



## **Watauga Commercial Improvement Program (WCIP)**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Watauga Commercial Improvement Program is to revitalize commercial properties in the City of Watauga in order to improve the visual image of commercial property within the City. To help achieve this goal, the City desires to stimulate investment in commercial properties by partnering with commercial property owners of buildings or structures that are fifteen (15) years or older and encouraging compliance with regulations.

### **Concept of Program**

This is a matching grant program where the City will provide a 25% matching grant of not more than \$10,000.00 per property for the funding of eligible improvements (listed below). Applicants are required to make a minimum investment of \$10,000.00 for each property, which would result in a City investment of \$2,500.00 per said property.

### **Application Process**

1. Application Required:
  - a. In order to ensure accountability, fairness and compliance with all applicable regulations, each incentive request will be subject to a uniform application process.
  - b. Process Steps Include:
    1. Pre-Application Conference with Economic Development Staff.
    2. Submission of Application.
    3. Application Review and Analysis by Economic Development Staff.
    4. Preparation of Executive Session Presentation to City Council.

5. City Council Recommendation.
6. Pre-Design Conference with Economic Development & Planning Staff.
7. Staff Review of Design.
8. Incentive Agreement Drafting & Revision.
9. Applicant Submission of Signed Agreements.
10. Public Hearing with City Council;
11. and City Council Approval or Denial\*.

\*All applications remain confidential as allowed under state law until this point (unless otherwise arranged between the City and the applicant).

**Eligibility Criteria include the following:**

1. Commercial properties in the City of Watauga;
2. Preference will be given to independent businesses not required by contractual agreement to maintain standardized décor, architecture, signs or similar features;
3. Written approval from property owners is required;
4. Nonconforming signs will be removed and replaced;
5. Applicants must meet minimum budget requirement of \$10,000.00 for all improvements per property;
6. Property owners must be current on all ad valorem taxes pertaining to the subject property and provide documentation of same;
7. Applicants must comply with all Federal, State & local laws and regulations;
8. The City has discretion to decline an application; and
9. Approved projects must be consistent with the overall objective of the program— to enhance the visual image of the City and the property itself.

**Eligible Improvements include the following:**

1. Wall signage;

2. Window replacement and window framing visible from the exterior of the building and appropriately scaled to building;
3. Monument signage;
4. Additional signage that is attractively integrated into architecture of building, including the window area, awnings, canopies and entryways;
5. Visually appealing lighting that illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of building façade;
6. Curbing, irrigation, approved trees, landscaping beds (not including planting material) or other landscaping features attached to building where appropriate, not to exceed twenty percent (20%) of project budget;
7. Cleaning, repainting or residing of building to improve visual appeal;
8. Resurfacing and/or restriping of parking lots visible from street not to exceed fifty percent (50%) of project budget;
9. Sidewalks being in the public right of way shall be in compliance with subdivision regulations;
10. New storefront construction appropriately scaled within existing building; and
11. Removal of architectural barriers to public accessibility.

If the application is approved by City Council, there will be a waiver of building permit and sign permit fees.

Please complete the separate application for consideration.

Thank you for your interest in investing in the improvement of your property and in the City of Watauga.