storefront should be made up of at least 75% glass (excluding doors). Storefront glass (as well as glass in doors) shall include safety glass, in accordance with the requirements of the International Building Code. Reflective, opaque, or heavily tinted glass shall not be used in the storefront, with the exception that opaque glass may be used in transom windows above the viewing zone in cases where dropped ceilings need to be concealed. However, it is preferable to rework dropped ceilings so that they start several feet back from the storefront, in a vertical or slanted bulkhead.



Guidelines for Materials, Accessories, and Painting

General Materials

- Storefronts should be constructed of high-quality, durable materials, similar in type and scale to traditional materials, such as wood, cast iron, structural metal, and glass.
- The bulkhead panels below the display windows should be made of wood panels, stone slabs, or ceramic tile.
- Brick may be used in narrow vertical piers, but only if appropriate to the design of the building.
- Corrugated metal panels, aluminum or vinyl siding, synthetic stucco, plywood siding, and concrete block should not be used in storefronts.
- Storefronts should not be decorated with half timbering, shingles, pent roofs, or other false historical materials or treatments.

Masonry exteriors

- Upper-floor masonry should be repaired or replaced to match the appearance of the original materials as closely as possible (including color, texture, size, shape, placement, detailing, and type of joint).
- Masonry surfaces should be cleaned, if necessary, by the gentlest means possible (water and detergent, or a mild acid, with low pressure water wash not to exceed 600 psi). Abrasive cleaning methods (such as sandblasting or sanding) shall not be used. Re-pointing of masonry shall be done with a mortar that matches the original as closely as possible in lime and cement content (high- Portland cement mortars shall not be used with older brick), color, and profile.
- No waterproofing or water-repellent coatings, artificial siding, stucco, or synthetic stucco material should be applied over existing masonry.
- Existing unpainted masonry surfaces should not be painted, except in certain cases of advanced deterioration.

Wood

- If the upper facade has wood siding, the wood siding should be repaired or replaced to match existing.
- If artificial (aluminum or vinyl) sidings have been installed in the past (over wood or masonry), they should be removed and the surfaces under them repaired. No artificial siding (aluminum, vinyl, asbestos, asphalt, insulbrick, etc.), shingles, or stucco should be applied over existing wood siding.
- All wooden trim and ornament, including cornices and brackets, should be retained and repaired or replaced to match.

Window openings

- Original window openings should not be altered, either by enlargement or by closing them in. Windows in the front facade that have been closed up or enlarged should be rebuilt to return to their original sizes, if possible.

Window frames and panes

- Original wood windows should be retained and repaired, if possible. If the existing windows cannot be repaired, or if the existing windows are inappropriate for the building, they should be replaced by new windows.
- All replacement windows should be constructed of wood, clad wood, or metal, in that order of preference. Regardless of material, all replacement windows should match the original windows in pane arrangement and molding profile.
- All metal windows should be anodized or painted to match the color of the window trim; a metallic “natural” mill finish is not appropriate.
- Window glass may be double-glazed (insulated) and clear; reflective and opaque glass. Check your local building codes for exact glass tempering requirements.
- Artificial window trim grids should not be used.
- Storm windows should be installed so as to be inconspicuous (colored to match the window frames, sized to fit the openings, and divided to match the other windows of the facade).
- Storefront windows should be carefully caulked and sealed. New storefront windows should be double-glazed (two panes of glass with an air-space between with the highest R-value possible, always meeting National Energy Conservation Codes).

Signs

- Signs should be designed as elements of the building, not as unrelated items merely attached to it; they should complement the style of the building.
- Sign permits are required by the Borough of Wilkinsburg.
- A maximum of one wall, one window sign, and one awning sign per first floor business, and one projecting sign (if permitted) per entrance into a business, will be permitted per street facade. A maximum of two window signs and one awning sign per upper-floor business shall be permitted.
- Only business and identification signs will be permitted; advertising signs and mass-produced signs supplied by national distributors shall not be permitted.
- Wall signs should be a maximum of two square feet in area for every lineal foot of building frontage, up to a maximum of 40 square feet (although there may be limits by other district-specific zoning guidelines). Window signs shall be a maximum of 20% of the glazed area of storefront windows in area, or a maximum of 50% of the glazed area of upper-floor windows in area.

