



Residential Façade Program Guidelines and Procedures 2024-25

Description/Purpose

Slate Belt Rising, a program of the Community Action Lehigh Valley (CALV), partners with the boroughs of Wind Gap, Pen Argyl, Bangor, and Portland to carry out a Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) with support from corporate partners and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Neighborhood community revitalization is accomplished through implementation of the, "Slate Belt Rising Community Plan 202-2028," which encourages blighted property remediation, upgrading the existing housing stock, and increasing homeownership opportunities.

This residential façade program is intended to improve the external appearance of residential properties in highly visible locations in targeted areas of Wind Gap, Pen Argyl, Bangor and Portland.

Applicant Eligibility

1) Owner-occupied residential, locally-owned residential rental properties, and investor-owned residential properties are eligible, as long as their properties are located in the Boroughs of Bangor, Pen Argyl, Portland and Wind Gap. The applicant must be the property owner. Although properties throughout the boroughs are eligible, applications for properties located within the boundaries below will receive higher priority.

- **Wind Gap:** *Along Broadway, Lehigh Avenue (SR 512), and E 3rd Street from the intersection with S Broadway to the intersection with Longcore and Church Roads*
- **Pen Argyl:** *within one block of the core commercial district, Robinson Avenue, East and West Main Street, Pennsylvania Avenue (from Slate Belt YMCA intersection to E Main intersection), Railroad Avenue, Broad Street, and Chestnut Street.*
- **Bangor:** *Within one block of the core commercial district near the intersection of SR 512 and SR 191, Pennsylvania Avenue up to and including 4th Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and Church Street, South Main Street, Messinger Street, Bangor Street, 2nd Street between Bangor Street and Church Street, and 3rd Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and Church Street.*

- **Portland:** *Along State Street, Main Street, and Delaware Avenue*

2) The applicant must submit a complete application and fulfill the approval process prior to beginning the project.

3) Applications are to be submitted to the office of Slate Belt Rising by a deadline that will be established by the appropriate SBR Committee. Applications received after the deadline will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. However, participation may be prioritized to homeowners and property owners at specific income levels based on funding requirements. Priority will always be given to those projects which create a positive impact on the community as determined by the Slate Belt Rising's Affordable and Quality Housing Sub-Committee, or projects in areas where strategic public and private investments are planned or are occurring. Rental/Investor property applications must be reviewed and approved by a borough-authorized agent in the appropriate Borough prior to SBR Committee approval.

4) All property owners must satisfy all encumbrances to the appropriate municipality, County, and School District taxes, which must be documented by a municipal tax certification in the file. The property may not have any outstanding municipal debt or other municipal liens.

5) If an individual property owner or any person/entity with an interest in the property for which funding is being applied, has one or more properties with documented code violations and/or a property that is considered a "nuisance" property, they may not be eligible for the façade program, subject to the discretion of each Borough.

6) Sufficient homeowners' insurance coverage is required for each property. CALV must be added as additional insured for at least the length of the construction period. Case files must document the insurance coverage.

7) A property which benefited from a facade grant in the last ten years may be permitted to participate in the program again based on the property's current state-of-repair, as determined by the Affordable and Quality Housing Sub-Committee.

8) CALV is responsible for ensuring that its grants and programs benefit the community to the greatest extent possible. Thus, local decision-making is an integral part of this process. The CALV Board of Directors and the Slate Belt Rising Steering Committees are made up of volunteers who make decisions based on the needs of their communities. These volunteers decide how to distribute funds granted to CALV by private corporations. Because funds are used to benefit the community as a whole, rather than benefiting private individuals, applicants must show that a public benefit results from their project.

9) Applicants must be in compliance with the CALV conflict of interest policy, meaning a person who is in a decision-making position or who has functional responsibilities regarding this façade project may not obtain a financial benefit from the façade activity. Applicants will be asked whether they or their immediate family members are employed by CALV, whether they serve on the Slate Belt Rising Steering Committee or Sub-Committee overseeing the façade project, or whether they ever provided gifts or services to CALV.

10) If the application materials, including supporting documentation, are not provided to staff within 30 days of request, CALV may reject an application.

