

Williamston Downtown Development Authority

Façade Improvement Program Procedures, Guidelines and Application



Williamston City Hall
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**WILLIAMSTON DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Restoration is preferable to renovation.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND & INTENT

In 1995, the City of Williamston Downtown Development Authority (DDA) established the present Façade Improvement 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. Downtown Williamston is pivotal to the economic health of the community because its condition, whether perceived or actual, plays such a large part in the impression that any neglect will create an image of a deteriorating economic base. As a result, potential businesses may be discouraged from locating in downtown Williamston and existing property owners may defer maintenance and reinvestment in their real estate.

The intent of the FIP is to strengthen the economic viability of downtown Williamston by providing financial incentives for improving the exterior appearance of its buildings. The FIP provides an opportunity to preserve the architectural heritage of downtown Williamston and enhance the unique atmosphere that the area provides to the community. It is important to the aesthetic enhancement of downtown that building design treatments be compatible with each other. The DDA believes the best approach is through the preservation of a building's original architectural features.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Williamston DDA has created a FIP that is intended to stimulate façade design improvements to downtown buildings in a coordinated fashion, stressing overall compatibility with the historical significance and uniqueness of Williamston's downtown structures. The DDA will provide grant funds for partial reimbursement of costs incurred to improve buildings consistent with the DDA Façade Improvement Program guidelines.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Owners, tenants with owners approval, and land contract purchasers with consent of the fee title owner who have structures located within the Downtown Development Authority district may apply for FIP funds. A map of the DDA district is available at City Hall. Applicants must be in good standing with the City and all city accounts must be paid. Public agencies are also eligible to apply for FIP funds.

ELIGIBLE BUILDINGS

Any existing commercial, retail, mixed use or professional building located within the DDA district which is owned by an eligible applicant for commercial purposes is considered eligible for FIP funds. Newly constructed buildings and additions to existing structures are also eligible, subject to funding availability and the limitation listed under Eligible Exterior/Façade Improvements listed below. Public agency buildings are also eligible, however the DDA will give priority to commercial, retail, mixed use or professional buildings over those owned or used by public agencies.

When one building is under one ownership but divided into more than one commercial, retail, mixed use (including 2nd floor residential uses) and/or professional tenancy, each separate unit which has an individual storefront façade and an independent ground floor entry shall be eligible to individually participate in the Façade Improvement Program.

FUNDING AMOUNTS

One Story Buildings:

The Williamston DDA will reimburse up to 50% or \$2,000 (whichever is less) per façade side (up to 4 sides) for a maximum of \$8,000 per building of total eligible expenses upon approval of the DDA Board.

The total amount rebated to a property owner and/or tenant for the same building during a five year period may not exceed \$8,000.00/18,000.

Two or More Story Buildings:

The Williamston DDA will reimburse up to 50% or \$4,500 (whichever is less) per façade side (up to 4 sides) for a maximum of \$18,000 per building of total eligible expenses upon approval of the DDA Board.



The total amount rebated to a property owner and/or tenant for the same building during a five year period may not exceed \$8,000.00/18,000.

To incentivize the renovation and repair of unsafe buildings (as determined by the building department) and/or buildings that have been vacant for 90 days, the DDA, after careful review of project scope and other DDA obligations, may grant more than \$2,000 per façade face or \$8,000 per eligible building. However, in no case shall the DDA expend more than \$100,000 for any project(s) within any fiscal year.

DESIGN GUIDELINES & FAÇADE WORK GROUP

Projects approved for Façade Improvement Programs funds must comply with all applicable City of Williamston ordinances and Building codes. Some projects will require zoning and/or building permits. The Façade Work Group will meet with the applicant to discuss the project prior to the DDA considering the project. The Façade Work Group shall meet with the applicant within 30 days.

ELIGIBLE EXTERIOR/FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

The DDA and/or its Façade Work Group shall reserve the right to determine the eligibility of all times in a project's scope of work. The determination shall be conclusive and final. All grant funded improvements must be permanent and fixed in type and/or nature and have an anticipated useful life of 10 or more years. Improvements must meet all City of Williamston zoning, building and safety requirements. Applicant will be responsible for obtaining necessary permits.