Signs, continued

- Awning signs may include one small business identification sign (measuring no more than six inches in height) on the front vertical flap of the awning.
- Projecting signs must meet local ordinances in terms of size and placement.
- For businesses located on a corner and having two street facades, the total frontage shall be factored in and employed separately to determine sizes.
- No sign may be placed in such a way as to obscure any architectural feature or ornament. Signs for first-floor businesses shall be located below the sills of the second-floor windows, preferably on the lintel or signboard over the storefront.
- Signs may be painted onto the insides of the storefront windows. Signs for upper-floor businesses should be painted onto the insides of the upper-floor windows.
- No signs should be located on the roof of the building, nor should the supports for any sign extend above the cornice of the building.
- Wall signs should be painted onto wood, metal, or opaque plastic backboards; individually-applied letters may also be used. Individually-illuminated channel letters, back-lit (silhouetted) letters, neon signs, and signs illuminated by small shielded spotlights may be used. Internally-illuminated plastic-faced box signs, and signs that move, flash or are intermittently illuminated, will not be permitted.

Painting

- Historically, wooden and cast iron storefronts were painted to prevent the harmful effects of weathering (moisture, ultraviolet rays from the sun, wind, etc.) as well as to define and accent architectural features. Repainting exterior surfaces is an inexpensive way to provide continued protection from weathering and to give a fresh appearance to the storefront and building façade.
- Existing unpainted masonry surfaces shall remain unpainted (except in certain cases of advanced deterioration).
- Masonry surfaces that have been painted in the past may be repainted.
- Exterior masonry, wood, and cast iron surfaces should be prepared properly by removing loose paint by the gentlest means possible (usually scraping or sanding by hand) and by cleaning the surface before applying a primer appropriate to the material and at least two coats of exterior grade paint.
- All selected paints should be “V.O.C. compliant” – that is, paints having a low concentration of volatile organic compounds that contribute to air pollution and other related indoor air quality problems.

Colors

- Building colors should be considered in relation to the colors of the other buildings in the block and down the street. Muted colors are preferable to bright ones; primary colors should not be employed except in signs.
- Color should be used to tie together all of the building's parts, including the storefront, windows, doors, and cornice. This can be done by choosing a single body color (or using the color of the existing masonry), a trim color that is a shade lighter or darker than the body color, and (if desired) a third, contrasting color for the ornament.
- No more than three colors should be used.
- Aluminum and steel windows, doors, and frames should be painted or anodized in accordance with the overall color scheme for the building. A metallic looking "natural" mill finish will not be permitted.
- Historic Colors - If a traditional color scheme is desired, the following points should be considered:
 - It may be possible to discover the original color scheme by carefully scraping or sanding an area down to the first coat of paint.
 - In the mid-1800s, soft, neutral tints were popular.
 - In the late 1800s, darker, richer shades of color were popular.
 - In the early 1900s, lighter, calmer colors were popular.
 - White paint was not widely used in the 19th century.

Façade lighting

- All lighting of the facade of the building shall be done in a discreet manner, using fixtures that are unobtrusive and that have light sources shielded from the public view. Consider energy efficiency, cut off requirements and photocell switches as you plan your overall lighting solution.

Awnings

- Depending on local requirements and public right-of-way considerations, awnings can be used on the storefront of the building, and may also be installed over all of the upper floor windows.
- Awnings should be sloping and triangular in section, in most cases (arched awnings should be used only over arched openings).
- Awnings should be made of canvas or canvas-like materials (not metal), and they should not have internal illumination.

Insulation

- All solid surfaces should be insulated, caulked, and sealed to prevent the loss of heated or cooled air to the outdoors.
- The building's insulation values must meet the National Energy Conservation Codes.
- The interiors of bulkhead panels below storefront display windows should be insulated.
- The first floor should be insulated in order to protect the commercial space from the cold of the basement below.
- If the building is one story in height, the roof should be substantially insulated to protect the store from both heat and cold.
- If the upper floors of the building are not in use, the second floor should be temporarily insulated to trap heat on the first floor.

