

# OPERATION DOWNTOWN

## **A Downtown Improvement Program of the City of Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation for Site Improvements and Related Improvements necessary to promote or develop new or expanded business enterprises**

A key element of a revitalization effort is the return of activity to a business corridor. These first few steps can be the spark to ignite interest and spur new business excitement. Operation Downtown provides a catalyst for these first steps. New site improvements and related improvements such as fresh paint, new awnings or complete façade rehabilitation all signal that something positive is happening. Operation Downtown is a conditional grant program available for site improvements and related improvements to business buildings located in Port Arthur Downtown Revitalization target areas (see attached map for target area boundaries). Projects will be granted up to \$250,000 to be matched by private or other source funds. For every three dollars of investment by private source funds into an Operation Downtown project Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC) will invest one dollar, not to exceed \$250,000 of public dollar investment.

**The purpose of Operation Downtown is to promote or develop new or expanded business enterprises in the designated downtown area as per the proposition approved by the voters in the May 2009 Special Election for site improvements and related improvements necessary to promote or develop new or expanded business enterprises which will also do the following:**

- Reverse the deterioration of business structures in the targeted areas.
- Enhance efforts to market vacant space and attract new businesses.
- Stimulate new, private investment and economic growth.
- Promote consistency in design and create a fresh and aesthetically pleasing environment.
- Assist property owners with the appropriate exterior rehabilitation of their buildings and bring them up to code.
- Reduce the perception of crime.
- Invest in historic preservation and rehabilitation.

This package contains other documents detailing the application process and information to assist you in completing the application. The package includes:

- This cover letter
- Basic Procedures and list of eligible projects
- Blank Application
- Map

For more information, contact:  
Port Arthur Downtown Revitalization Program  
4173 39<sup>th</sup> Street  
Port Arthur, TX 77642  
409-963-0579

## **ELIGIBLE PROJECTS**

### ***Project Description***

A conditional loan forgivable over five years may be provided to owners of eligible properties to undertake site improvements and related improvements which can include comprehensive exterior repair and façade upgrades or renovations, and infrastructure improvements including sidewalk repairs and landscaping in and adjacent to the public right-of-way. Conditional loan will be forgiven over a three year period at a rate of one third per year that the property is occupied, upon approval by the Board of Directors of PAEDC. The conditional loan assistance is provided to the property owner on a reimbursement basis as the renovation project progresses. All conditional loans shall be secured by private sector matching investment of three to one dollar from the property owner or a financial institution. The conditional loan shall be secured by a mortgage on the improved real estate.

### ***Eligible Properties***

Applications may be submitted for business properties, either owner or tenant occupied within the Port Arthur Downtown Revitalization target areas. Owners of vacant buildings are encouraged to apply and improve property as a catalyst for future occupancy. Mixed use buildings with retail/commercial in the storefront are also encouraged.

### ***Non Eligible Properties***

Properties used primarily as residences are not eligible for Operation Downtown.

### ***Eligible Applicants***

Business property and business owners located in eligible areas may apply for assistance. Tenants must have a signed lease and the property owner's approval. The City Council of the City of Port Arthur may also apply for assistance.

#### Exceptions

The Port Arthur City Council and the PAEDC Board of Directors are each allowed a one time grant with no match up to \$250,000 to be used within the three year period of the Program dependent on availability of funds.

### ***Eligible Improvements***

Operation Downtown will fund site improvement and related improvement projects. All improvements must be permanent or fixed. Eligible improvements may include, but are not limited to:

- complete facade and site rehabilitation;
- replacement of broken window panes, aluminum or wood windows and broken store front glass;
- scraping, priming, and painting of window frames, cornice and store front;
- painting of brick facade and sites where brick has been previously painted;
- repair or replace deteriorating signage and brackets when attached to the building;
- repair or replace missing or broken tile;
- repair or replace worn awnings or canopies;
- removal of metal slipcovers to expose original materials;
- certain types of security elements or security recommendations;
- rehabilitation of the upper facade and site and display areas or side walls of a building may also be eligible if street level improvements are approved;
- roof repair when incidental to overall facade and site improvements.
- Restore old historical facades
- Other site improvements as authorized by the proposition approved by the voters in the May 2009 Special Election

Other minor repairs when incidental to overall façade improvements such as:

- ✓ exterior lighting;
- ✓ certain types of security elements or security recommendations;
- ✓ roof repair;
- ✓ repair of sidewalk, ADA accessibility;
- ✓ detached signage;
- ✓ new construction;
- ✓ parking lots;
- ✓ landscaping;
- ✓ other improvements as approved by the EDC

In addition, professional, architectural, and City permit fees may be included in the total improvement costs.