Property Eligibility

- 1) The proposed project must seek to improve the physical appearance of the exterior/visible structure in accordance with the applicable design principles or guidelines established for this purpose.
- 2) Properties must be structurally sound to be eligible. The property owner must agree to a building code inspection of the exterior of the structure to be completed by the Borough building inspector, where applicable.
- 3) All proposed corrective actions or alterations completed by the current property owner without proper permits and/or all construction started before approval of the application will not be eligible for reimbursement through a façade grant.

Eligible Improvements

A project must enhance the primary façade, which is any side of the building facing a public street. Buildings situated on street corners or with facades facing two public streets or those facing a public space, such as a park, may be eligible for two façade grants.

Proposed facade improvements must bring the property into code compliance and should preserve the original building design and be sympathetic to the architectural character of the surrounding neighborhood. Eligible improvements may include:

- 1) Restoration of architectural details and removal of elements covering architectural or historic details.
- 2) Cleaning and/or repainting of building exteriors.
- 3) Repointing of brick or repairing cornices.
- 4) Installation of appropriate lighting to illuminate the exterior of a property.
- 5) Removal and replacement of awnings.
- 6) Installing or removing gutter and downspout systems in conjunction with other façade improvements.
- 7) Wood repair.
- 8) Energy Star rated and historically appropriate entrance lighting.
- 9) Repair of deteriorated windows, sashes, sills, and framing visible from the street.
- 10) Replacement or upgrade of porches, balustrades, columns/supports, steps, or railings.

11) Replacement or upgrade of doors.

12) Replacement of miscellaneous façade items such as house numbers and mailboxes for a unified façade appearance.

13) Replacement or improvement of roofs as approved by the Neighborhoods and Housing Committee on a case-by-case basis.

14) Landscaping such as flower boxes, planters, and shrubbery.

15) Sidewalk repair/replacement in conjunction with other eligible façade improvements as listed above requires a 2:1 match, not to exceed \$5,000 of the total project cost and work must be compliant with the borough's code of ordinances where applicable.

It is not the intent of this program to subsidize routine building maintenance, but rather to alter and improve the overall appearance of a building's façade through removal of inappropriate design elements. Removal of historic features is not permitted.

Terms of the Grant

1) Up to \$5,000 grant for income-qualified, owner-occupied households whose total household income is at or less than 80% of the prevailing area median income as determined by HUD. (See Housing Program Income Guidelines below) Required 1:1 cash match to be provided by source other than homeowner, i.e. NPP funds, Borough funds, or other. Thus, homeowners may receive up to \$10,000 in funding.

2) Up to a \$7,500 grant with a 1:1 cash match. These recipients may include:

- Investor-owned residential buildings
- Owners of residential rental properties

3) These grants are made available to homeowners and property owners in the form of self-forgiving loans. If property owners retain ownership of the property for a full five years after using the funds for their façade improvement, the loan will be forgiven. If they sell the property within five years, they will be obligated to repay the loan at 80% after year 1, 60% after year 2, 40% after year 3, and 20% after year 4. In order to administer this loan, staff at CALV will put a lien on the property and release it after five years.

4) The contractor is responsible for obtaining all required permits associated with the proposed façade project. The contractor will be paid in up to three increments totaling 90% work completed. The final 10% will be released when the Certificate of final inspection is signed by CALV.

5) The property owner is responsible for all project costs over and above the maximum grant amount and must pay those costs to CALV before any work can begin.

Outreach

Slate Belt Rising Staff will make every effort to inform eligible homeowners about this program in target areas identified by the Slate Belt Rising's Affordable and Quality Housing Sub-Committee. Outreach may include, but is not limited to door-to-door canvassing, mailings, social media, and phone calls.

Application Process

1) Applications may be obtained from and submitted to:

Slate Belt Rising
197 Pennsylvania Avenue
Bangor, PA 18013

2) Completed applications are submitted to the Director of Slate Belt Rising.

3) Applications are to be submitted to the Office of Slate Belt Rising by a deadline that will be established by the appropriate SBR Committee. Applications received after the deadline will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. Neighboring property owners are encouraged to submit applications simultaneously. Priority will also be given to applicants based on income or potential for impact. In the event that demand exceeds available funding, CALV shall maintain a waiting list of interested applicants.

