



**City of West Branch
Downtown Development Authority**

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

2022

PROGRAM INFORMATION AND MATERIALS

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CITY OF WEST BRANCH DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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City of West Branch Downtown Development Authority

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

1. PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The City of West Branch Downtown Development Authority (the “DDA”) established its Façade Improvement Grant Program to promote revitalization in the DDA district by providing financial assistance to building owners for improvements to existing commercial buildings. Financial assistance is made available to provide a visual impact on the exterior, thus improving the marketability of the overall area. The intent of this program is for building owners to take full advantage of assistance available and comply with full renovation programs.

2. BUILDING ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

2.1 – Location and Nature of Building Use.

Properties located within the legal boundary of West Branch’s DDA district engaging in retail, commercial, entertainment, or office services shall be deemed eligible for grant funding. Any question concerning the eligibility of a specific property may be submitted to the City Manager. A determination of location and building use eligibility will be provided to the interested party within five business days following receipt of the inquiry.

2.2 – Payment of Taxes and Other Public Accounts.

All previously billed and currently payable property taxes and annual installments of assessments must be paid in full for the subject property before an application for a façade improvement grant will be considered. Additionally, all City of West Branch accounts in the name of the applicant and/or attaching to the subject property must be current. All taxes, assessments, and other city accounts must be kept current during the application, review, construction, and post-construction processes.

2.3 – Nature of Façade.

Grant funding may be requested for any façade (front, side, or rear) that fronts on a public right of way (street, alley, or public parking lot). Applicants may apply for up to \$10,000 in funding per façade. The total amount available for funding for each year may vary and will be determined during each fiscal year’s budget. All requests for funding must be approved by the DDA Board. Greater consideration for funding will be given to work proposed on a façade fronting a city street.

2.4 – Structural Integrity of Building.

Buildings for which improvements are proposed must have basic structural integrity and, if needed, as confirmed by the Ogemaw County Building Department, thereby protecting the DDA’s potential investment in the façade.

2.5 – Insurance Coverage.

The applicant or the owner of the subject property must carry suitable property insurance coverage on the subject property and must provide a certificate of coverage to the DDA with the application. ***The applicant or owner is strongly encouraged to also carry a builder’s risk policy of insurance covering potential damage to the building’s structure by the contractor.***

3. INELIGIBLE USES OF GRANT FUNDS

Façade improvement grant funds ***may not*** be used to fund any of the following:

- 3.1.1** Payment of existing debt;
- 3.1.2** Property acquisition;
- 3.1.3** Interior improvements, equipment, or furnishings;
- 3.1.4** Site plans, building permits, or sign permits;
- 3.1.5** Property appraisals, legal fees, or loan origination fees;
- 3.1.6** Labor costs paid to the owner or applicant or their relatives unless the laborer is a licensed contractor and specific approval is granted as part of the application review process.
- 3.1.7** Landscaping or gardening;
- 3.1.8** Maintenance of existing façade or necessary repair work.
- 3.1.9** Purchase of a sign if that is the sole project.

4. AVAILABLE AWARDS

4.1 – Dollar Limits.

The DDA may award grants under the program in any amount requested from a minimum award of \$500.00 to a maximum award of \$10,000.00 per façade. All requests must be approved by the DDA Board.

Please note that if awarded funding, the reimbursement amount will be based on receipts submitted.

4.2 – Applicant’s Matching Funds.

An applicant for a grant must provide an amount matching the grant request on a dollar-for-dollar basis. An applicant’s proposed improvement project total may exceed \$20,000.00; however, the DDA’s participation is limited to a maximum grant of \$10,000.00.

4.3 – Discontinuation of Funding.

The DDA reserves the right to discontinue funding for the Façade Improvement Grant Program at any time. If funding is discontinued, all previously awarded grants will be honored by the DDA.

5. APPLICATION PROCESS

5.1 – Nature of Applicant.

A person applying for a façade improvement grant may be either a property owner or a tenant, if the tenant obtains the property owner’s written permission to make the proposed improvements. Applicants may be individuals or business entities.

5.2 – Application Meeting.

The prospective applicant may be asked to set up a time to meet with the DDA Chair and/or City Manager to review the program guidelines. At this meeting, the prospective applicant will be provided information as to whether the proposed project may fit the guidelines of the program. Any such information provided by the DDA Chair and/or City Manager and any opinion or suggestions that may be conveyed as to suitability of the project are preliminary only, are not binding on the DDA, and should not be relied upon by the applicant as a final determination of award status. If it seems at the Pre-Application Meeting that the proposed project may fit the guidelines of the program, the potential applicant will be encouraged to complete the application and return it with the required additional materials.

