

Town of Oxford – Beautification Façade Program



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The program

Oxford is fortunate to have historic buildings that date back to the 1800s and early 1900s

This program is an initiative of the River Philip Foundation, which is providing funds to improve the commercial streetscape on Main Street and Water Street, zoned under the Town of Oxford Bylaws in the “Downtown Commercial” area.

The façade improvement program is to help improve the overall look and feel of the downtown and to spark additional investment in the downtown by business proprietors. Better façades will provide many benefits:

- a more appealing environment for both residents and visitors who shop in the Town
- protecting and enhancing the historical value of Oxford’s built environment
- improving property values for building owners
- increasing revenue for business owners

Who administers the program?

The Town of Oxford receives applications from those applying for support from the Façade program. Once vetted at the staff level, applications will be forwarded to Oxford’s Beautification Advisory Committee (OBAC) for review and consideration.

OBAC, with support from the Chief Administration Officer, will have the authority to officially approve or deny an application.

If an application does not fully satisfy expectations, OBAC may correspond with the applicant to indicate how the application may be improved to meet the formal approval by OBAC.



What can I get funded for?

Applicants' buildings must be within the Downtown Commercial zoning area. Buildings outside of this boundary will not be considered.

Interior alterations are not eligible. If an exterior alteration requires an interior component, only the exterior portion of work may be eligible for funding.

Only changes to the exterior façade, visible from a public street, are eligible for funding from this program.

One application per property (PID) may be considered each fiscal year. Corner lots are permitted one additional application.

Projects must address one or more standard elements of a public façade:

- Cladding and trim (page 6)
- Windows and doors (page 7)
- Signs (page 8) may be considered when part of a multi-faceted renovation project. Types of signs include:
 - Projecting wall signs
 - Flat fixed wall signs
 - Canopy signs
 - Civic numbers

- Lighting (page 12)
- Painting of façade (page 13) will only be considered if the impact of the proposed paint job, in the estimation of OBAC represents a significant transformation of the public façade.

What funding is available?

Applicants may budget any amount for their project, however, successful applicants may receive up to 50% of a project value to a maximum of \$50,000 per applicant.

Signage projects may receive up to 50% of the signage value to a maximum of \$10,000.

In general, funding is available for:

- labour and contracting
- materials
- designers' professional fees (e.g. architecture, engineering, graphic design)

Façade example



What is the process?

Those interested in funding should review this book for ideas, requirements, and for useful guidelines. Interested applicants are encouraged to meet with the Town's Chief Administration Officer and discuss ideas.

If an applicant would like to request funds from the Society he/she must fill out the form available in-person at the Town Hall.

To be considered, applications must include:

- 1) a description of proposed renovations with notes adequate to demonstrate design, materials and colours; and
- 2) a cost estimate from a contractor.

When the project is approved, 50% of the eligible funding will be granted. When the project is complete, the owner must submit actual receipts and schedule a site inspection by the OBAC to ensure the project is built as proposed. Deviations from the original proposal may be grounds for denying funding.

If the inspection is successful, OBAC will issue a letter of acceptance to the applicant, and release the remaining funds based upon the actual receipts.

Projects must be completed within the fiscal year (April 1–March 31) in which the application was made. For example: if an application is received and approved in principle in August 2025, all work must be complete by March 31, 2026.

Permits

Applying to this program is not the same as applying to the Town for a development or building permit.

Many of the projects funded under this program will also require a *development* and/or *building permit* from the Town of Oxford, and proponents must apply for any required permits before undertaking work.

If you are unsure whether your project requires a permit, please phone 902-447-2170.

Cladding & trim

CLADDING

Siding that will be considered for funding includes brick, stone vinyl, aluminum, and wood.

BRICK AND STONE

Both brick and stone may be refreshed in a few ways:

REPOINTING: all mortar between bricks or stones decays over time. *Repointing* means adding new mortar to the external surface to fill in gaps that have formed. It is the way to make a wall look new again.

PAINT STRIPPING: removing paint and other materials from the outside of walls. Several methods are possible. *Sandblasting damages brick and is not eligible.*

RESETTING: damaged bricks or stones must be removed, replaced with new material, and the gap must be re-mortared.