3) Applications will be reviewed, prioritized and selected by the Slate Belt Rising Affordable and Quality Housing Sub-Committee. Selection shall be based on several factors, such as community benefit, owner interest, and potential to leverage addition funds in that neighborhood. A CALV scoring sheet shall be used to rank the projects. Projects must receive final approval by the Slate Belt Rising Steering Committee.

4) The façade program will be carried out by the Slate Belt Rising/CALV staff, who will work with all applicants seeking grants to determine the feasibility of a proposed project and applicant eligibility. The staff will receive and review applications (as to completeness, accuracy, income eligibility), determine the historic significance of the structure, determine the proposed scope of work, including the need for professional services, coordinate bidding and execute contracts, conduct pre-work meetings with property owners and selected contractors, determine a property owner's match, and present projects before the Affordable and Quality Housing Sub-Committee for their consideration/approval.

5) If an application is denied, property owners may request reconsideration by representatives of the Affordable and Quality Housing Sub-Committee. Should the applicant still be dissatisfied, the staff will request a meeting between the applicants and the CALV Board of Directors.

6) Construction may not begin until the application is approved, the owners have signed all of the necessary paperwork, and owners have contributed their required match, if applicable.

Determining the Scope of Each Project

Slate Belt Rising/CALV staff will arrange to visit each property to assess, photograph, and determine the extent of work needed for the façade renovation in accordance with the ordinances of the borough where the property is located. Staff will then write-up the scope of work and estimate the rehab costs for the project, bearing in mind the budget for each of the façade improvements. Staff will then review the scope of work with the property owners, who will approve the written description.

Contractor Selection

Staff will follow the procurement process required by each funder, or the CALV procurement policy if there are no funder requirements.

At a minimum, staff must verify the following for each contractor being considered:

- Contractor registration through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – a valid PA Home Improvement Contractor License Number needs to be provided
- Contractor is not debarred or suspended – Verified through State of PA website

Prior to a contract being awarded through CALV, contractors will be asked to provide the following additional information, which must be documented by the program manager:

- 1) Commercial general liability insurance - \$1 million per occurrence for bodily injury, death, personal injury, and property damage
- 2) Automobile liability insurance
- 3) Worker's compensation insurance or proof of exemption
- 4) Indemnification - the contractor will hold CALV harmless to the fullest extent possible
- 5) EIN number
- 6) EPA lead-based paint certification for renovation, repair and painting (RRP)
- 7) Three references from previous job

The goal is to control, rather than abate lead-based paint hazards. All construction must be conducted in strict accordance with the EPA Renovate, Repair and Paint Rule. Contractors are expected to be familiar with these regulations, utilize all equipment and work practices necessary to maintain full compliance and provide a workforce holding appropriate, current training certifications. Contractors bear all liability for proper performance of lead-safe work.

The contractor shall perform all work in accordance with OSHA and all other applicable laws, standards and regulations. Work must be completed to borough code, even if permits are not required.

The contractor shall warranty and guarantee all workmanship and materials for a period of one year from the date of the project closeout.

Cost Comparison

All contractors must be provided with exactly the same scope of work, so their estimates can be accurately compared.

Three construction estimates will need to be obtained. Upon review, and after determining that the same scope is being compared, the lowest estimate will be selected. Extenuating circumstances, such as poor references, or an inability or unwillingness to follow through or schedule the work within a reasonable period of time, may be reason to use the next lowest priced contractor. In all cases, documentation of the rationale for why the contractor was selected (lowest bidder or other circumstances) needs to be documented in the case file.

Should all the bids exceed the estimated amount for renovation, the Slate Belt Rising/CALV staff will notify the contractors of the situation, adjust the scope of work, and ask all of them to restructure their estimates. Staff will again review the estimates, accepting the lowest one. Should there be two or more estimates coming in at the same amount, the director will rank the projects according to the quality of the materials proposed and choose the one that would provide the most lasting improvements to the building. Members of the Affordable and Quality Housing Sub-Committee will be provided information about this decision.

The terms of the construction contract will require that the work begin within 30 days of the execution of the contract and be completed within 90 days of the execution of the contract.