6. APPLICATION PROCESS

6.1 – Application Contents.

An application for a façade improvement grant must include all of the following:

- 6.1.1 The completed grant application form, signed by the applicant;
- 6.1.2 A detailed description of the improvements proposed, with justification as to why the improvements meet the DDA's intent of preserving or enhancing the buildings in the DDA district;
- 6.1.3 Detailed cost estimates from one qualified contractor for the work proposed, and the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the persons who prepared the estimates;
- 6.1.4 All architectural plans and/or sketches, and all specifications needed to understand the scope of the work proposed;
- 6.1.5 Examples of color schemes and materials proposed for the exterior improvements, including paint, bricks, signage, windows, awnings, etc.;
- 6.1.6 A description of the long-term maintenance plan proposed by the applicant for the building's exterior once any grant-funded improvements are completed;
- 6.1.7 The property owner's release of liability and written permission for the work proposed;
- 6.1.8 Written proof in the form of a letter from the City of West Branch noting account history that all property taxes, annual installments of assessments, and balances on all City of West Branch accounts (whether in the name of the applicant or owner or attaching to the property) for the subject property have been paid;
- 6.1.9 A certificate of insurance coverage for the subject property;
- 6.1.10 A project schedule detailing the applicant's expected progress in completing the proposed improvements;
- 6.1.11 Photographs of the building façade proposed for improvements.

6.2 – Submission of Application.

The application, including all required materials, must be submitted to the West Branch City Hall, Attn: DDA. The applicant may be contacted to request required materials which are not submitted, or to request supplemental materials. Applications are reviewed on an annual basis. Applicants are to submit materials by December 1 of each calendar year in which the program is funded. A person interested in applying for a façade improvement grant must submit the application and be approved by the DDA ***before any construction work commences*** on the proposed project. ***Starting construction work before approval of a grant award may result in ineligibility for a grant.***

7. REVIEW PROCESS

7.1 – Time of Review.

Applications are reviewed on an annual basis. The DDA will review all complete applications upon closure of the deadline. The DDA meets regularly on the Fourth Tuesday of each month to conduct business. All applications for façade improvement grants will be reviewed at regular meetings unless an applicant provides a compelling reason, in the sole discretion of the DDA chair, for convening a special meeting to consider an application.

7.2 – Substantive Criteria.

The DDA will evaluate each application based on the following design criteria:

- 7.2.1** The visual prominence of the subject building and its location within the DDA district;
- 7.2.2** The long-term maintenance plan for the building's exterior once the proposed improvements are completed.

7.3 Notification of DDA Action

The applicant will be notified of the date, time, and location of the DDA Board's meeting at which the application will be discussed. The applicant will be invited to attend the meeting and address the Board regarding their application. The DDA Board meets regularly on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 12:00 pm at City Hall. The applicant will be notified in writing of the DDA Board's decision regarding their application.

7.4– Rights Reserved.

The DDA reserves the right to deny any or all applications for façade improvement grants. The DDA reserves the right to modify or amend the program guidelines at any time deemed necessary. The DDA reserves the right to waive any guideline(s) or requirement(s) of the program at any time and for any reason at the sole discretion of the DDA Board, such waivers to be made on a case-by-case basis for extenuating circumstances.

7.6 – Conflict of Interest.

Members of the DDA Board who are in a position to influence decisions regarding grants awarded under this program shall not have a financial interest, either directly or indirectly, in any person or entity applying for a grant through this program, unless that interest has been fully disclosed in writing and the board member involved has removed him/herself from the decision-making process, including all deliberations. For purposes of this provision, "financial interest" includes any ownership interest, stock, membership

interest, partnership interest, lease, financial obligation, right or option to purchase, or share in profits, or employment relationship by the board member/committee member or a family member of such board member/committee member with the person or entity applying for the grant. "Family Member" includes the following relatives of the Board Member or Committee member: spouse, children, spouse(s) of children; parent(s)/guardian(s); sisters and brothers of self or spouse; and the spouse(s) of brothers and sisters of self or spouse, nieces, and nephews of self or spouse. All laws of the State of Michigan and all policies of the City of West Branch with respect to Conflicts of Interest shall apply to the interpretation of this provision.