Repair of stone has different requirements from brick; if you have a stonewall, contact a professional who specializes in stone.

If brick is painted prior to this application, then painting of the brick façade may be considered for funding under this program. Otherwise, any proposals to paint brick that is currently in its original unpainted form will be rejected.

SHAKES AND CLAPBOARD

Wood siding degrades over time and must be replaced or repaired periodically. Applications may include replacing degraded shingles, clapboard or board and batten, and may be a wholesale replacement of cladding, or a spot repair of a rotten section.

TRIM

Exterior trim may be updated and refreshed, including, but not limited to:

- corners
- door trim
- window trim
- corner boards
- friezes
- baseboards

Original trim cannot be replaced unless it is already past the point of repair (e.g. wood members are rotten).

Trim must be consistent in style throughout the façade; it must not employ various shapes, sizes and colours. Also, any new trim must be in keeping with the building's style, if applicable.

Cladding



Brick



Trim



Windows & doors

Examples of windows

Windows and doors are not secondary concerns to the look and feel of a building. They do a lot to project a welcoming feel to visitors on a street and are of high importance to this program. A long blank wall “deadens” the sidewalk and street, whereas a storefront, which balances transparency and colour, invites people to come in.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- The inclusion of original-style windows will enhance the historical attributes of the buildings and street. Vinyl windows and door frames are also acceptable.

WINDOWS

Replacement windows should fit in the existing opening of the building, and should match the original width-to-height ratio, orientation, alignment, and style of the original building. In addition:

- Windows must be clear-glazed (not coloured)
- Windows should be double or single hung: do not use sliders or horizontal windows

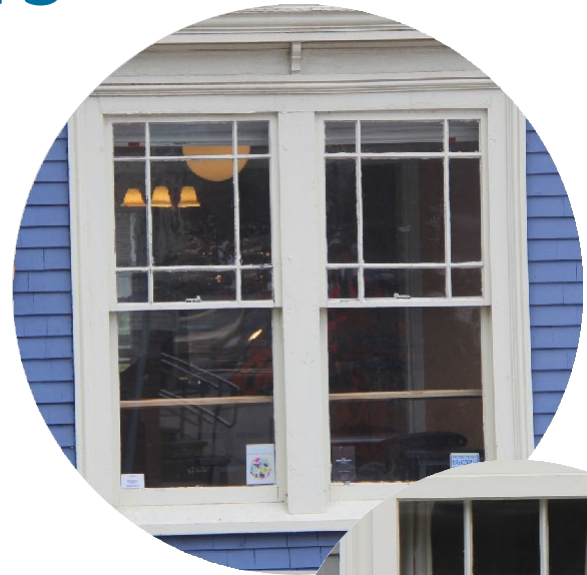
DOORS

Doors to first floor businesses should be high quality glass or aluminum doors. Replacement doors should fit in the existing opening of the building, and should match the original width-to-height ratio, orientation, alignment, and style of the original building.

Upper-level windows

Funding will not be approved if the following conditions exist:

- air conditioning units or mechanical vents blocking upper façade windows
- windows boarded up
- upper level windows covered with advertisements



Examples of doors



Signs

Examples of projecting wall signs

Signs and storefronts tend to change much more frequently as businesses come and go while building façades tend to remain static over time.

This program intends that façade signs will emphasize and respect Oxford's Main Street and Water Street's historic character, while visibly advertising the business to those on the sidewalk and on the street.

The following sign installations qualify for funding:

- projecting wall signs
- flat fixed wall signs
- canopy signs
- window signs
- civic numbers

No banner signs of any type will be allowed in this program. Requests including corrugated plastic or vinyl signs with printed lettering will also be rejected.

PROJECTING WALL SIGNS

Projecting wall signs should be mounted so that all signs on the street are at approximately the same height. Projecting wall signs should be vertically centered around a line 3.5 metres from the ground.

- The clearance under such signs must be at least 3 metres (9.8 ft.).
- Signs must be mounted between first and second storeys; they must be centred to the adjacent windows horizontally. Signs must be at least 100 mm from any electrical boxes or conduits.
- The sign face cannot be larger than 2m² in area and must be at 90° from the façade (except for signs on corner-lot buildings).
- Guide wires must be properly installed and may not block views of the sign itself.
- The sign cannot be free swinging (it must have a catch or chain).



