



Façade Improvement Program Proposal

DOWNTOWN KENOSHA

In July 2013, Kenosha was awarded Main Street community designation, beginning our city's participation in the national program implementing the proven approach of *economic development through historic preservation*. Downtown Kenosha Inc., is a 501c3 designation, and is funded with the support of the Kenosha Area Chamber of Commerce, Kenosha Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the BID.

The organization's purpose is to revitalize Downtown Kenosha through business retention and recruitment, residential population growth, and expansion of the customer base with the support of volunteers, local government, and community organizations.

STRATEGIC PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

In August of 2012, The Lakota Group published the [Downtown Strategic Development Plan for Kenosha](#), and the recommendations are currently being implemented. Kenosha is also charged with taking the following steps as part of a comprehensive approach for downtown revitalization, many of which are in progress:

- Developing downtown design guidelines and revising the zoning code
- Making improvements to the streetscape
- Working to preserve & reuse historic buildings
- Implementing wayfinding and parking signage
- Focusing on connectivity to other neighborhoods
- Reviewing parking regulations, needs, and signage
- Assessing transit and complete streets needs
- Improving second stories for residential and/or office use
- Increasing branding efforts and site marketing
- Supporting catalytic projects and developments
- Reducing storefront vacancy through small business recruitment
- Improving downtown infrastructure
- Creating additional civic open space

One of the most important recommendations with an immediate impact on downtown businesses is:

- Establishing a façade/storefront rehabilitation program (p. 128-129 of the Downtown Strategic Development Plan)

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Studies have shown that façade improvement programs have significant economic impact, both for the individual business and for the larger district. In "An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Physical Improvements on Retail Sales," the study found that after a façade restoration, all businesses experienced an average increase of 272% in their annual gross sales the year after improvements. A UW-Extension study entitled "Economic Effects of Storefront Improvement" showed that when supported in making exterior improvements, about 85% of the businesses also made interior improvements including new inventory and product lines, merchandising and window display. All of the businesses in the study experienced favorable customer response and considered the improvements worth the investment. Improving the building façade also contributes to the overall aesthetic appeal of the district and typically raises the property value of the building and potentially of the surrounding buildings.

Downtown façade improvement programs are typically matching grant programs, with the sponsoring organization reimbursing the business or property owner with 50% of the project's total cost after the design has been approved and project completed. Funding can come from BID revenue, TIF Districts, CDBG departments, or most commonly – Community Reinvestment Act grants from local banks.

Projects can include:

- New signage
- New or restored awnings
- Exterior lighting
- Window replacements
- Full exterior renovations

Project costs will likely range from \$500 for signage to \$50,000 for a full façade renovation, with the average project costing about \$10,000.

Being a Main Street community, Downtown Kenosha receives several years of free design assistance from Wisconsin Main Street. We are able to offer rendering services for five projects per year at no cost to the business or property owners.



A façade restoration project completed with Wisconsin Main Street design assistance in Monroe, WI

PROGRAM GOALS

Program establishment:

- ✓ Create a façade improvement program application and guidelines with an approval process by the Main Street Design Committee, modeled on successful downtown programs.
- ✓ Market program and target several specific businesses.
- Raise \$25,000 in CRA funds granted to Downtown Kenosha for façade improvements in the Downtown district, defined as 45th Street 65th Street and 13th Avenue to the lakefront.

2017 Program Goals:

- Begin façade improvements for 2 Downtown Kenosha buildings.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTNERSHIP

Downtown Kenosha's façade improvement program requires the economic support of the community for these improvements to be possible. Our civic and community organizations are already contributing to Downtown Kenosha financially, and this is an excellent opportunity for our local banks to formalize their support of our city center's revitalization.

Benefits to contributing to this program include:

- Supporting downtown development with a highly visible, CRA-eligible investment in economic development and neighborhood stabilization
- Receiving publicity from Downtown Kenosha with your bank's name and logo
 - on our website and social media pages when a new project is approved
 - in print when the project is completed, both in local newspaper and business owner newsletter
 - at a project completion ceremony where local elected officials, media, and community members will be present
 - in all digital media promoting the downtown façade improvement program
 - displayed at our annual meeting
- The opportunity to reach new customers

For more information, please contact

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