Façade features **eligible** to be restored, renovated or constructed with grant dollars include:

- Signage promoting an on premises commercial/residential use*
- Exterior walls
- Windows
- Doors
- Storefronts
- Painting of exterior surfaces
- Cleaning and/or tuck-pointing of brick and stone
- Entrance/exit improvements (including ADA)
- Awnings*
- Exterior architectural features
- Exterior lighting*

**these items are closely examined through design guidelines and zoning ordinances*

Improvements must be started within 60 days of approval and completed within twelve (12) months of commencement.

With all grant funded projects, **restoration is preferable to renovation**. Restoration is the attempt to return the façade to its original appearance through the use of authentic materials and the faithful replication of the building to conditions shown in old photos and records. Renovation projects should be sensitive to the historic appearance of the building but may include modern materials and design elements.

Buildings on the State of National Register must be restored or rehabilitated according to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. If your project does not fall under this category, please see the Williamston DDA's Williamston Downtown Historic District November 2011 Report, available at Williamston City Hall. This report contains valuable information on the history of many downtown buildings, including the building's architectural style. The DDA will prefer façade improvements that seek to restore the building to the historically researched architectural style.

NON-ELIGIBLE EXTERIOR/FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

The following are **non-eligible** funding expenses:

- Expenses incurred prior to FIP application approval
- Real property acquisition
- Mortgage, title work, land contract financing, loan fees, easement work, or register of deeds filing
- Site plan, sign, or building permit fees
- Appraiser, attorney, architect or interior decorator fees
- Wages paid to applicant or applicant's relatives for work associated with the FIP
- Permanent job tools or those that have a shelf life longer than one (1) year
- Furnishings, trade fixtures, or other items taxed as personal property
- Roofs, landscaping, sidewalks or approaches (but not including ingress/egress ADA)



TIMETABLE

Unless otherwise agreed to 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 twelve 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.

RIGHTS RESERVED

The Williamston DDA reserves the right to reject any and all applications. The specific program guidelines detailed herein are subject to revision or amendment by the DDA Board. The Williamston DDA may discontinue this program at any time, subject to availability of program funding. At the DDA's discretion and with a majority vote of the Board, an exception to any FIP guideline may be granted.

QUESTIONS

Questions concerning this program should be directed to Community Development & Planning Staff. They can be reached at commdev@williamston-mi.us or at (517) 655-2774.

**CITY OF WILLIAMSTON
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
APPLICATION PROCEDURES CHECKLIST**

BEGINNING THE PROCESS

1. _____ Read Description, Application, and Checklist provided by the DDA.
2. _____ Contact the Community Development & Planning Department at Williamston City Hall, 161 E. Grand River Ave., Williamston, MI 48895, (517) 655-2774 for the Façade Improvement Program Application Packet and guidelines between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. *Feel free to ask staff questions.*
3. _____ **PLEASE NOTE:** Some façade improvements may require Zoning Administrator or Planning Commission Review. Contact the Community Development & Planning Department at (517) 655-2774 to pick up any permits or additional applications you may need to evaluate your Façade Improvement Project (sign permits, zoning permits, Planning Commission review, etc.)
4. _____ **PLEASE NOTE:** Some façade improvements may require building inspection. Contact the Williamston Building Department to pick up any building, electrical, plumbing, etc. permits you might require and call 1-(800) 627-2807.
5. _____ **PLEASE NOTE:** Property taxes, special assessments, and water and sewer bills must be fully paid on the property proposed for façade improvement. Please check with the City Treasurer and Water Clerk to ensure that all accounts are up to date and paid at (517) 655-2774.