Design Guidelines

This program is designed to highlight, preserve, and maintain the unique historic and architectural heritage of the Slate Belt Region to the extent that is practicably possible. All properties located in any of the Borough’s historic districts must adhere to their historic commission’s design guidelines if a historic commission exists.

Façade Materials – Wood Framed and Sided Construction: It is never desirable to put new aluminum or vinyl siding on street-facing facades of homes with wood framed/sided construction. For reasons of aesthetic appearance, historic accuracy, sustainable energy and environmental standards and material reliability, the following are the design choices in order of preference.

- Option A:** Replace with high quality, paint grade, wood lap siding.
- Option B:** Replace with cement fiber lap siding with a smooth paintable finish.
- Option C:** If original siding is intact under removed siding, scrape, repair and repaint original surfaces. Restore original details.
- Option D:** If cost hardships prevent options A through C above, then power wash and repair existing siding and paint. Restore as much detail as possible via paint scheme selection.

Façade Materials – Brick, Stone and Masonry Construction: It is always best, when possible, to maintain the original masonry surface in an unpainted condition. Stone should never be painted. Covering wood framed and sided facades with faux brick or stone (Brickote, Formstone) are also inappropriate rehabilitation techniques.

- Option A:** Gently clean and repoint existing brick, stone and masonry surfaces as per professionally recommended standards. Replace broken and missing pieces with similar color and texture materials.
- Option B:** If brick surface is painted, remove paint in professionally recommended, non-destructive manner. Repair mortar and brick as above.

Option C: If brick is intact (after inspection of sample area) remove Brickote/Formstone. Repair mortar and brick as above.

Option D: If brick surface is severely spawled, cracked, etc. such as to be aesthetically unacceptable, repair as necessary and refinish surface with specialty paint specifically formulated for brick surfaces.

Option E-1: If Brickote/Formstone cannot be removed without destroying original substrate, patch and repair as necessary and paint. Maintain brick detailing as close to original masonry as possible.

Option E-2: If original masonry is beyond repair to the point that option four is not an acceptable solution, then Brickote can be considered as a last resort. The pattern, color and detailing of the finish shall be approved by the Director in partnership with any professional consultants.

Façade Materials – Other Construction: To be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Porches – Floors and Foundation Walls: Materials should remain generally consistent with typology of the block and street. Orientation of entry should also follow the pattern set by original street conditions.

Option A: Concrete floors should remain so unless deterioration is extreme and replacement with same would involve considerable structural disruption to the adjoining building. In the latter case a “shell” construction of wood over existing concrete may be considered.

Option B: In *no case* shall pressure treated lumber be used as a finish material. It is designed as framing lumber for damp locations and insect resistance. In exposed use it warps, shows knots and does not take finishes well. Wood flooring should be exterior grade, tongue and groove type; stain or paint grade. Edge details should be designed to eliminate exposure of end grain.

Porches – Railings and Columns: Original materials may be wood, concrete, iron or masonry. It is the intent to match original materials wherever possible.

Option A: Non-original iron, aluminum and other metal railings should be replaced with original materials where possible.

Option B: Exposed concrete shall be patched as necessary with Abocrete synthetic patch material or equal. If color variation detracts from finish appearance, it may be painted with approved concrete stain.

Option C-1: Wood railings and columns shall be exterior grade finish lumber: stain or paint grade.

Option C-2: No PVC material shall be used. Heavy composite material matching consistency and finish of original wood (such as Fypon) may be considered if desired wood product is not available.

Option D: Original iron railings and columns shall be wire brushed, primed and painted as necessary to maintain original condition. Brass or other high-grade finishes shall be polished and protected with clear lacquer. Missing parts shall be fabricated and replaced where necessary.

Porches – Entry Stairs and Stoops: The material should echo the character, scale and finish of similar components of the surrounding street and block. In most cases this will be concrete since the steps are normally exposed to the weather. It is *not acceptable* to replace or cover existing concrete entries with wood. In *no case* shall pressure treated lumber be used to replace wood steps for exposed entry stairs.

Windows, Doors and Trim - General: The character of the neighborhood shall be maintained by adherence to the detailing of doors, windows and trim. Front doors and first floor windows especially shall be treated as main design elements of any façade project.

