

MASON DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

AMENDED JULY 10, 2003; MARCH 11, 2004; NOVEMBER 11, 2004;
AND FURTHER AMENDED FEBRUARY 3, 2010

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Mason Downtown Development Authority (MDDA) Façade Grant Program is to encourage historically-minded improvements within the Downtown Development District to commercial façades that are readily visible to the public.

It is the intent of the Façade Grant Program to utilize MDDA revenues to enhance the building façades found within the Downtown Development District.

The appearance of buildings plays a major role in the marketing success of the Downtown Development District. The public perception of the Downtown Development District plays a significant part in the economic success of the District. Improving the physical appearance of our buildings will promote the attraction and retention of business operations in the District, will halt property value deterioration, will promote economic growth in the District, and will preserve historic district resources.

II. Grant Amounts and Participation

To be eligible for a grant, a project must have total eligible costs of at least \$4,000.00.

MDDA will consider applications for grants of up to thirty-five percent (35%) of the eligible costs of the project. The maximum grant will be \$10,000 provided, however, that the maximum grant may, in the discretion of MDDA, be up to \$15,000 or up to fifty percent (50%) of the total eligible costs, whichever is less, where the total eligible costs exceed \$10,000 and where the façade project, in the sole opinion of MDDA, will result in a substantial and dramatic visual change and improvement to the exterior of the building involved.

Grants are available for the exterior repair, maintenance or rehabilitation of the faces of the existing commercial buildings within the Downtown Development District. Faces included are the front, rear or side of a building if the front, rear or side is readily visible from a public street or municipal parking lot.

Owners of property within the Downtown Development District are eligible.

Tenants or other occupants of property within the Downtown Development District are eligible but the application must include written approval and consent of the property owner.

Land contract purchasers of property within the Downtown Development District are eligible but the application must include written approval and consent of the fee title owner.

III. Eligible Costs

Eligible Costs include, but are not necessarily limited to, labor and material for:

1. Restoration, repair or replacement of windows, doors, exterior walls, chimneys or other architectural elements.
2. Exterior painting if done in conjunction with other eligible work.
3. Signage, awnings, marquees and related lighting and electrical fixtures.
4. Masonry repair or cleaning.
5. Exterior work necessary for conversion to a retail or entertainment storefront.
6. Removal of after-installed façades.
7. Restoration of vintage elements.
8. Architectural fees.

The following costs are not eligible:

1. Costs incurred before final grant approval by MDDA with the exception of architectural fees.
2. Costs paid by the applicant in merchandise or in-kind services.
3. Labor paid to the applicant or a family member of the applicant or an employee of the applicant unless the applicant, family member or employee of the applicant is a recognized contractor for the particular labor being provided to the project.

IV. Conditions of Eligibility

Each applicant must meet the following requirements:

1. Property taxes and other city accounts must be current at the time of approval and funding.
2. Proposed improvements or repairs must have an anticipated useful life of ten or more years.
3. The applicant must, at the time of signing a Façade Grant Agreement, identify the contractor or contractors who will perform the work and disclose if any such contractor is a family member or employee of the applicant. The contractor or contractors must be approved by MDDA.
4. The proposed property will be subject to a recapture of 100% by the DDA. Non-taxpaying entities are not eligible.

V. Application Process

An applicant will complete an application substantially in the form approved by MDDA and deliver it with all necessary attachments and exhibits to the MDDA Director.

The application will be reviewed by the MDDA Director who will notify the applicant whether or not the application appears to meet the program objectives and will be accepted for consideration.

An application will consist of the following:

1. Application in the form approved by MDDA;
2. Renderings of proposed work;
3. Written description of project plans (scope of work); and
4. Detailed cost estimate for all eligible costs supported by a quote from one or more recognized contractors or suppliers.

MDDA may consult with an applicant for the purpose of modifying the scope and content of the proposed work.

VI. Time Frame

Applications must be received by the end of a calendar quarter in order to be considered for approval during the next calendar quarter. All applicants will be notified of preliminary approval, non-approval or a request for modification before the end of the calendar quarter following receipt of an application.

