

NEW YORK MAIN STREET GRANT

GRANTS AT WORK ON MYRTLE AVENUE

Since 2004, the Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project LDC (MARP) has been assisting property owners and merchants with façade and building improvement projects by providing matching grant dollars. These grant dollars, which can cover 75% of a project's costs, are provided from the State's New York Main Street program. MARP has continually applied and received four rounds of funding from the State, awarding more than **\$827,500** in grants to Myrtle Avenue merchants and property owners. Please contact us to learn more.

Former Hollywood Produce

(Anthony Venezia, 555-559 Myrtle)

The Venezia's received a grant in 2012 to pay for more than 40% of their building improvement project. The project included a cleaning and repainting of the 3-story building, as well as the restoration of the three historic storefronts on the first floor. After the project, the once vacant storefronts rented to new tenants, bringing in new income for the owners.

By the Numbers

\$77,000 — **\$38,750** = **\$38,250**
TOTAL PROJECT COST COST TO APPLICANT TOTAL GRANT AWARD



Before & After, 555-559 Myrtle

The Emerson (Sam Barron, 561 Myrtle)

In 2010, The Emerson bar installed a new storefront on a once-vacant garage building on Myrtle, between Emerson & Classon. NYMS covered half of the project. The grant allowed for a once blank wall to become an active storefront and a desirable spot for a new business. The wooden storefront, signage and lighting all respect the historic character of the building.

By the Numbers

\$80,000 — **\$40,000** = **\$40,000**
TOTAL PROJECT COST COST TO APPLICANT TOTAL GRANT AWARD



Before & After, 449 Myrtle

How New York Main Street Can Work for You

Do you have work you would like to do to your property or store? Grant dollars are available to help you with your project.

For every dollar you spend on your project, the available grant can contribute an additional 3 dollars. Each project has a maximum grant award, but that amount depends on the size and scope of a project.

To find out how much money you could receive for your project, contact the Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project LDC.

To learn more or apply, contact Chad Purkey at MARP:

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4 : Rounds of funding received by MARP from NY State

29 : Completed building improvement projects

\$827,500 : Grant dollars given to local merchants & owners

\$2,100,000 : Dollars invested by local merchants & owners

Best Practices

- ⇒ **Photos:** Photo documentation is the best way to measure success and the impacts your façade improvement program is having. Of course, taking before and after photos of specific projects is necessary. But also, taking a photo every year or two of each building in your district allows you to see the impact on an entire block or through the entire district.
- ⇒ **Illustrations & Renderings:** In many cases, it's worthwhile to create a hand drawn sketch or computer rendering of the "ideal" storefront or façade improvement project *before* meeting with a merchant or property owner. With this rendering in hand, the applicant can see the highest standards you have in mind and negotiating from there can ensure a quality design.
- ⇒ **Contractor Recommendations:** The best asset you can provide merchants is a list of reliable contractors. It's important to keep this list up to date and always changing based on recently completed projects. This means both removing ineffective contractors (which will happen often) and adding proven ones. Also, even if you recommend a trusted contractor, always get an up-to-date reference to make sure the contractor's quality of work is still high.
- ⇒ **Communication:** Most conversations around façade improvement projects occur in person or over the phone. I keep a log of each conversation for each project. This helps me to (1), accurately remember what was said when and (2) provide a record that I can revisit when needing to remind applicants about previous agreements, discussions and when paperwork was delivered.
- ⇒ **Create an Individualized Project Schedule:** For each storefront project, develop a custom schedule with intermediate deadlines. I add these deadlines to my work calendar and it reminds me to then send reminders to applicants and contractors about our project schedule and keeping things on track.
- ⇒ **Stuck on Repeat:** Repeat the guidelines and rules of your storefront program often and always! It's amazing how often people choose not to hear you.

Common Challenges

- ⇒ **Budget:** Merchants and property owners will always want to keep the project as inexpensive as possible. This inevitability requires some work on your part to know how to prioritize items in the scope of work and where to cut corners on materials. Some general tips here is to make sure to receive itemized estimates, which will help in removing items from the scope of work. Also, be prepared to prioritize the scope of work (with applicant input) so you can quickly and easily decide which parts of the project to scrap and which portions of the project can get shortchanged in terms of materials.
- ⇒ **Project Schedule:** Keeping projects on schedule is the most common challenge because there are so many variables and players involved (usually several contractors and material suppliers). See best practices above for some tips.
- ⇒ **Keeping to the Original Scope of Work:** Some details, like materials or small design tweaks, will inevitably need changing throughout a project. It is important to state from the beginning that applicants need to communicate all of these changes to you. The best thing to do is to be the direct contact person to the contractor from the get-go, that way any necessary changes can be communicated directly to you by the contractor and it can be your responsibility to loop-in the merchant and convene the conversation between everyone, which ensures you are part of the discussion.
- ⇒ **Encouraging Creativity in Design:** It is too easy for merchants to see work on a neighboring storefront and want to replicate it. This isn't always the best option because it can lead to a dull looking commercial district. I am constantly taking photos of storefronts and signage that can serve as models and pulling images from Google searches to show to merchants that will help get creative juices flowing. Also, consulting with a graphic designer (if available) is always helpful.
- ⇒ **Making It Clear That You're A Funder:** If you are providing matching grants, it's important to make it clear up front that you are supplying money for the project, which allows you to have a say in the project and it's outcome. Often, merchants can make changes without telling you and you'll find a different storefront that what you agreed to at the beginning. Make sure everyone understands that you have a say in the outcome and have "needs" that need met.