APPLICATION & FAÇADE WORK GROUP

6. _____ Fill out the application and return it to the Community Development & Planning Department at City Hall and be sure to include requested support material, proof of permit applications, etc. The Community Development & Planning Department will review for completeness and requests missing/additional information if required. No application can be reviewed by the DDA until Community Development & Planning reviews for appropriate completeness.
7. _____ The Façade Work Group (comprised of members of the DDA Board) will meet with the applicant (within 30 days of City Hall receiving the completed application) to evaluate the FIP application and supporting material before the DDA considers the application.
8. _____ The Community Development & Planning Department reviews all application material and forwards the recommendation to the DDA to be placed on the following DDA meeting. DDA meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at City Hall, 161 E. Grand River Ave., Williamston, MI 48895.

DDA RECCOMENDATION

9. _____ The DDA reviews project submitted and approves or denies funding. Applicant receives notification of DDA decision and any conditions placed on funding.
10. _____ Applicant must commence project within 60 days of receiving grant approval and complete project within 12 months or



other timeline as accepted by the DDA. If this timeline cannot be met, applicant must return to the DDA in verbal or written format and request a re-evaluation and extension.

11. _____ **Any modification** (unplanned, unforeseen, or otherwise) to the approved application must be authorized by the DDA Director who may refer a decision to the DDA.

REIMBURSEMENT

12. _____ Upon completion of the project, the applicant must provide paid receipts and invoices to the DDA Director, demonstrating that the project has been completed and paid for in full within 60 days of project completion. The DDA Director will forward proof of completion to the DDA, which will vote on the amount to be awarded for the grant.
13. _____ The Applicant agrees to façade improvement offer, reviews necessary paperwork (such as title work or title policy commitment) and grants the DDA a 5 year façade easement to ensure that improvements are maintained and altered only with permission of the DDA Director or DDA Board. The agreement is filed with the Ingham County Register of Deeds.
14. _____ City Treasurer writes a check from the DDA Account within 30 days and it is mailed to the address provided on the application.

PLEASE NOTE: PROJECT WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR FUNDING IF:

1. The application process is not completed prior to beginning of construction.
2. All documentation requested in the application is not provided.
3. The property's taxes and other City accounts are not current.
4. Final financial report is not completed with required documentation.



FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM APPLICATION

Application Date _____
Name of Applicant _____
Mailing Address _____
Telephone Number _____
E-Mail Address _____
Project Address _____
Building Owner _____
Owner Address _____
Proposed project start date _____
Proposed completion date _____

Project will involve the building's following façade sides: (check all that apply)

Front
Side as viewed from street _____ L _____ R
Rear _____

Estimated total dollar amount of the improvement project: _____
Estimated grant amount being requested (\$2,000 per side, \$8,000 cap) _____

Applicant must provide the following information in addition to this application:

- 1. Provide a detailed description and include cost breakdowns by major categories such as architectural fees, engineering fees, signs, awnings, painting, repair, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, etc.
2. Include all project bids with complete cost estimates when submitting application review. We suggest that the applicant "shop around" to ensure the most competitive bid for your proposed project. Three bids is sufficient.
3. Once a commercial contractor has been selected, proof of commercial liability insurance for contractor shall be provided listing the City and DDA as additional insured.
4. Attach at a minimum one (1) color photocopy image of the existing façades(s) to improve.
5. Attach one (1) copy of the project design for exterior improvements for each side.

The undersigned applicant (s) affirms that:

- 1. The information submitted herein is true and accurate to the best of my (our) knowledge.
2. I (we) have read and understand the conditions of the DDA Façade Improvement Programs and agree to abide by its conditions and guidelines

Signature of Applicant (s) _____ Date _____

_____ Date _____

Signature of Property Owner(s) (if different from above) _____ Date _____

_____ Date _____



DDA USE ONLY

- Date application reviewed by applicant _____
- Date of review with CDP staff and Façade Work Group _____
- Date & opinion of Zoning (if necessary) _____
- Date & opinion of Building (if necessary) _____
- Date & opinion of Treasurer review _____
- Date completed application submitted _____
- Date & opinion Façade work group _____
- Date & opinion of CDP _____
- DDA meeting date & action _____
- Project beginning date _____
- Project ending date _____
- Project modifications & extensions (if any) _____
- Title Work -or- Title Policy Commitment _____
- Easement filed with Register of Deeds _____
- Date of receipts submitted & action _____
- Date reimbursement sent _____

