

Community Focus Statement A: Protect the community's treasures for years to come.

Action Statement A.1: Establish a façade and sign improvement program that defines the Mentone look and feel.

A

Benchmark: A façade and signage improvement matching grant program is established for commercial buildings and grant guidelines developed ensuring that 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: \$1,000–\$200,000



Facade renovation project. Photo source: [PublicDomainPictures](https://www.publicdomainpictures.com)

Improving the appearance of the downtown and commercial areas is important to recruit new businesses and bring more customers into the area to support existing businesses. Attractive and well-maintained businesses demonstrate pride of ownership and draw in more visitors. Several properties in the community have experienced some neglect in recent decades, and economic growth has stagnated.

Mentone could establish a façade and sign improvement program for commercial buildings that provide design assistance to property owners making physical improvements. A façade improvement program should include a formal purpose statement that explains why the program was

established, a well-defined target area, and design guidelines. The design guidelines should aim to achieve aesthetic cohesiveness in the target area, as well as celebrate the Mentone community and heritage.

To fund a façade and sign improvement program, commercial areas could form a business improvement district (BID). A BID is a defined area where businesses are required to pay an additional tax in order to fund projects within the district's boundaries. A BID could also draw upon other public and private funding opportunities. Federal and state grants for community and economic development or downtown revitalization could be pursued to benefit the BID. Other options should also be identified and considered.

A façade and sign improvement program would attract new businesses and shoppers to Mentone. Locally owned and operated businesses would be strengthened, keeping more money in the local economy. After façade and sign improvement programs are put into place in other communities, many commercial districts report an increase in sales and property values. As a result, properties are often converted to a perceived better use.



Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Hold a meeting to establish a façade and sign improvement committee, matching grant program, and secure funding for the program.	Champion	Months 1 – 3	Mentone Area Community Association https://www.facebook.com/mentone.association
2. Develop a target area, grant matching criteria, a matching ratio, an application process, and façade design guidelines for commercial properties.	Committee	Month 4	Mentone Chamber of Commerce http://mentonechamber.com/
3. Hold a public meeting to get input if community wants to create a façade and sign program and identify and decide on themes.	Committee		The most common sources are federal and state grants for community and economic development, housing, and downtown revitalization; and municipal revenue. It is not uncommon for a municipality or organization to work with a consortium of local banks that contribute equally to the funding pool to share investment risks.
4. Reach out to local banks, property owners, business owners, and others to provide information about the new program and encourage them to take advantage of grant matching funds.	Committee	Month 5 – onward	Planners Web: http://plannersweb.com/2013/10/how-facade-improvement-programs/ Downtown Development: http://www.downtowndevelopment.com/pdf/dtd021915Report.pdf
5. Process applications and provide ongoing support to commercial properties that have received grant funding, such as construction resources and permit procedures.	Committee	Month 5 – onward	Façade Guide: http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/convert_286603.pdf How façade matching programs can benefit your community: http://plannersweb.com/2013/10/how-facade-improvement-programs/