### ***Ineligible Improvements***

The following improvements are not eligible for funding:

- burglar bars;
- fencing;

## **BASIC PROCEDURE**

### ***Step 1 - Applicant Eligibility***

- Business or property owners are eligible to apply for Operation Downtown funds if the business is 1 - located within a Port Arthur Downtown Revitalization target area; and 2 - utilized primarily for business purpose (this does NOT include residences or apartments).
- For information for Port Arthur Downtown Revitalization target area boundaries see map included herein or contact the Operation Downtown Coordinator or Port Arthur Downtown Revitalization Coordinator or the EDC CEO.
- If needed, a meeting at the site with the applicant, their contractor and Port Arthur Downtown Revitalization staff can be arranged to discuss the application process, area design guidelines and/or to develop a preliminary design concept.

### ***Step 2 – Complete The Application***

- The application (enclosed herein) is to be completed by the applicant (business owner, property owner or tenant). A completed application must contain information for all three parts: applicant information, property information and project information. Incomplete applications may result in delays in processing.
- Design assistance or preliminary project discussion meetings may be arranged if the applicant is uncertain what improvements are needed or would like suggestion. Inquires may be made to the Operation Downtown Coordinator at 409-963-0579.
- A completed application should be submitted to:
  - Port Arthur Downtown Revitalization Program
  - Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation
  - ATTN: Floyd Batiste, CEO
  - 4173 39<sup>th</sup> Street, Port Arthur, TX 77642
- Once an application is received, the Operation Downtown Coordinator will confirm eligibility of the site and the proposed scope of work, notify the applicant that the application has been received and is under review, and arrange a Project Review meeting.

- Projects that are eligible for funding will be considered on a first come, first served basis. There is no deadline; applications are accepted year round. However, projects may be limited due to budget constraints and funding availability. All approved projects must be completed within 18 months of contract date.

### **Step 3 - Project Review & Contract Execution**

- A Project Review meeting is required to be conducted prior to contract execution and construction beginning.
- A Design Review Team (Sub committee from PAEDC Board) will conduct the Project Review meeting with the applicant to review the application. A site visit may also be helpful but is not required.
- The Design Review Team will discuss the merits of the project and form a **recommendation** to either fund the project, or require the applicant to make changes and re-submit.
- The Design Review Team recommendation is presented to the PAEDC Board of Directors.
- If the recommendation is accepted by the EDC Board of Directors, the Design Review Team recommendation will be presented to the applicant to accept or withdraw.
- If approved, a Grant Agreement (contract) will be prepared by the EDC and affiliated attorneys or by the City Attorney and then forwarded to the EDC Board of Directors and to the City Council for approval
- The applicant and the EDC will sign the Grant Agreement. A fully executed Grant Agreement will be returned to the applicant. An Affirmative Covenant of Maintenance document is also signed and filed with the County Clerk's Office. **Start of the construction prior to the date of contract signing will void the grant.**

