



CIA BUSINESS FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Charter Township of Meridian Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) formally institutes its Façade Improvement Grant Program (CIAFIP) to stimulate appropriate improvements to the exterior of commercial buildings within the district.

The CIA finds that the creation and maintenance of an attractive community is a public purpose which can be achieved in part through improvements to building facades. The Corridor Improvement Authority is a district authority, and provides direct investment incentives for eligible businesses, properties, and projects within the Corridor Improvement Authority District of Meridian Township. The boundaries of the CIA district, are equal to the area that the CIA will provide development incentive benefits to. The FIP will apply to eligible businesses based on the criteria address in this guide.

The intent of the FIP will be to strengthen the economic viability of the CIA district, through the implementation of grants to small business brick and mortar locations. The intent of this program is to invest in the district and provide financial incentives for improving the exterior appearance of its buildings. The FIP is not for general building maintenance projects, but for façade beautification investments, updates, and expansions. The FIP provides an opportunity to create a unique atmosphere that Meridian Township can offer the community. It is important that building design treatments be compatible with each other and promote the brand of Meridian Charter Township as a *Prime Community*.

Program Description:

Subject to funding availability and project approval, the CIA may reimburse up to 50% of the cost of improvements to the exterior building façade. Except as otherwise noted in these guidelines, the total reimbursement for a Standard Façade Improvement Grant

may not exceed \$20,000.00 per building, per project, or the cost of exterior face improvements, whichever is less, every 10 years.

Standard Façade Improvement Grant:

This type of grant (reimbursement) is given for work which is consistent with the CIA Façade Improvement Program Guidelines.

Subject to funding availability and based on a separate vote of approval by the Corridor Improvement Authority of Meridian Charter Township, the reimbursement may be increased by 20% above that awarded for the Standard Façade Improvement Grant, for existing buildings within the district. New buildings will not be eligible for the 20% rehabilitation increase.

Who is an Eligible Applicant?

Property that falls within the boundaries of the **Meridian Charter Township Downtown Development Authority** and outside of the **Corridor Improvement Authority district** are not eligible. The DDA has its own FIP, and qualified applicants should apply to the DDA. The Meridian Township Economic Development Corporation has its own FIP, and eligible applicants are encouraged to apply. The CIA may also consider working as a partner with the EDC to build enhancing programs for CIA properties. Owners, tenants with the owner's approval, or both who have commercial property located within the Township may apply for FIP funds. This includes the Corridor Improvement Authority or Public agencies that own and or operate **commercial** property within the district.

What is an Eligible Building or Property?

Any existing commercial building located within the CIA which is owned or used by an eligible applicant is considered eligible for FIP funds. Landscaping projects adjacent to a

commercial property within the district are also eligible. Newly constructed buildings and additions to existing structures are eligible, subject to funding availability and the limitation listed under Eligible Exterior/Façade Improvements below. All taxes and special assessments must be current to be eligible for FIP funds (Proposed Addition: at the time of grant approval and disbursement of funds). **Any property in the DDA is ineligible to engage in this program.**

A building under one ownership, divided into more than one unit for purposes of commercial tenancy, each separate unit which has an individual storefront façade and an independent ground floor entry shall be eligible to receive FIP funds; provided however, that FIP funds shall not exceed (\$20,000.00) for the entire building, subject to funding availability, for a Standard Façade Improvement Grant.

If the owner or principal tenant of a building which has and uses storefront façade frontage of more than sixty (60) feet applies for FIP funding, the CIA at its discretion may award additional funds as it determines reasonable but not more than a total of (\$20,000.00) for any one project.

Program Financing:

The CIA will reimburse 50% (no more than \$20,000.00) of total eligible FIP expenses for an approved project.

Design Guidelines:

Projects approved for Façade Improvement Program funds must comply with the U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and/or all applicable Meridian Charter Township Code of Ordinances and building codes. Most projects will need a building permit, and some may require site plan approval by the Meridian Charter Township Planning Commission and Township Board.

Eligible Exterior/Façade Improvements:

Materials and wages for improvements to the front, rear and side facades of eligible buildings, when completed in conjunction with a significant renovation project, such as, but not limited to the following items;

- Carpentry
- Masonry Cleaning
- Removal/Demolition
- Awnings
- Doors/Entryways
- Storefront Constructions
- Painting
- Lighting
- Signs
- Sidewalks (From the Public Sidewalk to the Business)
- Signage
- Asphaltting Of Customer/Public Parking Area
- Free Wi-Fi Connectivity and Broadband Services
- Walkability/ non-motorized site improvements
- Green infrastructure to address site development improvements
- Electric Charging stations
- Accessibility Site Improvements (Age Friendly, ADA Compliance etc.)
- Affordability (Housing, Child Care)
- Landscaping Adjacent to Structure

Project Prioritization:

Applications containing the following characteristics will have priority funding appropriation:

- New projects (1st Time Applicant)
- Scope and size of project (larger projects that achieve desired outcomes)
- Retail, recreation, and entertainment businesses
- Projects identified on corner lots
- Projects in which the building is owner-occupied
- Projects containing a high ratio of private to public dollars
- Projects preserving community institutions
- Projects designed to resolve deteriorated/inappropriate/unsightly conditions that have existed for many years (boarded windows, deteriorated electrical fixtures, etc.)
- Projects that will complete the improvement of a block or portion of a block (ex. Replacement of an inappropriate façade on a block containing many well-preserved or improved facades)

Ineligible Expenses:

General maintenance and property management items are not eligible for the FIP. Other items that are not specifically stated under eligible expenses such as but not limited to the following items:

- General building maintenance projects like a singular painting update
- Expenses incurred within 60 days (about 2 months) prior to the CIA's review and approval of an FIP application
- Property acquisition

- Mortgage or land contract refinancing
- Loan fees
- Meridian Township Planning Department site plan, building and sign permit fees
- Construction of new building additions except for façade portion
- Sealing of parking lots
- Murals
- Appraiser, attorney, interior decorator fees
- Wages paid to the applicant or relatives of the applicant unless licensed to perform such work
- Furnishing, trade fixtures, display cases, counters or other items taxed as “personal property” or any other interior improvements
- Wages paid to applicant, relatives, or friends for work associated with the façade improvement (e.g., payments under the table)
- Any portion of expenses for which applicant pays contractor in merchandise or in-kind services
- Reusable or removable items
- Any portion of expenses for which applicant pays contractor in merchandise or service

Timetable:

Unless otherwise agreed in writing when the project is approved for FIP funding, in the event the actual physical construction on a project has not commenced within three months (90 days) and been completed within six months (180 days) of the CIA funding commitment, the CIA will re-evaluate the status of the project. At its discretion, the CIA reserves the right to cancel or extend the funding commitment.

Other Program Guidelines:

1. The CIA will give priority to commercial/income producing buildings over those owned or used by public agencies.

(a) Within a 10-year period, a property owner and/or tenant with property owner's approval may apply for FIP funds to renovate a building façade.

(b) The total amount rebated to a property owner and/or tenant for the same building during a 10-year period may not exceed \$20,000.00.

2. At the CIA's discretion and with a majority vote of the Corridor Improvement Authority Board, an exception to any FIP guideline may be granted due to special conditions or situations which were not apparent at an earlier date.
3. Not intended for general maintenance, this is at the discretion of the CIA.

Application, Approval, and Payment Procedures

1. Contact the Economic Development Director for the CIA FIP information and application packet between 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The application and information packet may also be found online at: www.meridian.mi.us
2. Review proposed façade improvement design with the Economic Development Director and Planning Staff.
3. Submit completed application, design plans, cost estimates to the Economic Development Director at 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864. The CIA accepts applications throughout the year.
4. The application is reviewed by staff to verify that the location is within the CIA district. Staff will provide a preliminary review outlining how well the project meets the program objectives.
5. **CONSTRUCTION WORK BEGUN BEFORE ISSUANCE OF A BUILDING PERMIT (IF REQUIRED) AND OR, PRIOR TO THE CIA'S REVIEW AND APPROVAL WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED ELIGIBLE FOR REIMBURSEMENT GRANT FUNDING.**

6. The applicant must submit a detailed plan illustrating proposed improvements. At this point, the applicant should obtain any necessary permits from the Township and complete a site-plan review with the Planning Director as needed.
7. If the application meets program objectives the applicant will be notified that their project has been accepted for consideration.
8. Each application shall be reviewed by Planning Staff and the Economic Development Director. A written recommendation for approval, modification or rejection shall be prepared for consideration by the CIA at their next regular meeting.
9. Applicants must show proof of payment for full reimbursement (cancelled check) and completed work must be signed off by the building inspector if a building permit is required.
10. If the grantee sells/removes said property prior to ten years, repayment of Façade grant will need to be paid back to the CIA on a prorated basis. The grantee will agree to these terms through the signing of a Development and Reimbursement Façade Improvement Agreement.

Post Façade Improvement Program Approval Procedure

- Execute a Development and Reimbursement Façade Improvement Agreement.
- Any changes in the scope of work must be approved by the CIA prior to construction/installation.
- All approved changes in work verification shall be attached to the original site plan in the form of an addendum and dated.
- Township and CIA staff may conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance with the site plan and adopted eligible activities. Any questions or concerns will be directed to the applicant.

- Projects must be completed within one (1) year and six (6) months of notification of project approval by the CIA. Only under extenuating circumstances, an extension of time to complete the project can be requested in writing and may be awarded by the CIA.
- Upon completion of the project improvement, CIA staff will photograph the new façade and submit it to the CIA to ensure that all components of the site plan are met.
- After final project inspection, the CIA Board will review and approve the project, the applicant be reimbursed for the approved grant amount.
- Any business or organization that receives funds from a Façade grant will be required to display a certificate in a prominent space of their business that indicates the project was funded in part by the CIA. The certificate should be displayed in a front window or in the lobby of the business for the duration of the time that funds are being received (10 years maximum).