8. DENIAL OF APPLICATIONS

8.1 – Form of Denial.

Following the denial of an application by the DDA, the DDA shall so notify the applicant in writing, including the text of Paragraph 8.2 below, and stating reasons for the denial as communicated by members of the DDA, including, if applicable:

- 8.1.1** Requests for additional documents or other information which, if submitted by the applicant, may result in a grant award based on a future application; or
- 8.1.2** Suggestions as to changes in the proposed façade improvements which may result in a grant award based on a future application.

In all cases, neither submission of requested documents nor compliance with the suggestions of the DDA will automatically result in a grant award, and the DDA reserves the right to deny any and all future applications.

8.2 – Appeal.

Denial of an application may be appealed to the DDA Board. An applicant who desires to appeal a denial must contact the DDA Chair to be placed on the agenda of the DDA's next regular meeting, held on the Fourth Tuesday of each month, and must appear at the meeting to address the DDA. The applicant will be notified within 7 days following the meeting of the DDA's decision to award or deny the requested grant.

9. PRE-CONSTRUCTION MEETING

Following a grant award and prior to the commencement of construction work on the façade improvements, the applicant and the applicant's contractor(s) may be asked to meet with the DDA Chair and/ or a DDA Committee and/or City Manager. This meeting is mandatory for the applicant and contractor(s) if requested by the DDA. The purpose of the pre-construction meeting is to:

- 9.1.1** Review the specific improvements and work approved in the application to ensure a clear understanding of the DDA's expectations
- 9.1.2** Discuss the contractor's schedule for any proposed work to determine if the work will occur during or affect any downtown activities or events.
- 9.1.3** Determine if any special accommodations are required during the work, such as closing sidewalks, placing dumpsters on sidewalks or in parking spaces, etc.;
- 9.1.4** Review the program requirements for approving proposed changes to the scope of work following the award of a grant or the start of construction.

10. POST-AWARD AMENDMENTS TO PROJECT

10.1 – Required Materials.

Following the award of a façade improvement grant, if the applicant desires to make any changes to an approved design, the applicant must submit all of the following materials which may be required by the DDA for review of the proposed changes:

- 10.1.1** A letter requesting a review of the changes proposed, including any requested increase in the amount of the original grant;
- 10.1.2** A detailed description of the changes proposed;
- 10.1.3** A detailed cost estimate from the applicant's contractor for the changes proposed, if the applicant seeks an increased grant amount;
- 10.1.4** All architectural plans and/or sketches, and all specifications needed to understand the scope of the changes proposed;
- 10.1.5** Examples of color schemes and materials proposed for changes in the exterior improvements, including paint, bricks, signage, windows, awnings, etc.;
- 10.1.6** A description of the long-term maintenance plan for the changes proposed, if the plan differs materially from the original application;
- 10.1.7** The property owner's written permission for the changes proposed, if the applicant is a tenant and the changes proposed differ materially from the original application;
- 10.1.8** A project schedule detailing expected progress in completing the changes proposed, if the schedule differs materially from the original application.

Before submitting an application for review of the changes proposed, the applicant must contact the City Manager for a determination of which of the above listed materials will be required by the DDA for review of the changes proposed.

10.2 – Construction of Proposed Changes in Design.

No construction work on proposed changes to a previously approved design may commence until approval of the proposed changes is granted by the DDA.

NOTE: Failure to obtain approval for any changes in design undertaken after awarding of the original grant may result in the disqualification of the applicant from the program and the loss of the entire grant funding.

10.3 – Time of Review.

The DDA will approve or deny the proposed design changes within 14 days after receipt of all required review materials.

11. PROJECT INSPECTIONS

Upon award of a grant, the applicant agrees to provide access to the applicant's building to the City Manager or DDA representative during and after construction for the purpose of inspecting the work as it relates to the proposal. It is not the intent of the DDA to act as a building inspector during the course of the project. As such, the DDA representative will not confer with or advise the contractor of construction deficiencies or code violations during the course of construction.

NOTE: Failure to take timely and suitable remedial actions, in the sole determination of the DDA, may result in the disqualification of the applicant from the program and the loss of the entire grant funding.

Applicants and contractors are not relieved from their duties to have all construction work duly and timely inspected by proper building authorities as required by law.

12. DISBURSEMENT OF GRANT FUNDS

12.1 – Time for Project Completion.

