



US Highway 301 Beautification Grant Application Instructions

Department of Planning and Community Revitalization
112 Goldsboro Street E., Wilson, NC 27893



Purpose: The purpose of the US Highway 301 Beautification Grant Program is to provide business and commercial property owners an economic incentive to encourage thoughtful revitalization and redevelopment while increasing roadway aesthetics. The program does this by providing grants to assist property owners with improving the appearance of the public facing side of their property [building exterior, landscaping, and signage] in an effort to enhance the investment of the US 301 TIGER Project and to reflect the community's vision as defined in the 2030 Wilson Comprehensive Plan.

First developed in the 1930's, US Highway 301 served as an important interstate highway connecting Delaware to Florida. With the majority of inter-state traffic utilizing Interstate 95, US Highway 301 became an urban boulevard and required a new roadway design that reflect that change. In 2015, Wilson successfully received a highly competitive US Department of Transportation TIGER Grant for design changes to US Highway 301. This \$10 million federal grant was matched with \$6.5 million from NCDOT and \$2 million in local funds. The \$18 million project has transformed US Highway 301, from Lipscomb Road to Black Creek Road, into an urban boulevard and represents a significant investment in Wilson.

Eligibility: Any owner or tenant of a building located along the designated section of the US Highway 301 corridor is eligible. Grant funding will be awarded based on merit according to program guidelines, criteria, and available funding. Only one grant may be awarded per property and per project. Any tenant applying for a grant must have the owner's written permission. Please see included map for district boundaries.

Funds Available: The US Highway 301 Beautification Grant is made possible by the Wilson City Council. Grants are awarded for eligible projects on a competitive and funds-available basis. The maximum grant for any one project is \$10,000, and the maximum grant amount shall not exceed 50% of the total cost of the project.

Guidelines: These grants are intended for comprehensive exterior improvement projects. Grants shall not be available for deferred maintenance items. However, if a project includes comprehensive repairs and renovations that improve the entire exterior façade of the building or the length of the site, the grant application will be considered.

1. Exterior Building Improvements
 - a. Removal of previously attached walls/façades, appliances, obsolete fixtures, and slip covers.
 - b. Improvements to restore the original architectural design of the building, if historically important.
 - c. New paint scheme to accentuate architectural details and visually improve the look of façade.
 - d. Addition of awnings and/or other façade enhancements.
 - e. Storefront repairs and/or replacement to restore or improve upon architectural design of building.
2. Signage Improvements
 - a. New permanent signs both attached and/or freestanding [that conform to Wilson signage ordinances].
 - b. Removal and/or replacement of derelict signs.
 - c. New monument signs [with brick bases individually lettered].
3. Landscaping Improvements [refer to Chapter 8 of Wilson Unified Development Ordinance]
 - a. Installation of living plant materials.
 - b. Addition of soil amendments and mulch.
 - c. Construction of berms or other topographic enhancements.
 - d. Installation of entrance and/or intersection features.
 - e. Decorative fencing and walls. Street frontage and parking lots are priority.
 - f. Screening of mechanical equipment and other service items.

Criteria: All applications are reviewed based upon the following:

1. Projects with a greater amount of private investment pledged will be considered more competitive [because they increase the leverage of public dollars] and have a greater chance of being awarded at higher amounts.
2. Any exterior renovation proposal is eligible to apply, but top priority will be given to projects that will make a highly visible positive impact to the commercial corridor.
3. To create pedestrian walking experiences, properties located directly on the US Highway 301 corridor will be given preference.
4. To encourage job retention and creation, it is highly recommended that applicants engage local businesses.
5. Proposed grants must meet all code requirements of the City of Wilson and the State of North Carolina.
6. Funds are for substantial building façade and site improvements and are not for general and/or deferred maintenance.
7. The City of Wilson will not be party in negotiations between the applicant and/or contractor employed by the applicant. The applicant agrees to hold the City of Wilson harmless of any defects in workmanship, liability, damages, or other costs relative to this project.
8. All work must be completed in a good workmanship manner. The applicant will not be eligible for grant funds unless the work is completed by a competent professional.
9. Grant agreement must be signed within thirty [30] days of project award and work must be started within sixty [60] days from the date of the signed grant agreement. One extension may be considered for special unforeseen circumstances such as weather, but must have prior staff approval.
10. Grant funds are distributed as a reimbursement. Monies for approved projects will be reimbursed to the grantee upon meeting all inspections/review requirements and showing invoices with proof of payment.
11. Any deviation from approved work plan must seek approval from staff and/or Wilson Appearance Commission before changes are made. Failure to seek approval may result in forfeiture of grant.
12. Grants shall be awarded for new projects only. Work that was previously completed, or started in advance of the grant award date, is not eligible for funding.
13. Failure to comply with approved plans could result in the loss of grant funding.

Process: Applications may be submitted at any time. All applications will be reviewed for completeness by staff. For requests \$5,000 or under, staff may administratively approve. All other applications will be forwarded, with a staff recommendation, to the Wilson Appearance Commission for review at the next available meeting.

1. No work shall begin prior to application receiving approval and returning signed contract. Doing so will disqualify applicant from grant funds. Staff will acknowledge receipt of all applications within two business days. It is advisable to contact staff in advance so that they know an application will be submitted. If applicant does not receive a response, please contact Dana Corson at 252.399.2225 or dcorson@wilsonnc.org.
2. Applicant shall complete application and include all required documentation. When appropriate documentation has been filed, staff will review in order to deem complete and determine if proposed project is eligible for consideration.
3. Applicant may be requested to attend the Wilson Appearance Commission meeting to discuss the proposed project, if deemed necessary.
4. A notification letter will be sent to the applicant as to whether the project has been approved, approved with conditions, or rejected. If awarded, the applicant will be sent a grant contract. The applicant will sign and return the contract. Once staff acknowledges receipt, the project is activated and construction can begin.
5. All change orders must have prior approval from staff or the grant contract will become invalid.
6. The project must be completed within six [6] months of signing the grant agreement.
7. Failure to complete the project by this date, without an approved extension, could result in loss of grant funding. No grant contracts shall be extended beyond twelve [12] months of initial approval of the contract. Applicants may request an extension by contacting Dana Corson at 252.399.2225 or dcorson@wilsonnc.org.
8. Staff reserves the right to deny payment if completed work is inconsistent with the contents of the original application, is of insufficient quality, or insufficient proof of payment is presented.
9. Once the project is completed in accordance with the approved plans, inspected, and all documentation regarding payment [invoices and canceled checks] have been submitted, staff will request that a check be issued for amount granted, provided the work is accomplished in accordance with the agreement. The check will be mailed to the mailing address provided on the application.