Windows: Shall maintain size and lite arrangement (2 over, 6 over 6, etc.) of original. New, insulated glass units shall be mandatory unless recreating special design features (sidelights, transoms, fan windows) renders that prohibitive.

Doors: Formal entry doors shall maintain the character of the street and block. Replacement with “suburban style” metal doors (oval lite panels, fake historic elements) shall be avoided. Use of storm doors with summer screen inserts is encouraged. No aluminum replacement screen doors.

Trim: Trim, sills, window caps and other fine details shall be of original design material. Aluminum coil stock shall not be used to cover original detailing. For properties with existing aluminum or vinyl siding, exposure of original painted sills, corner boards and trim shall be executed with exterior, paint grade lumber. If wood is not available a composite material (such as Fypon) can be considered.

Façade Color Palette: One or more design consultants shall meet with the grant recipient to come to a consensus on a paint scheme that both serves the building well and accentuates the context and character of the neighborhood. The consultant(s) shall work with the grant applicant to achieve a design appropriate to all concerns. A sample façade color palette will be made available to all grant applicants.

Project Completion

- 1) Upon completion of the façade project, construction work will be inspected by CALV staff for quality and compliance with code requirements and design guidelines. Depending on the scope of work, municipal inspections may be required.
- 2) Slate Belt Rising/CALV staff, property owner, and contractor must sign and date a verification form stating that the work was done in a satisfactory manner.
- 3) If Slate Belt Rising/CALV staff or inspector finds a problem with the work, the contractor must correct the problem before receiving final payment. Generally, 10% of the contract amount will be kept as a retainage until all work has been completed.
- 4) Slate Belt Rising staff will file the mortgage and promissory note with the county, and ensure that the file is complete with documentation of applicant, contractor, case notes, loan documents and construction paperwork.

Slate Belt Rising Façade Program Flow Chart

TASK	LEAD	PROGRESS
Receive Application	SBR Director	
Collect Income Documentation and Qualify	SBR Director	
Obtain Tax Certification and Certificates of Insurance (County/Local Taxes and Municipal Fees)/Review and Approval by appropriate Borough	SBR Director	
Construction Manager and Designer visit property	CALV Housing Department	
Scope of Work/Design Development	CALV Housing Department	
Concept Approval by Property Owner	CALV Housing Department/SBR Director (Optional)	
Review/Approval by appropriate SBR Subcommittee	SBR Director	
Review/Approval by SBR Steering Committee	SBR Director	
Review/Approval by CALV Board/Housing Committee	CALV Housing Department	
RFQ sent out for Bid	CALV Housing Department	
Bid Review/Negotiations	CALV Housing Department	
Secure Property Owner Match (if applicable) Secured	SBR Director	
Contracts, Mortgage (if applicable), Promissory Note (if applicable) reviewed and signed	CALV Housing Department/SBR Director	
Construction Work Completed	CALV Housing Department	
Mortgage Filed	SBR Director	
Certificate of Final Inspection Signed	CALV Housing Department	
Photos	SBR Director	



HOUSING PROGRAM INCOME GUIDELINES

In order to qualify for Community Action's housing programs, the total income of all adults over 18 in your household must fall below the following levels:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	MAXIMUM INCOME
1	\$ 55,100
2	\$ 62,950
3	\$ 70,800
4	\$ 78,650
5	\$ 84,950
6	\$ 91,250
7	\$ 97,550
8	\$ 103,850

CALV staff will collect income documents from your household to determine if you qualify. We'll need to project what your income over the next year might be, based on either current circumstances or upcoming changes you know about. We'll ask you questions on your financial situation to make the most accurate projection.

We'll ask you for the specific documents we need. In most cases, we'll need the following:

- The most recent two (2) years tax returns for every adult who files. This includes Form 1040 and all schedules.
- The most recent two (2) years of W-2's and 1099's received by all household members.
- The most recent three (3) months of paystubs for all employed adults in the household.

CALV's determination of income eligibility will be final and binding. We regret we are unable to make exceptions to these limits due to funding source requirements.

All income information will be kept strictly confidential!