



## DDA FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Charter Township of Meridian Downtown Development Authority (DDA) formally institutes an established the Façade Improvement Grant Program (FIP) to stimulate appropriate improvements to the exterior of downtown commercial buildings.

The DDA finds that the creation and maintenance of an attractive downtown is a public purpose which can be achieved in part through improvements to building facades. The Downtown Development Authority district is comprised of physical property starting on the western boundary of Okemos and Grand River Avenue intersection, to its eastern boundary at Okemos and Marsh Road. The district continues south of Grand River avenue to include Ferguson and Wonch Park's, through the roundabout at Hamilton road back to Marsh road. This district, first established in 2005 is pivotal to the economic health of the community because of its rich history with the establishment of the Village of Okemos, the age of the established area, the conditions of the district currently, whether perceived or actual. Downtown Development Authority has the mission to beautify and revitalize downtown Okemos as a very desirable place to shop, live, and do business. It is a commitment to promoting and improved quality of life by creating a friendly, walkable community embracing the natural aesthetics of the river and parks.

The intent of the FIP will be to strengthen the economic viability of the downtown development authority, invest in the invested business 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 an approved aesthetic that enhances the unique atmosphere that Downtown Meridian Township can offer the community. It is important to the aesthetic enhancement of downtown, that building design treatments be compatible with each other and promotes the brand of Meridian Charter Township as, a Prime Community.

### **Program Description:**

Subject to funding availability and project approval, the DDA 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 DDA Façade Improvement Program Guidelines.

Subject to funding availability and based on a separate vote of approval by the Downtown Development 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?**

Owners, tenants with owner's approval, or both who have commercial property located within the Downtown Development Authority District may apply for FIP funds. See attached map of DDA District. This includes the Downtown Development 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 DDA District which is owned or used by an eligible applicant is considered eligible for FIP funds. Also eligible is landscaping adjacent to such a structure. Newly constructed buildings and additions to existing structures are also 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 façade grant improvement funds (Proposed Addition: at the time of grant approval and disbursement of funds).

Where a building under one ownership is 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 DDA 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.

### **Public Spaces Amenity Bonus:**

If sufficient funds are available, and based upon a separate vote of approval by the Board of Directors, a rebate may be increased to **20%** above that awarded for the Standard Façade Improvement Grant, if the improvement will include public spaces and amenities that address the following:

- Free Wi-Fi Connectivity and Broadband Services
- Walkability and accessibility site improvements
- Green infrastructure to address site development improvements
- Electric Charging stations

### **Program Financing:**

The DDA will reimburse **50%** (up to \$20,000.00) of total eligible FIP expenses, or **70%** (up to \$30,000.00) for all projects with Public Spaces Amenity in restoration projects once approved by the Downtown Development Authority.

### **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
- landscaping adjacent to structure

- sidewalks (from the public sidewalk to the business)
- asphaltting of customer/public parking area

**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 that include increase public space and amenities as listed in the Public Spaces Amenity Bonus
- 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* prior to the DDA'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
- Site improvements done in conjunction with an approved project submitted by the Downtown Development Authority District
- 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 90 days and been completed within six months of the DDA funding commitment, the DDA will re-evaluate the status of the project. At its discretion, the DDA reserves the right to cancel or extend the funding commitment.

**Other Program Guidelines**

1. The DDA will give priority to commercial/income producing buildings over those owned or used by public agencies.
2. (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.
3. At the DDA's discretion and with a majority vote of the Downtown Development Authority Board, an exception to any FIP guideline may be granted due to special conditions or situations which were not apparent at earlier date.
4. Not intended for general maintenance, this is at the discretion of DDA.

**Application, Approval, and Payment Procedures.**

1. Contact the Meridian Charter Township Downtown Development Authority Façade Improvement Grant Program for information and application packet between 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The application and information packet may also be found online at <https://www.meridian.mi.us/government/boards-and-commissions/downtown-development-authority>
2. Review proposed façade improvement design with the DDA staff liaison, Planning Staff and Downtown Development Authority Chairperson.
3. Submit completed application, design plans, cost estimates to the DDA staff person at 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864. The DDA accepts applications throughout the year.
4. The application is reviewed by staff to verify that the location is within the DDA 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 PRIOR TO THE DDA'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 Community Planning Director as needed.
7. Each application shall be reviewed by Community Planning Staff and Downtown Development Authority Staff liaison. A written recommendation for approval, modification or rejection shall be prepared for consideration by the DDA at their next regular meeting
8. If the application meets program objectives the applicant will be notified that his/her project has been accepted for consideration.

9. Applicant must show proof of payment for full reimbursement (cancelled check) and completed work must be signed off by the building inspector if building permit was required.
10. If grantee sells/removes said property prior to five years, repayment of Façade grant will be paid to the DDA 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 Approval Procedure**

- Execute a Development and Reimbursement Façade Improvement Agreement.
- Any changes in the scope of work must be approved by the DDA 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 DDA 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 DDA. Only under extenuating circumstances, an extension of time to complete the project can be requested in writing and may be awarded by the DDA.
- Upon completion of the project improvement, DDA staff will photograph the new façade and submit it to the DDA to ensure that all components of the site plan are met.
- After final project inspection, the DDA 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 or Façade Maintenance grant will be required to display a 5"x 5" window decal that indicates the project was funded in part by the DDA. The window decal 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 (5 years maximum).