

# Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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## “Façade Improvement Program”

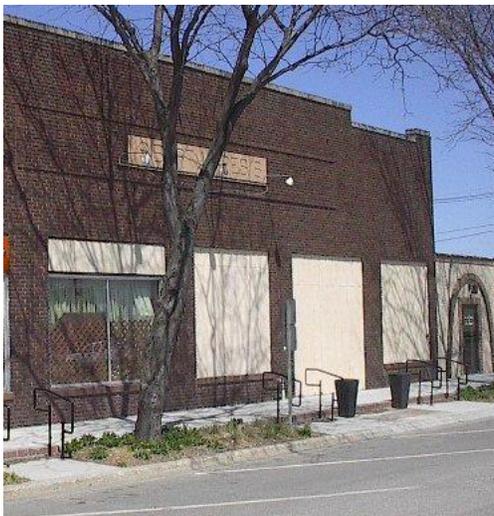
A façade improvement program has helped numerous businesses in downtown Norfolk put their best foot forward with help funding remodeled store entrances and street frontage. Bree Wolff of Pettitt Plumbing and Heating said she has gotten lots of positive comments about the appearance of their Norfolk Avenue business entrance.



“We had windows replaced and we had a new sign put on. We wouldn’t have done it without the program assistance,” Wolff said.

Property owners and tenants within the Downtown Vehicle Parking District area roughly from 8<sup>th</sup> Street to 1<sup>st</sup> Street are eligible to apply for up to \$7500 for the restoration, renovation, replacement or reconstruction of their facades and up to \$1000 for signage. Participants must pay at least 51% of the entire project costs.

The Façade Improvement



Program was approved by the Norfolk City Council in May of 2010 and is funded by a Community Development Block Grant through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. The City of Norfolk and the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District administer the funds for the project. The funds are considered a forgivable loan as long as the improvement stays in place for five years. The funds can be used to do work on or make repairs to the exterior of any wall of a building exposed to public view.

The Norfolk City Council passed an amendment to the program guidelines at the Council meeting Monday night so more than one forgivable loan on each property can be allowed. There is no limit as to the number of times a business owner can apply. Stipulations for receiving the funding include having the proposed project approved by a design advisory board.

Since the program’s inception, fourteen downtown businesses have taken

advantage of the grant program with a total of \$82,892 of CDBG funds distributed to help defray costs of façade and signage improvements. According to Sheila Rios, City of Norfolk Senior Accountant, there is about \$36,000 of funds currently available for businesses to apply for in the improvement program.

Franc's Salon and Spa at 414 Norfolk Avenue was one of the first recipients of the grant funds. Owner Karen Arehart said new customers have come into the Salon as a result of their updated entrance.

"We get endless amounts of attention from our new entrance. New and improved facades make it inviting for everyone to come downtown. Norfolk Avenue has grown by leaps and bounds and we want to keep it vital and growing," Arehardt said.

For more information about the program contact Rios at 402-844-2027.