### **Step 4 – Construction**

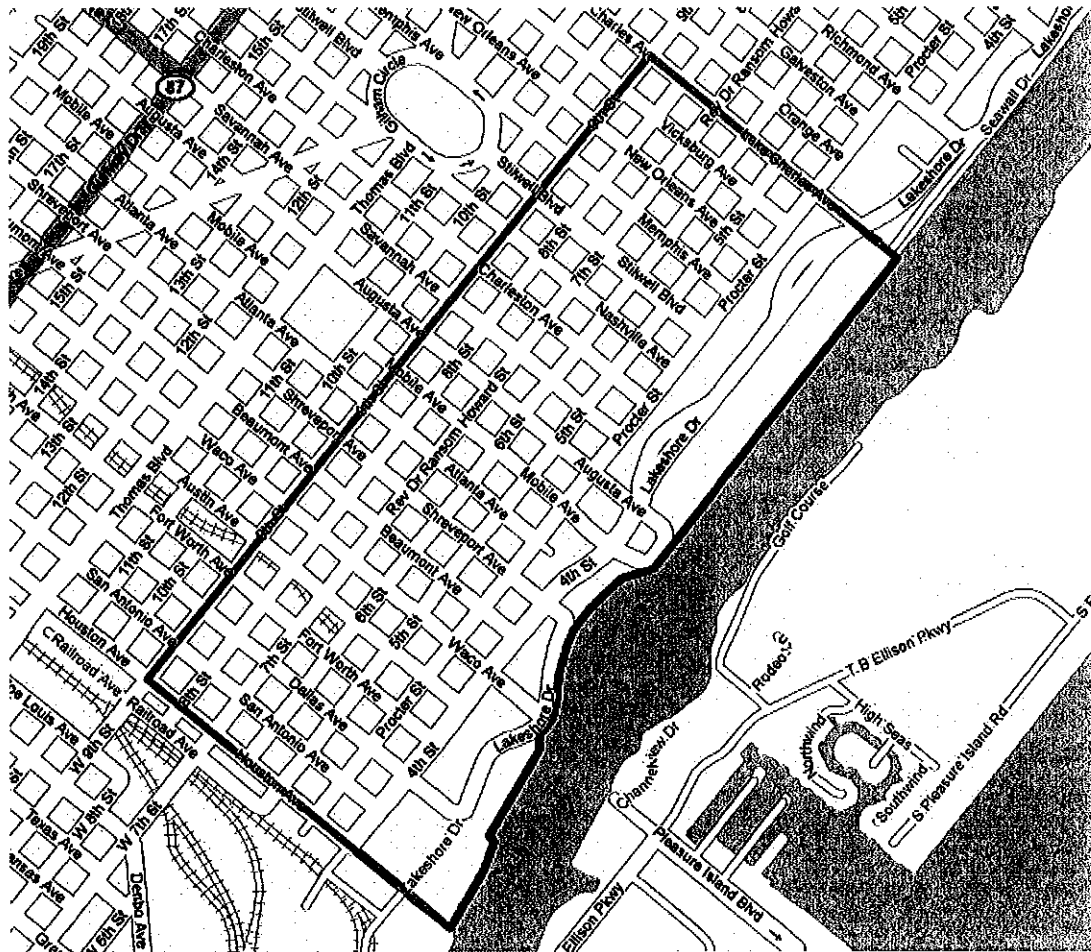
- A Pre-Construction Meeting will be held to go over construction scope of work, change orders, as well as other procedures. This meeting will usually be held on site, prior to construction but after the contract is signed. It is helpful if the applicants as well as contractors are present.
- If the improvements require a building permit, or approval from the Texas Historic Design and Review Commission, the applicant must comply. The City of Port Arthur Planning staff may be able to assist in the process on the applicant's behalf.
- A Sub committee from Board or City staff may monitor the progress and make periodic inspections during the project.

### **Step 5 – Reimbursement**

- Funds will be provided on a reimbursement basis ONLY.
- Reimbursement will be processed at 90% rate with 10% retained until completion of the work.

- Applicant will contact the PAEDC or City staff to conduct a final inspection. If all parties are satisfied with the work, the PAEDC and applicant will sign off on completion of the improvement.
- The applicant will complete the Project Completion form and submit it along with copies of invoices, canceled checks, asking for final reimbursement of applicable costs.
- When **all** work and documentation is received, the PAEDC staff will request payment. A final check will be sent to the applicant.

## Downtown Revitalization Target Area Map



The boundaries of the Downtown Revitalization Target area are Lakeshore Drive to the south, Houston Avenue to the west, 9<sup>th</sup> Street to the north and Lake Charles Avenue to the East. Properties on both sides of the right-of-way of the boundary roads will be considered for Operation Downtown funding.

**OPERATION DOWNTOWN**  
**Site Improvement Grant Program**  
**Application**

**APPLICANT INFORMATION**

Is the applicant a: Corporation Partnership Proprietorship Individual  
Name of Applicant: d/b/a \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: Work Home \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of Business: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROPERTY INFORMATION**

The Port Arthur Downtown Revitalization Target Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address of property to be improved: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Description: Lot Block Tax Account No \_\_\_\_\_

Does the applicant own or lease the property. \_\_\_\_\_

If leasing, please include copy of lease agreement and letter of approval from owner.

Is the property currently: occupied \_\_\_\_\_ vacant \_\_\_\_ if vacant, when will property be occupied (date) \_\_\_\_\_

What is the current and proposed use of the property?  
\_\_\_\_\_

How many **full time** employees, if any, does the business currently employ?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you anticipate hiring additional employees after the proposed improvements are complete? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If so, how many more?

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Description of Site Improvements and related improvements including improvements to facade:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Estimated total cost of project: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Attach Project Budget form)

Grant funds are available up to **\$250,000** per eligible property.

When does the project need to begin? \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated time to complete  
(Date)

job? \_\_\_\_\_  
(# of days)

**NOTE: Work must not start prior to contract execution.**

Attach:

1. Recent photos of the property **(required)**
2. Budget and supporting estimates **(required)**
3. Copy of lease and/or letter from property owner granting approval or copy of warranty deed (if applicable)
4. Proof of funds for 75% of the total cost of the project **(required)**
5. Drawings or renderings that convey concept (if available)
6. Paint chips, color board or other samples (if available)

*I certify that work has not started nor have I entered into any contract with any contractor for work to be covered under this grant application. I also understand that I will have to sign an agreement with the City of Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation to be approved by the City of Port Arthur regarding this grant award; a maintenance covenant will be filed to insure that the improvements will be maintained.*

Applicant signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant printed name \_\_\_\_\_