



# Covington Small Business Program Guidelines

## Historic Electric Signage

### A. Introduction

The **Small Business Program** is designed to stimulate the establishment of new Covington businesses and help existing Covington businesses expand. Our competitive program awards funding to projects that support small business growth, create jobs, leverage private investment, and will have a catalytic effect on our community. This program focuses on distinctive signage that exists throughout our commercial districts.

In addition to our many amazing historic buildings, Covington also has unique historic electrical signs throughout various commercial areas of the city. The recent reconstruction of the projecting sign at Rich's Proper (Madison and Seventh Street) showcases how attractive refreshed signage can be for generating foot traffic, slowing cars, demonstrating a vibrant district, and helping businesses improve their curb appeal.

The Historic Electric Sign program is a forgivable loan program focused on refurbishing dilapidated historic signage and incorporating these signs back into our commercial areas. This program offers new and existing businesses and commercial building owners a 75(city)/25(owner) matching grant (up to \$7,500) to offset costs for restoring existing projecting signs or installing a refurbished historic sign. The following items are eligible: mounting hardware, sign installation, sign refurbishment (including wiring and neon or related lighting fixtures) and rehabilitation or upgrading of electrical and structural attachment to the building. One sign grant per parcel (PIDN) per round may be funded.

Applications are reviewed quarterly. Applicants are required to schedule a meeting with the City's Historic Preservation Specialist to discuss the project BEFORE applying to receive a Certificate of Appropriateness. This applies to ALL applicants, even if the building is not historic or located in an Historic Preservation Overlay zone. All proposals are due by the final submission deadline and must have the required attachments to be considered.

	<b>Deadline to Meet with Preservation Specialist</b>	<b>Final Submission Deadline</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	July 5, 2024	July 19, 2024
<b>Round 2</b>	September 27, 2024	October 11, 2024
<b>Round 3</b>	January 17, 2025	January 31, 2025
<b>Round 4</b>	April 25, 2025	May 9, 2025

Please send a complete application to the Program Administrator. The City staff review all applications and recommends funding awards based on the criteria in the program guidelines and rating sheet. City staff will evaluate the strength of an application based on the Rating Sheets attached as Exhibit A. Depending upon funding availability and the strength of individual applicants utilizing the evaluation criteria, City staff can choose to recommend applicants to City Commission for final approval. If City Staff recommends funding for a project, the Program Administrator will then present the project to Commission for final approval. Funding agreements will be executed following Commission approval. **CONSTRUCTION STARTED PRIOR TO A SIGNED LOAN AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR REIMBURSEMENT.** After an agreement is signed, historic signs must

be installed within 12 months to be eligible for reimbursement. **Submission of an application is not a guarantee of funding.**

**Submit applications to:**  
Patrick Duffy, Program Administrator  
Phone: 859.292.2141  
Email: [PDuffy@covingtonky.gov](mailto:PDuffy@covingtonky.gov)  
Mail: 20 West Pike Street  
Covington, KY 41011

## B. Eligibility

Applicants must meet all the following requirements in order to be considered eligible to receive a Historic Electric Sign incentive under the Small Business Program:

- a) Applicant must own a commercial property located within the City of Covington to apply for the Historic Electric Sign Program. A business can also directly apply but must have the building owner as a co-applicant. The building cannot be owned by a public entity.
- b) One sign incentive per parcel (PIDN) is eligible per round of funding.
- c) The proposed sign improvements must be consistent with city's historic design guidelines and be approved by the City's Historic Preservation Specialist, even if the building is not historic or within a Historic Preservation Overlay. Applicants must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness.
- d) Applicant is encouraged to meet with representatives from the American Sign Museum in Cincinnati to go over possible refurbishments options, i.e., add lighting, paint, etc.
- e) The applicant(s) must be properly licensed to operate within the City of Covington, KY, Kenton County and Commonwealth of Kentucky, and the property must meet all City of Covington zoning requirements and meet all local and state building and health code requirements where applicable. This includes having an up-to-date rental license with the City if there are residential or short-term rental units also in the property.
- f) The applicant(s) must, at all times, be in compliance with City of Covington Good Standing Ordinance. Pursuant to City of Covington Code of Ordinances § 35.003, applicants and affiliated persons and/or entities for this program must not have made or filed pending adverse claims against the City in the form of settlement demands and/or lawsuits; nor shall they be delinquent on their obligations to pay loans, fines, liens, or other obligations owed to the City.
- g) In accordance with the City of Covington's Code of Ordinances Human Rights Commission requirements, § 32.040 et. seq., the Business shall not discriminate on the basis of any protected class, including but not limited to: race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, parental status, familial status, place of birth, disability, or natural texture, color of hair, hair styles, or protective hair styles (including, but not limited to braids, locks, twists, and coverings).

