

# Lawrenceville Corporation

## Sign Grant Program Guidelines

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD SIGNAGE**

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First impressions have a lasting influence. That's why it's important that neighborhood business districts like Butler Street and Penn Avenue present an appealing image to potential customers, tenants, and investors. Signs are particularly important. When well designed and properly maintained, signs enhance the unique image of a neighborhood and favorably influence people's perceptions of individual businesses and the district as a whole.

#### ***Important things to consider when designing a sign for your business:***

- Does the design of the sign take into account the historic character of the building and the neighborhood?
- Does the sign reflect the image of your business? Is it attractive enough to entice new customers?
- Is your sign readable? Do the typeface, color, and design make it easy for customers to recognize your business?
- Can your sign be seen at night?

**Remember that your signage is a reflection of your business. A well-designed and attractive sign can increase customer traffic and business awareness.**

### **SIGN GRANTS**

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The Mainstreets and Real Estate Committees of the Lawrenceville Corporation (LC) recognize the importance of attractive signage to the success of individual businesses and the entire Butler Street and Penn Avenue business districts. To help small businesses afford attractive signage, the committees created the Sign Grant Program.

The Sign Grant Program offers 50/50 matching grants to businesses in the Butler Street and Penn Avenue business districts. Businesses in buildings that have been rehabilitated or renovated are eligible for up to \$500 of matching grant funds. Proof of payment or of in-kind donation will be considered for the business/property owner's match. Sign grants are reimbursable grants, which mean business/property owners must pay the sign fabrication and installation fees up front, and then be reimbursed for half of the fees up to \$500.

## **CRITERIA**

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To qualify for a sign grant through the LC's program, you must meet the following criteria:

- The sign must be placed in the Butler Street and Penn Avenue Local Neighborhood Commercial (LNC) districts. Maps of the LNC districts are available from the Office of City Planning, but in general, the Butler Street LNC is from 34<sup>th</sup> to 56<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Lawrenceville portion of the Penn Avenue LNC is from 34<sup>th</sup> to 45<sup>th</sup> Streets. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Real Estate Committee.
- Eligible businesses include retail, wholesale, and professional and personal service establishments.
- Liquor-serving businesses (any business with a current or pending liquor license) are eligible for sign grants only after the 30-day Public Notice on their license has closed and they have participated in Lawrenceville's Community Liquor License Process during the 30 day window.
- Adult entertainment facilities, used car lots, and non-independently owned gas stations, fast food establishments, banks, and convenience stores are not eligible for sign grants.
- Must be a member of the Lawrenceville Corporation in good standing.

## **USE**

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Eligible businesses may use sign grant money for:

- Fabrication and installation of business identification signs including, but not limited to, projecting signs, wall signs, sandwich board signs, transom and/or storefront window signs, and awnings.
- Fabrication and installation of shielded external sign lighting including, but not limited to, spotlights, goose neck lights, florescent tube lights, halogen lights, and neon lights.
- Fabrication and installation of directional signage in the main business districts (Butler Street and Penn Avenue) noting businesses off of the main districts.
- Internally illuminated box signs are not an acceptable sign and will not be funded, regardless of illumination.

## **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

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Signs must follow the following design guidelines set by the Streetface Façade Improvement Grant Program, administered by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (the complete design guidelines are available on the URA's website: (<http://www.ura.org/streetfaceProgram.html>):

- (a) Number: A maximum of one wall, one window sign, and one awning sign per first-floor business, and one projecting sign (if permitted) per entrance into a business, shall be permitted per street facade. A maximum of two window signs and one awning sign per upper-floor business shall be permitted.