Security Gates

- Security gates may be installed on the inside of the storefront windows.
- Security gates should be able to be removed or folded completely back when not in place, and should be painted so as to be as inconspicuous as possible.



Pittsburgh Asian Market Façade Renovation Before & After, 705-709 Penn Ave., Wilkinsburg. ©Martha Rial & WCDC

New Construction: Maintaining Context within a Business District

Construction of a new building or designing a new addition to an existing building in an established commercial district is a challenging task. The new design should be compatible with its neighbors, maintaining sensitivity to its architectural context. In general, it is important to be attentive to the existing architectural rhythms of the commercial district's structures. An overhauled, renovated, or infill structure should mimic--or be designed to be compatible with--the characteristics of the surrounding buildings. These characteristics include:

- Size and width of façade – two or more stories are encouraged in the business district.
- Height-width proportion of building – if a large new building is proposed, the new façade should be broken into a number of smaller units or bays.
- Degree of setback from the street – the set back from the street should be the same as its neighbors.
- Window and door spacing – the rhythm of the block should not be altered in a dramatic way.
- Size and proportion of window, door, and storefront openings – should be similar to adjacent buildings and the ration of window area to solid wall for the façade as a whole.
- Complementary materials and architectural details – material should not dramatically stand out among other buildings in the business district.
- Color schemes – should tie in to the neighboring buildings.



700 Block of Penn Ave., Wilkinsburg. ©Jason Cohn & Jeff Lovett

Design and Renovation: Guidelines for Environmental Sustainability

It is important to include basic considerations for environmental sustainability and energy efficiency in all design projects. Additionally, construction and renovation processes can be made more sustainable and subsequently more cost-effective.

- Make windows and doors more efficient in order to conserve energy.
 - Windows - Old windows must be repaired so that all of their parts fit snugly. Loose or broken glass panes should be re-glazed. Be sure to weather-strip and caulk, to eliminate draft between the sashes and frames. New windows should be double-glazed with the high R-value replacements. Storm windows should be installed on upper-floor windows.
 - Doors - Entryways are very important. All doors should be repaired so that all of their parts fit together rightly, and all loose or broken glass panes should be re-glazed. They should be carefully weather-stripped and caulked, to seal the cracks between the door and the frame. If new doors are installed, they should be double-glazed (two layers of glass with an air space between) with the highest R-value possible.
- During all renovation projects, pay special attention to the possibility of lead paint and asbestos, which were sometimes used in older construction. Handle and dispose of these dangerous materials according to published industry safety standards.
- When possible, recycle all construction materials.
- All new development should work towards Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certification. If certification is not feasible, effort should be made to include LEED practices to the highest possible level throughout the project.

Other Considerations

Landscaping

Stormwater Management: New development projects should work towards reducing wet weather flow (rain water or snow melt) rates from the site to an amount that is less than or equal to the estimated flow for the site pre-development. There are a variety of ways to reduce rainwater flowing into our combined sewer system. Much more can be learned from the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association.

Green Space: Plantings should be entirely or predominantly composed of native tree, shrub, and herbaceous plant species. Non-native invasive plants should not be planted under any circumstances. Please refer to the Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission for creating and enhancing the landscape.

Street Trees and Plantings: Trees should be mulched with no more than 2"-3" of shredded wood mulch for weed control; mulch should be spread at least 3' around the base of the tree avoiding the trunk by three inches to prevent trunk rot. Tips for keeping trees and plants healthy:

- *Pick-Up Litter:* Plastic bags, bottles, cigarette butts, and other litter degrade public spaces and create a stressful environment for trees and plants. Always wear gloves when picking up litter and safely dispose of it in a trash can or garbage bag, recycling what you can.
- *Remove Weeds:* Weeds grow and spread quickly, taking essential nutrients from trees and plants. Remove weeds by first identifying the weed, using gloves to pull up the weed and its entire root system, and disposing of the weed properly in a trash can or garbage bag.
- *Avoid Rock Salt:* In small amounts, de-icing rock salt (sodium chloride) affects nutrient availability and uptake, causing damage to trees and plants. In large amounts, rock salt can cause plant tissue to dry up and die. During the winter months, consider using alternatives to rock salt, such as calcium chloride or urea, which can be found at most local hardware stores.
- *Discourage Dogs:* Dog waste overwhelms trees and plants because it can burn a tree's trunk and throw soil nutrients out of balance. Please do not allow dogs or other animals in tree pits.
- *Park Bikes Elsewhere:* Locking bikes or other objects to a tree can damage tree bark, crush plants, and compact soil. This can damage root system and limit water and nutrient uptake. Encourage your patrons and employees to park their bikes in a designated area.

Vacant Land Management: Vacant land should be maintained on regular bases. Vacant lots in the business district should be put to use in a variety of ways to engage people in the business district. Options include pocket parks, green screening, pop-up activities, or art project, among others. The intended goal should be to use these spaces for a temporary use until future development is planned for the site.

In cases where existing structures are condemned and require removal, all demolition contracts should mandate the following to facilitate “Clean & Green” management. Soil amendments, such as 1 foot of clean fill and mulch with plantings to be either: low grow/no mow grass mix, native flower mix, and sunflowers. Existing vacant land should be managed using a “Clean & Green” approach that includes grass and/or flower plantings. To reinforce the property boundary and discourage dumping, tree and/or shrub plantings should be considered along with split rail or other attractive fencing around vacant lots.

Public Art

The inclusion of public art is encouraged throughout the Wilkinsburg business district. Please refer to the Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission for creating public artwork.

The Office of Public Art can provide assistance on public art projects. A good resource is the Add Art, Add Value guide for developers and property owners.



Street Tree & Plantings, 711 Penn Ave., Wilkinsburg. ©Martha Rial

Resources

Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation

1001 Wood Street
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
(412) 727 - 7855
info@wilkinsburgcdc.org
www.wilkinsburgcdc.org

Borough of Wilkinsburg

Wilkinsburg Borough Building
605 Ross Avenue
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
(412) 244 – 2900
www.wilkinsburgpa.gov

Links

Façade Grant Program Design Guidelines

www.wilkinsburgcdc.org/programs-and-projects/business-district-revitalization

Façade Grant Program Application

www.wilkinsburgcdc.org/programs-and-projects/business-district-revitalization

Borough of Wilkinsburg Code Enforcement

www.wilkinsburgpa.gov/government/Code_Enforcement.aspx

Borough of Wilkinsburg Zoning Code

www.wilkinsburgpa.gov/pdf/Zoning%20Ordinance%20Final.pdf

National Park Service Preservation Brief: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts

www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/11-storefronts.htm

Office of Public Art's Add Art, Add Value

www.ura.org/developers/URA-AddValueAddArt.pdf

Pennsylvania DCED Keystone Communities Program Guidelines, 2011

www.newpa.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Community_Affairs_And_Development/Keystone_Communities/KeystoneCommunities_Guidelines-2011.pdf

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, 2011

www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/sustainability-guidelines.pdf

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, 1997

www.nps.gov/history/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehabilitation-guidelines.pdf

Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission

www.wilkinsburgpa.gov/projects/Arts_Commission.aspx

Façade Renovation Program Guidelines

Purpose of Guidelines

These guidelines serve as a resource for applicants and potential applicants to the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation's Façade Renovation Program. The document explains how the program is funded and run, how to apply to the program, and how to carry out renovations according to the program's requirements. The application for the Façade Renovation Program is a separate document.

About the Façade Renovation Program

Introduction

Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) provides many different financial opportunities for local revitalization efforts. The Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation (WCDC) has been working to secure façade funding through the DCED's Keystone Communities Program to stimulate private investment, create an attractive environment, and preserve historic architecture.