Construction work on the façade improvement project must be complete within 210 days following written notification of the grant award, unless a written extension is specifically requested and approved by the DDA due to extenuating circumstances.

12.2 – Final Inspection.

Upon completion of construction, the applicant must contact the City Manager to arrange to have the completed work inspected for compliance with the project proposal, drawings, and other materials submitted with the application.

12.3 – Applicant’s Final Payment Request.

Upon completion of construction, the applicant shall submit a final request for full payment of the grant funds, in the form of a contractor’s invoice. The final payment request shall include photographs of the as-constructed façade improvements, and proof in the form of a receipt, lien waiver, or written statement from the contractor stating that the applicant has paid the contractor in full for the applicant’s matching share of the project’s construction costs or is otherwise current in the applicant’s payments to the contractor under an installment payment plan.

12.4. – Compliance with Approved Design.

If, during the final inspection, the work is found to be in compliance with the approved design proposal and the program requirements, the DDA shall pay the grant funds to the applicant within 30 days following the applicant’s submission of a final request for payment, whichever is later. Reimbursement cannot be made to the contractor directly.

12.5 – Non-Compliance with Approved Design or Program Guidelines.

If, during any site visit by a representative of the DDA, any of the construction work is found to be in non-compliance with the approved design proposal or the program requirements, the DDA will notify the applicant in writing within three business days, describing all areas of non-compliance. After receipt of the notification, the applicant shall provide to the DDA a written description of remedial actions intended to bring the project into compliance with the program guidelines and the previously approved design proposal. ***Final payment of grant funds will be withheld until all areas of non-compliance are suitably remedied, inspected, and approved in the sole discretion of the DDA.***

**WEST BRANCH DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION FORM**

Application Date: _____

Applicant: _____

Contact Name: _____

Property Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Applicant's Telephone (Daytime): _____ (Home): _____

Total Cost of Proposed Improvements: _____

Total Grant Amount Requested (*\$10,000 maximum*): _____

Brief Description of Proposed Façade Improvements: _____

Anticipated Timeline of Improvements (start and complete dates): _____

APPLICANT AGREEMENT & SIGNATURE

I have read the program requirements and I understand that my participation in the Façade Improvement Grant Program is contingent upon my full compliance with all requirements. I understand that this is a matching grant program and that the DDA will provide funding on a dollar-for-dollar match basis and that awarded grant funds are paid following completion of the work and full approval by the DDA. I understand that design changes not approved by the DDA prior to their incorporation into the improvement project may result in my forfeiture of the grant award for the entire project. I also certify if I am a tenant of the subject property that I have obtained written approval from the property owner to complete the project improvements. My application includes the materials listed on the checklist on the following page.

Signature of Applicant

Date

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION MATERIALS CHECKLIST

- _____ The completed grant application form, signed by the applicant.
- _____ A detailed description of the improvements proposed, with justification as to why the improvements meet the DDA's intent of preserving or enhancing the character of buildings in the DDA district.
- _____ Detailed cost estimate from a qualified contractor or the work proposed, and the name, address, and telephone number of the persons who prepared the estimates.
- _____ All architectural plans and/or sketches, and all specifications needed to understand the scope of the work proposed.
- _____ Examples of color schemes and materials proposed for the exterior improvements including paint, bricks, signage, windows, awnings, etc.
- _____ A description of the long-term maintenance plan proposed by the applicant for the building's exterior once any grant-funded improvements are completed.
- _____ The property owner's written permission for the work proposed, if the applicant is a tenant.
- _____ Written proof in the form of a statement of account history that all property taxes, annual installments of assessments, and balances on all City of West Branch accounts (whether in the name of the applicant or owner or attaching to the property) for the subject property have been paid.
- _____ A certificate of insurance coverage for the subject property.
- _____ A project schedule detailing the applicant's expected progress in completing the proposed improvements.
- _____ Photographs of the building façade proposed for improvements.

Owner Authorization for Proposed Façade Improvements

I hereby authorize (applicant name)_____to
carry out the exterior improvements as detailed in the attached Façade Improvement
Grant Application Form, on my property located at (address)

_____, which is located within the West Branch
DDA district.

I agree to release and hold harmless the City of West Branch Downtown Development Authority and the members thereof, the DDA Chairperson, representatives, and staff, the City of West Branch, and the City of West Branch’s officers, councilpersons, representatives, and staff from all liability in the event of property damage or physical injury resulting from construction work performed in conjunction with this façade improvement project.

SIGNED _____ DATED: _____