VII. Historic District Commission

Most of the buildings in the DDA district are also in the City of Mason Historic District. The City's Historic District Ordinance requires that any façade modification be approved by the Historic District Commission (HDC). Upon preliminary approval by MDDA of a grant application, the applicant will apply, as required, for HDC approval.

The MDDA Executive Director will assist the applicant in applying to the HDC for a certificate of appropriateness by providing the applicant with the necessary forms, by obtaining answers to any questions the applicant may have, and by facilitating the process wherever possible.

VIII. Final Approval and Agreement

When the HDC has issued a certificate of appropriateness, the applicant will be notified of final approval by MDDA. The applicant and the MDDA will sign a Façade Grant Agreement in a form approved by MDDA. The applicant will be responsible for obtaining any necessary building permits from any governmental agency and the DDA director will facilitate this process wherever possible. The Façade Grant Agreement will include a covenant by the applicant to perform the work in accordance with the plans approved by MDDA and HDC. The Façade Grant Agreement will include consent of the applicant that pictures, renderings or descriptions of the work may be used by MDDA for any and all promotional purposes.

IX. Changes

Any changes in the scope of work must be approved in writing by MDDA and the HDC, where applicable, before construction of installation.

MDDA appreciates and understands that the repair and restoration of existing buildings, and particularly historical buildings, will sometimes result in costs that were unforeseen and unexpected at the time of applying for a Façade Grant and at the time a project is commenced. Therefore, the MDDA Executive Director may, without further approval of the MDDA Board, increase the amount of an approved grant where the Executive Director finds that all the following are true:

1. A grant has previously been approved by MDDA and a Façade Grant Agreement has been executed in accordance with these guidelines.
2. The applicant, after commencing work on the project, for the first time encounters circumstances surrounding the actual construction, repair or restoration that, in the opinion of the Executive Director, were to that point in time unforeseen and unexpected by the applicant and that will necessarily increase the cost of the project for which a grant was approved.
3. The applicant has requested an increase in the grant amount and has submitted documents in support of said request that meet the documentation requirements for an initial grant application hereunder.
4. The applicant is not seeking to change the essential nature or scope of the project for which the grant was first approved.

5. The increase in the grant amount requested by the applicant does not exceed 20% of the grant first approved.
6. The adjusted total project cost and grant amount are still within the limits set forth in Paragraph II. of these guidelines.
7. No previous increases in the grant amount have been requested and approved.
8. The increase in the grant amount will not result in the aggregate of grant approvals to all applicants exceeding the MDDA budget for grants for the fiscal year in which the grant was initially approved.
9. A grant applicant whose request for an increase has been rejected by the Executive Director may appeal that decision to the full Board at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

X. Completion of Work and Funding

The approved work must be completed within one (1) year from the date of the grant agreement between MDDA and the applicant.

Upon completion of the work, the applicant will submit to MDDA a written request for funding certifying the work has been completed in accordance with the approvals and certifying the expenses that have been incurred.

The applicant will submit to MDDA evidence that any required building inspections have occurred and that all required approvals have been obtained.

MDDA may conduct such investigations and inspections as it deems appropriate to confirm completion of the work in accordance with the approvals and to confirm that the expenses have been incurred.

MDDA will then pay to the applicant the amount of the grant or the agreed upon percentage of the cost, whichever is less, upon receipt of the grantee's sworn statement containing a list of the laborers, suppliers and contractors to whom payment is due, and the itemized amount of such payments. MDDA reserves the right to issue joint checks when, in its sole discretion, it determines that joint checks are necessary.

XI. Promoting the Program

The MDDA Director will prepare and mail to each known building owner and business operator within the Downtown Development District a communication announcing the grant program and the availability of workshops. This notification will take place at least once each calendar year.

The MDDA Director will schedule, publicize and conduct at least one workshop each calendar year to inform potential applicants of the parameters of the grant program and the requirements for applying.

XII. Discretion of MDDA

Each applicant will understand that MDDA may, in its sole and absolute discretion, approve or reject any application or request modifications of the proposed project. MDDA reserves the right to change these guidelines at any time.