The Keystone Façade Grant enables the WCDC to conduct a matched-funding program for Wilkinsburg's property owners and business owners (with property owners' consent) to renovate and improve their building façades, signs, and awnings. The Façade Grant program empowers community members to improve their own properties and businesses while enhancing the environment and image of the business district.

In order to receive a façade grant, a business or property owner must apply through the WCDC and complete the façade renovation process in accordance with the program guidelines. A 50% match, up to \$5,000, is available for façade improvements. Applicants will be reimbursed once the project is completed and reviewed. Any project that spends over \$25,000 for the façade renovation will be required to pay state prevailing wages for all work done.

Why Apply?

The WCDC Façade Renovation program gives business owners, property owners, and commercial real estate developers the opportunity to receive funding for renovations that will improve commercial property, appearance and value. Furthermore, participating in the WCDC Façade Renovation program helps to promote community pride and economic revitalization in Wilkinsburg.

What Can the Grant be Used for?

The Keystone Façade Grant supports renovations to a property's:

- Street-facing exterior
- Signs and Awnings
- External lighting

The renovation work should follow the Wilkinsburg Façade Design Guidelines. Interior renovations, landscaping projects, and roofing and paving improvements cannot be funded by the Keystone Façade Grant. Upper-floor renovations may be included in a proposed project, but should not be the focus of the project.

Wilkinsburg's LERTA (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Abatement) Program

Tax abatements are available for the construction costs associated with improving deteriorated business property in Wilkinsburg. Façade renovation projects frequently include these types of improvements; participants in the WCDC Façade Renovation program should see if they are eligible to apply to the LERTA program. Applications for tax abatement must be submitted to the Wilkinsburg Borough Manager 30 days prior to the issuance of a building permit or to the commencement of construction. (See “Resources” section for the application.)

Application Process

Eligibility

Eligible Façade Grant applicants are:

- A property owner, a local commercial real estate developer, or a business owner with property owner’s approval.
- Up to date with all taxes; in good standing with the tax authorities of the Borough of Wilkinsburg and Allegheny County, as well as the Wilkinsburg School District.
- Financially capable of fully executing proposed project.

Eligible Façade Grant properties are:

- Commercial, street-facing, and preferably first-floor.
- Within the bounds of Wilkinsburg’s designated Main Street district (see map below).
- Up to code or will be up to code upon completion of proposed project.
- Properties that have received a façade grant in the past five years may be approved for another grant if any of the following is true:
 - There has been a change in business ownership;
 - The previous façade grant amount was less than the maximum eligible amount;
 - The project does not remove or cover work from the previous façade grant; and/or
 - The façade is being updated to match to business district design guidelines/vision.



Required Materials

- \$100 Application Fee (refundable if your application is not approved). Checks should be made payable to the Wilkesburg Community Development Corporation.
- Detailed drawings of proposed improvements, both hard copies and electronic files.
- Cost estimates and/or bids. This must include any estimates for architectural or design services, if applicable.
- Projected timeline for completion, not to exceed 6 months.
- If applicant is a tenant, letter from property owner explicitly authorizing proposed improvements.
- Contractor's lien waver, if needed.

Applying: Step-by-Step

1. Make sure you are eligible to apply, and your property is qualified. See "Eligibility" section above.
2. Complete and compile required materials. See "Required Materials" section above.
3. Consult WCDC Façade Renovation Program Design Guidelines for assistance in creating a proposal. The Guidelines support projects that are respectful of historic preservation and environmental sustainability.
4. Make sure all proposed work aligns with borough codes. This may include applying for permits, especially sign permits. Permit fees are reimbursable by the Façade Grant. Borough codes and permit applications can be found at www.wilkesburgpa.gov.
5. Submit application electronically to the WCDC for review by the WCDC Design Committee. Please send to info@wilkesburgcdc.org.
6. Wait for the WCDC to respond to your application (1 – 3 weeks).
7. When approved, send application electronically to the Borough of Wilkesburg for review by the Wilkesburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission.
8. Wait for the WCACDC to respond to your application (up to 2 months).
9. As necessary, cooperate with the Borough of Wilkesburg's Planning and/or Zoning departments in order to ensure correct and cooperative renovation.
10. Obtain all necessary permits to build and renovate.
11. Begin renovation process.