Pin-mounted lettering

FIXED FLAT WALL SIGNS

Signs which are parallel to the façade, usually mounted to the façade face. They are also known as fascia signs:

- The sign cannot be larger than 0.62 m² per linear metre of storefront. For example, if your building is 6 metres wide, your sign may be 3.72 m² in area.
- Signage may not extend beyond the eaves at the top of the building or beyond the side of the wall.

Fixed flat wall signs are best when they do not affect the storefront behind—pin-mounted lettering is ideal, though routed (CNC or laser-cut) wood and other forms are acceptable.

CANOPIES AND CANOPY SIGNS

Canopies, also known as awnings, define a welcoming outside space at the sidewalk, and provide a refuge from rain and sun.

- The clearance under canopies must be at least 3 metres (9.8 ft.) from the grade.
- The awning's front sign must not cover more than 75% of the awning.
- Signs may not extend beyond the edges of the canopy face.

Canopies must use high quality, durable fabrics that degrade slowly and keep their colour for many years. Poor-quality canopies will fail quickly and must not be used. Some options include:

- Vinyl-laminated polyester-reinforced fabric
- Woven acrylic canvas



Fascia signs



Canopy



Canopy signs

WINDOW SIGNS

Window signs should be in a uniform place in each business along the streetscape. Such signs should match the colour scheme of the building façade, and must be at a uniform height: between 1.4 and 1.5 metres above grade.

- Window signs are only allowed on the ground level.
- Window signs must not cover more than 40% of the window glass.
- Capital letter heights may not be more than 200 mm.
- Only specific things are allowed on window signs: the business name, the logo, and a description of products sold or services provided.



Window sign



CIVIC NUMBERS

They may seem inconsequential, but civic numbers can provide a unified look between buildings in a business district. Civic number signs are eligible within this program if they fit the following:

- Numbers must be mounted in the transom (above the front door) if possible. If the numbers cannot be mounted in the transom, they must be mounted in a position at least 2–2.5 metres above grade.
- Digits (e.g. 5423) must be at least 100 mm high.
- Digits must be in clearly legible letterforms; faux-scripts are not acceptable.
- Numbers must not be written out as words (e.g. “Five thousand four hundred and twenty three” is not acceptable).
- The civic number must be reflective, or must be lit (e.g. using façade lighting) so that it is visible at night.

Civic number



GENERAL INFORMATION



Correct



DO:

- consider how your signs address foot traffic on the sidewalk—how it looks and feels on the street is what matters
- ensure signs don't cover windows or trim elements (e.g. cornices)
- centre projecting signs under windows and/or the entire façade width



Incorrect

DO NOT:

- intrude on windows or doorways with fixed wall signs
- mount signs at or above second floor windows
- mount projecting wall or canopies lower than 3 metres above grade
- design façades lacking windows and/or doors of any kind



Lighting

The purpose of façade lighting is to make storefronts as welcoming at night as they are during the daytime.

Lights should be arranged to illuminate:

- signs (especially fascia signs)
- trim and other detail
- the entrance to the store

Carefully arranged lighting fixtures can make an entire building façade glow.

Gooseneck lamps (also known as RLM) are a highly recommended way to light a façade efficiently, without throwing light where it is not desired.

Lights must not be distracting, intermittent, or be directed to shine in the eyes of people on foot or in vehicles.



Examples of gooseneck lamps

Colour

While there are no regulations regarding colour choices, the Downtown Planning Advisory Committee (DPAC) will review an application involving colour changes based upon the following:

HOW TO SELECT A PALETTE?

Create a façade that is appealing and respects its surroundings by considering the paint colours which adorn trim, cladding and which is printed or painted on signs.

If the project is being designed by a professional (e.g. an architect), most professionals will recommend a palette during the design process.

Paint stores are accustomed to helping clients select colours and would generally be able to find an appropriate palette for a building façade.

Even when working with professionals, you may wish to have a starting point you're comfortable with. Select a colour you like from things around you (e.g. plants, clothing, wood, metal). Take a photo and bring it to your designer or paint retailer. The colour combinations that are possible are essentially infinite, but there are a few standard methods that yield appealing results.