## C. Eligible Costs

Expenses incurred prior to execution of an agreement with the City **are not eligible** for reimbursement and all invoices/expenses must be constructed, billed, and submitted for reimbursement within the contract's term.

- a) The maximum forgivable loan is \$7,500. Which is a 75/25 match option, and the forgivable loan will reimburse the investment made by the building owner on a \$.75 to \$.25 basis up to \$10,000 in total project cost. The maximum total incentive per property is \$7,500.00 per sign.

- b) After approval and contract execution, approved participants will oversee the entire sign construction process. Applicants must complete sign rehabilitation, pay all contractors, and submit for reimbursement within 12 months after the contract's execution to be eligible for reimbursement.
- c) Applicants will submit one pay application requesting reimbursement for eligible expenses, which will include:
  - A signed "Project Completion Certification" form certifying that the expenses were incurred and were in accordance with the agreement.
  - All contractor invoices submitted for reimbursement, which should be dated and itemized so staff can review all expenses (materials vs labor) at the property.
  - A signed covenant protecting the sign from removal, sale or demolition and transferring ownership of the sign to the City in the event of voluntary removal within 25 years of the date of reimbursement.
  - Canceled checks or digital proof for all payments made to contractors.
  - Before and after photo documentation.

#### D. General Program Requirements

- ❖ Source and Use of Funds: All sources and uses of funds for the project must be identified when the application is submitted to the City and in place at the time of the award agreement.
- ❖ Sign Reconstruction: Applicants will oversee the entire reconstruction process. Applicants will be required to comply with the City's "Good Neighbor" guidelines regarding minimizing construction interference on the public. Applicant must utilize professional contractors, and work cannot be done "in house" using applicant's own employees. In order to be eligible for reimbursement, applicants shall ensure that: construction is completed, all contractors were paid, Applicant's contractors paid all applicable City taxes and occupational licenses fees relating to the work, and that Applicant submits a final pay application to the City for reimbursement within 12 months after the contract's execution.
- ❖ Site Visits: City staff will conduct a site visit before and after construction. Staff may also conduct unannounced site visits periodically to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement.
- ❖ Repayment terms: The monitoring period is 3 years. Full repayment of the historic electric sign incentive is required should the sign be voluntarily removed or destroyed within 3 years.
- ❖ Sign Contractors: Part of the City's rating sheet criteria is the preference for using local Covington contractors. The City does not recommend specific companies, however, a list of local contractors who have asked to be on a reference list is available upon request. We also recognize that restoring signs is a specific trade and might not always be feasible to find an appropriate Covington contractor. NOTE: This is an excellent way to increase the score of your application, if available. Also, please be aware that substitution for non-local Covington Contractor's after an application has been approved may result in a 50% reduction of the eligible reimbursement amount.

