

Community Focus Statement A: Improve the quality of our built environment to enhance community health, safety, neighborhood character, and the image of our business corridors.

Action Statement A.5: Establish and implement a façade and sign improvement program for existing and future businesses.

A5

Benchmark: Façade and signage improvement matching grant program for commercial buildings established, developed grant guidelines, and the program continues to function for a period of at least three years.

Champion: Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

Estimated Cost: \$10,000 to \$200,000 dependent upon scale of the program



Clean storefront signage improves the overall appearance of commercial structures. Photo source: Michael Baker International

Improving the appearance of commercial areas in Bear Valley is important for community identity, business recruitment, and the success of existing businesses. Attractive and well-maintained businesses demonstrate pride of ownership and can help draw in more visitors by making commercial areas more appealing places. However, updates to commercial properties in Bear Valley along these corridors have been few, and economic growth is limited. The communities can help finance the rehabilitation of commercial areas in Bear Valley by establishing a matching grant program for façade and sign improvements to commercial buildings.

The grant program should allow property owners to make improvements to the outside of their buildings that may be unaffordable under traditional financing mechanisms. The program should be available for a wide variety of improvements, particularly those that help to make the buildings more consistent with any design guidelines that the community may adopt, and open to all commercial properties. The agency responsible for implementing the grant should provide easy-to-understand guidelines that clearly spell out which types of improvements are eligible and their typical costs. After some projects have been completed, the grant materials should also include information about which buildings have been renovated under the grant, allowing potential future applicants to see the results for themselves and to speak to property owners about the process.

The grant program should allow property owners to choose how to match their contribution, either through matching funds or by performing some of the improvement work to the extent their skills allow (also known as sweat equity). Local banks and other businesses may be able to provide part of the funds, particularly if there is a marketing effort publicizing the improvements and the sponsors that enabled them. As with any grant program, the

program should be carefully monitored and reported on to community members and local leaders, and the program should be revised as needed to ensure it is effective.

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Meet with San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency and Land Use Services Department to discuss potential sources of funding and Bear Valley agencies who could serve as program administrator.	Design review advisory committee (established under A.4 or created new)	Month 1	How façade matching programs can benefit your community http://plannersweb.com/2013/10/how-facade-improvement-programs/ San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency http://www.sbcountyadvantage.com/Home.aspx
2. Meet with potential program administrators and select or form most appropriate.	Design review advisory committee	Month 2 - 8	http://www.sbcountyadvantage.com/Home.aspx
3. Secure funding for the façade and sign improvement matching grant program.	Program administrator	Year 1	What is a Business Improvement District? file:///C:/Users/schampion/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/13ZXY9W8/BusinessImprovement.pdf
4. Define target area/s, eligibility criteria, matching ratio, an application process, and façade design guidelines, (See Action Plan A.4).	Program administrator	Year 2	Façade Improvement Program, Portland, Maine http://www.portlandmaine.gov/557/Facade-Improvement-Program
5. Inform local banks, property owners, business owners, and others of the new program and encourage them to take advantage of grant matching funds.	Program administrator	Year 3	Façade and Sign Improvement Program, Village of Grafton, Wisconsin http://www.village.grafton.wi.us/documentcenter/view/247
6. Process applications and provide ongoing support to commercial properties that have received grant funding, such as construction resources, permit procedures, etc.	Program administrator	Year 3, ongoing	