COMPLEMENTARY

This is the most eye-grabbing scheme; it can be vibrant or jarring depending on the context. Complementary schemes use colours that are the highest possible contrast from each other, such as red/green.

Colours on opposite sides of the colour wheel are complementary.

ANALOGOUS

Colours which are next to each other on the colour wheel are analogous, and tend to be serene and comforting, such as blue/green or red/orange.

TINTS, SHADES AND TONES

If you are looking for a solid, subtle scheme that is harmonious and simple, select a single colour and then add white (tints), black (shades) or grey (tones). Schemes which use a few variations on a single colour are often called monochromatic.

Complementary, analogous and tints, shades and tones are just a few options. Several other methods are common!

Complementary



DO IT YOURSELF

For those that are producing their own design, free internet tools have made selecting and matching colours easy:

ADOBE COLOR

The user can select a desired colour wheel and find matches easily based on the methods above (e.g. complementary, monochromatic)

<https://color.adobe.com/>

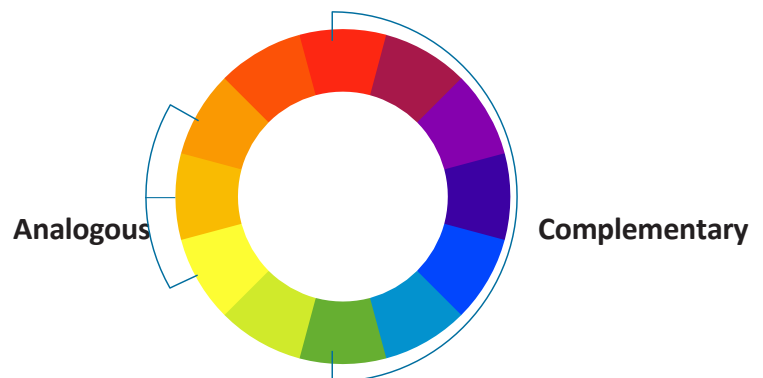
ENCYCOLORPEDIA

Input a standard "hex" computer colour, and it will be translated into named paint colours for many common paint brands: e.g. hex colour f0f015 is closely matched to manufacturer Glidden Paints' "Dazzling Daffodil" or to Sico's "6121-84 Mint Punch".

<http://encycolorpedia.com/>

HISTORICAL COLOUR

It is also possible to determine historically correct colours that would have been available in Oxford during the early days. There are several architects and heritage preservation consultants who can help to determine historical colours for buildings in Oxford.



Other resources for you ...

There are a number of other funding/granting programs available through external organizations and the Provincial government that may be of interest to you as you plan your next big renovation project.

We warmly invite you to explore the links and information shared on this page and contact the agencies that oversee these programs for information on how you can get the absolute most out of every dollar you invest in renovations to your business or commercial property!



Efficiency Nova Scotia is Canada's first energy efficiency utility offering rebates, financing, and expert advice to all types of businesses across Nova Scotia, including small businesses like yours. Your small business could benefit from rebates on high quality, energy efficient equipment, and programs that identify energy saving opportunities — reducing maintenance costs and improving your bottom line.

In addition to applying for funds through your local Façade Improvement program, we also encourage you to explore grant opportunities beyond our organization that may benefit you and your business or property!

For more information on programs available through Efficiency Nova Scotia, please visit www.energycns.ca/smallbusiness. You can also contact Efficiency Nova Scotia by phone at 1-877-999-6035.

BUSINESS ACCESS-ABILITY PROGRAM

The Nova Scotia Business ACCESS-Ability Program provides funding for businesses that are looking to cost-share accessibility related improvements. Improvements can be made for clients and customers, employees, or both!

There are five funding categories, including: built environment, accessible communications services, assistive devices, universal design capacity building, and accessible transportation.

For program information, please visit <https://cch.novascotia.ca/business-access-ability-grant-program> or phone 1-902-424-4408.



***For more information, please contact:
Town of Oxford
c/o Chief Administration Officer
105 Lower Main Street, Oxford, NS B0M 1P0
902-447-2170***