#### E. The Application Process

- 1) Presubmittal Meeting: All applicants MUST meet with the Historic Preservation Specialist to review their project before submitting an application. Applicants should have current photos of the sign(s) and any drawings of the proposed alterations to signage to the meeting. To schedule a meeting, please call Kaitlin Bryan, Historic Preservation Specialist at (859) 292 - 2171 or email at [kaitlin.bryan@covingtonky.gov](mailto:kaitlin.bryan@covingtonky.gov) at least one week prior to the submission deadline. **Please, no drop-ins.**

- 2) **Schedule:** Applicants will hear back from the Project Administrator within three weeks of the application deadline about whether they have been recommended for funding or not. If an applicant has been recommended for funding, it will be forwarded to City Commission for final approval. Altogether, it takes about two months after submitting before construction can begin.
- 3) **Application:** Due to the competitive nature of this program, the City will not accept incomplete applications. The required checklist is below:
  - Completed and signed application.
  - All contractor quotes, bids, and drawings of proposed improvements.
  - Attach evidence of financing/equity equal to the total project cost (bank letter or checking account statement).
  - Design Recommendations from Historic Preservation Specialist.
  - Evidence of 50%+ women, minority, LGBTQ+, Covington Fire/Police Employee (or spouse), or veteran-ownership, if applicable.
  - Completed W-9.
  - Signed letter from American Sign Museum stating they have completed a consultation with applicant (optional but encouraged).
  - Bonus Points for providing evidence that Sign is 50+ years old.
- 4) **Application Evaluation Criteria:** This is a competitive incentive program. Applicants should review the rating sheet and demonstrate why their project should receive city funding. This is your opportunity to stand out from the crowd. Submission of an application is not a guarantee of funding. The City's Incentive Review Group will evaluate the strength of an application based on the Rating Sheets attached as Exhibit A. Depending upon funding availability and the strength of individual applicants, The City's Incentive Review Group can choose to recommend applicants to City Commission for final approval
- 5) **Appeals:** If an applicant is not recommended for funding, applicants may appeal their request directly to the City Manager, who has the final determination. The City Manager's review shall be limited to the materials submitted in the applicant's application.
- 6) **Conflict of Interest:** Applicants shall ensure a conflict of interest does not exist. A conflict of interest exists if an applicant is an employee, agent, consultant, officer, elected or appointed official to the City of Covington, and if the applicant: exercises or has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to funds for this program, or participates in the decision-making process related to funds for this program, or is in a position to gain inside information with regard to program activities. If a conflict of interest exists, the applicant may not obtain assistance under this program. If there is any doubt of the conflict of interest, a written waiver may be obtained from the City of Covington. Additionally, the prohibition against conflicts of interest, gratuities and kickbacks in KRS 45A.455 are specifically incorporated herein. By submitting an application, the Applicant warrants that no conflict of interest exists.

#### **F. Program Agreement**

An executed agreement between the applicant and the City is required in order for the applicant to receive fund disbursements.

**The City of Covington, Kentucky is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and encourages the participation of minority and female business enterprises (M/WBE) and Section 3 entities**

Exhibit A

Small Business Program

Historic Electric Signage Rating Sheet

---

Applicant: FOR REFERENCE ONLY – DO NOT FILL OUT

Address of Structure (Location of Sign): \_\_\_\_\_

Business District / Neighborhood: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Rating Categories	Score =	TOTAL
<b>1) Project is “Ready To Go” (4 points are possible)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Available funds/bank letter (1 point)</li><li>• All quotes and selected contractors identified (up to 3 points)</li></ul>	=	_____
<b>2) Amount of matching investment (4 points are possible)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 25% match= 1 point</li><li>• 50% match = 2 points</li><li>• 100% match = 3 points</li><li>• 100+% match = 4 points</li></ul>	=	_____
<b>3) Shop Local (up to 4 points are possible)</b> Hires Covington contractors/businesses (4 points for hiring all Cov contractors-)	=	_____
<b>4) Willingness to work with partners (2 points are possible)</b> Consulted with American Sign Museum on refurbishing (Bonus +2 points)	=	_____
<b>5) Project’s Neighborhood Impact (6 points are possible)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project impact &amp; neighborhood’s need for investment (up to 2 points)</li><li>• Highly visible location, ex. corner store (up to 4 points)</li></ul>	=	_____
<b>6) Women, Minority, LGBTQ+, Covington Fire/Police Employee, or Veteran-owned (If so, +2 bonus points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Evidence of women, minority, or veteran-ownership attached.</li></ul>	=	_____
<b>7) Evidence Sign is 50+ years (If so, +2 bonus points)</b>	=	_____