- (b) Type: Only business and identification signs shall be permitted; advertising signs and mass-produced signs supplied by national distributors shall not be permitted.
- (c) Size: Wall signs shall be a maximum of two square feet in area for every lineal foot of building frontage, up to a maximum of 40 square feet (though they may be limited by district-specific zoning guidelines). Window signs shall be a maximum of 20% of the glazed area of storefront windows in area, or a maximum of 50% of the glazed area of upper-floor windows in area. Awning signs may include one small business identification sign (measuring no more than six inches in height) on the front vertical flap of the awning. Projecting signs, if permitted, shall meet the zoning ordinance in terms of size and placement. For businesses located on a corner and having two street facades, the frontage on each street shall be computed and employed separately for the determination of sign areas.
- (d) Location: No sign may be placed in such a way as to obscure any architectural feature or ornament. Signs for first-floor businesses shall be located below the sills of the second-floor windows, preferably on the lintel or signboard over the storefront. Signs may be painted onto the insides of the storefront windows. Signs for upper-floor businesses shall be painted onto the insides of the upper-floor windows. No signs shall be located on the roof of the building, nor shall the supports for any sign extend above the cornice of the building.
- (e) Materials: Wall signs shall be painted onto wood, metal, or opaque plastic backboards, or individually-applied letters may be used. Individually-illuminated channel letters, back-lit (silhouetted) letters, neon signs, and signs illuminated by small shielded spotlights may be used. Internally-illuminated plastic-faced box signs, and signs that move, flash or are intermittently illuminated, shall not be permitted.

While these are general design guidelines, note that the Real Estate Committee has the ultimate discretion to approve or deny requests for sign grants.

## **APPLICATION STEPS**

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***IMPORTANT: Do not fabricate or install your sign before the LC's Real Estate Committee reviews and approves the plans. The LC cannot pay for work done prior to granting approval.***

1. Contact Ed Nusser at the LC, at 412-621-1616 x 106 or [ed@lawrencevillecorp.com](mailto:ed@lawrencevillecorp.com) to receive a copy of the Sign Grant Program application and zoning regulations regarding allowable signage in the City of Pittsburgh. All signs must meet the City's guidelines for signs, including meeting code and permitting requirements. Contact the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Building Inspection at 412-255-2175 or [BBIDPWRequests@city.pittsburgh.pa.us](mailto:BBIDPWRequests@city.pittsburgh.pa.us) to find

out about any permits you need to acquire. The applicant is responsible for obtaining and paying for sign permits, however the permits must be applied for by a licensed sign fabricator.

2. Submit sign grant application to the LC for review along with the following materials:
  - Current photo of the building, including all sides where signage will be placed.
  - Professionally drawn, color copies of your plans for signage, which specify color, material, and position on building, size, and typeface.
  - **NOTE:** Complete applications, including all supporting materials, must be submitted to the LC one week before the Real Estate Committee meeting, which typically meets the first Friday of the month.
3. If the sign is being installed on property not owned by the business owner seeking the sign grant, you must submit express written permission along with the application.
4. The LC's Real Estate Committee will review and vote on your sign plans and will notify you within one week of the committee meeting. If your sign fails to meet the committee's approval for a sign grant, the committee will make recommendations to qualify your sign. **IMPORTANT: Do not fabricate or install your sign before the LC's Real Estate Committee reviews and approves the plans. The LC cannot pay for work done prior to granting approval.**
5. You will be notified in writing if your design and bids have been approved and can then begin fabricating and installing your sign. You must present a copy of the sign permit to the LC before grant reimbursement. Send your receipts for fabrication and installation to the Lawrenceville Corporation, Attn: Sign Grant Program, 100 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 106, Pittsburgh PA 15201. You will be reimbursed within 30 days of receipt of your payment receipt.

#### **ABOUT THE LAWRENCEVILLE CORPORATION**

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The Lawrenceville Corporation is a non-profit community development corporation whose mission is to serve as a catalyst and conduit for responsible growth and reinvestment in Lawrenceville through business development, real estate development, community planning, and neighborhood beautification. The Real Estate Committee of the LC provides direction for the LC's Real Estate program, reviews and analyzes real estate projects, and facilitates requests for Streetface façade grants.

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