Renovation Process

Renovating: Step-by-Step

1. Do not begin renovating until full approval has been granted by both the WCDC and the WCACDC.
2. Make sure the agreed-upon schedule is followed properly.
3. Keep track of ALL spending; save all invoices, checks, and receipts. You will need these in order to receive the Façade Grant at the end of the process.

Notes on Renovating

- Façade improvement projects supported by the Keystone Façade Grant should respect the historic integrity of façades. The WCDC and the Keystone Main Street program encourage concrete steps towards the restoration of commercial structures' historic characteristics.
- Consideration for architectural, design, and construction services should be given to vendors currently doing business in Wilkinsburg.
- The WCDC may take and use pictures of the property at various stages of the renovation process. See "Statement of Understanding" in the program application.

Project Completion

Notes and Requirements

In order for a façade renovation to successfully receive the full façade grant:

- At end of renovation process, property must be up to code.
- Renovations must be completed according to the approved timeline. If unforeseen circumstances arise which delay the project, exceptions may be considered.
- After completion of project, you must electronically send the WCDC a letter of completion along with copies of all receipts and proof of payment for materials and labor. Please send this information to info@wilkinsburgcdc.org.
- For projects costing a total of \$10,000 or less, the grant will reimburse 50% of the total project costs agreed upon in the award letter. For projects costing more than \$10,000, the grant will provide a reimbursement up to \$5,000 for costs agreed upon in the award letter. Renovations must be reviewed before reimbursement can take place.

The property owner is responsible for directly paying all contractors, labor, and other contributing services. At the conclusion of the renovation process, the WCDC will review the site. As long as all requirements are met, the WCDC will request reimbursement from the State for the applicant for the agreed upon grant amount within one month.

Façade Renovation Program Application

Required Materials

The following items must be attached to this application in order for it to be considered complete:

- \$100 Application Fee (refundable if your application is not approved). Checks should be made payable to the Wilkesburg Community Development Corporation.
- Drawings of proposed improvements. Drawings and renderings should be sent electronically to info@wilkesburgcdc.org.
- Cost estimates or bids. This must include any estimates for architectural or design services, if applicable.
- If applicant is a tenant, completed “Property Owner Authorization” Form.
- Projected timeline for completion, not to exceed 6 months.

Application Procedure

The following steps should be taken in order to complete the façade renovation program process:

- Send the completed application and all attached items electronically to info@wilkesburgcdc.org. The WCDC will review the application and notify you if and when it is approved.
- Once the proposal is approved by the WCDC, Wilkesburg Borough will need to review and approve the design work. The Wilkesburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission (WCACDC) will need to receive the documentation and have the project put on the agenda for a monthly meeting.
- Ensure that all proposed work aligns with borough codes.
- Do not start any improvements until you have been notified that your grant has been approved by both the WCDC and WCACDC.
- Keep track of all spending. Save ALL invoices, checks, and receipts and submit them to the WCDC.
- Obtain necessary permits before commencing work.
- After renovations have been completed and reviewed by the WCDC, the WCDC will reimburse you in accordance with the terms of the grant.

Other Information

- The WCDC can offer assistance for design work and project scope of work. Please contact the WCDC for additional information.
- Consideration for architectural, design, and construction services should be given to vendors currently doing business in Wilkinsburg.
- Once accepted by the WCDC and WCACDC, it may be necessary to work with the Borough of Wilkinsburg's Planning Commission, depending on the proposed renovations.
- Through the Wilkinsburg LERTA program, tax abatements are available for the construction costs associated with improving deteriorated business property in Wilkinsburg. See the Façade Renovation Program Guidelines or contact the WCDC for more information. Applications for tax exemption must be submitted to the Wilkinsburg Borough Manager 30 days prior to the issuance of a building permit or to the commencement of construction.



Pittsburgh Asian Market Façade Renovation, 705-709 Penn Ave., Wilkinsburg. ©Martha Rial



Wilkinsburg Main Street Program