(24 points are possible) TOTAL SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_



Covington Historic Electric Sign Examples





**Examples of Covington Historic Signs that could use program (not an exhaustive list)**

- Sim's Furniture: 727 Madison Ave
- Covington Chili: 707 Madison Ave
- Sam's Ice Cream and Candy: 207 W Pike Street
- Landwehr Hardware and Toys: 826 Madison Ave
- Madison Theater: 730 Madison Avenue
- Motch's Jewelers clock: 613 Madison Ave
- Rental Space - 13-15 W. Southern Ave. (the old theater converted into business/apartment space)
- Reeve's Chiropractic Health Center - 3631 Decoursey Ave. (Two old signs + clocks on sides of building)



**2024-2025 Application**

---

Property Owner Name (as registered with the KY SOS): \_\_\_\_\_ Project Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Women, minority, LGBTQ+, Covington Fire/Police, or veteran-own \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Mailing Address (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Occupational License Number: \_\_\_\_\_ List of other Associated Legal Entities who have received prior City funding (please include Entity's Occupational License number)

Business Tenant Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Description of the proposed Historic Sign Enhancements (attach separate page if necessary):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How will sign improvements benefit the current commercial user, a future user, and/or the business district: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Scope of Work & Budget Itemized**

**Costing of Signage Improvements:**

Electric	\$ _____
Painting	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

**Is the Project Ready to Go?**

Project Construction Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Est. Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sources of Funding**

Private Funds: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ City's Contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signage Private to Public Leverage Match: \_\_\_\_\_ 1

Are you also privately making exterior/interior improvements? If so, how much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have documentation that the sign is 50+years? \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION IS NOT A GUARANTEE OF FUNDING\*\***





**Shop Local:**

Covington contractors (interior or exterior, please list)?

---

NKY or Non-Covington contractors: \_\_\_\_\_

**Design Assistance:**

Did you incorporate any recommendations from the Historic Preservation Officer and/or American Sign Museum? If so, please describe:

---

**Other:** Are you receiving grant assistance from any other governmental agencies? Yes | No

If yes, list any additional grant sources and amounts: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**CERTIFICATION AND WAIVER OF PRIVACY**

I, the undersigned, applicant(s) certify that all information presented in this application, and all of the information furnished in support of the application, is given for the purpose of obtaining a grant or forgivable loan under the City of Covington Small Business Program, and it is true and complete to the best of the applicant(s) knowledge and belief. The applicant(s) further certifies that he/she is aware of the fact that he/she can be penalized by fine and/or imprisonment for making false statements or presenting false information.

I understand that this application is not a guarantee of grant assistance. Should my application be approved, I understand that the City of Covington may at its sole discretion discontinue subsidy payments or reimbursement at any time for cause. I hereby give my consent to the City of Covington, its agents and contractors to examine any confidential information given herein. I further grant permission, and authorize any bank, employer or other public or private entity or agency to disclose information deemed necessary to complete this application.

I understand that this grant agreement is subject to conditions in the attached Small Business Guidelines and dependent on an executed contract with the City of Covington.

I understand that if this application and the information furnished in support of the application are found to be incomplete, it will not be processed.

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION IS NOT A GUARANTEE OF FUNDING\*\***



2024-2025 Application

---

**Supporting Documentation Checklist**

Please EMAIL your application packet with the following documentation:

- Completed and signed application
- All contractor quotes, bids, and drawings of proposed improvements
- Attach evidence of financing/equity equal to the total project cost (bank letter or checking account statement).
- Any design recommendations from Historic Preservation Specialist
- Evidence of 50%+ women, LGBTQ+, Covington Fire/Police, minority, or veteran-ownership, if applicable.
- Completed W-9
- Signed letter from American Sign Museum stating they have completed a consultation with applicant (OPTIONAL)
- Bonus Points for providing evidence that Sign is 50+ years
- Approved Certificate of Appropriateness
- List of other Associated Legal Entities who have received prior City funding (please include Entity's Occupational License #s)

**\*\*SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION IS NOT A GUARANTEE OF FUNDING\*\***