

EDC FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Charter Township of Meridian Economic Development Corporation (EDC) formally institutes an established the Façade Improvement Grant Program (FIP) to stimulate appropriate improvements to the exterior of commercial buildings. The commercial buildings must be within the boundaries of Meridian Charter Township. The commercial buildings must be outside of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA). The aforementioned have their own district FIP grants available, and businesses in these districts are not eligible for the EDC FIP.

The EDC 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 Economic Development Corporation is not a district authority, and provides direct investment incentives for eligible businesses, properties, and projects within Meridian Township. The boundaries of the Township are equal to the area that the EDC 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 Township through the implementation of grants to small business brick and mortar locations. The intent of this program is to invest in the business districts of the Township, 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 promotes the brand of Meridian Charter Township as, a Prime Community.

Program Description:

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

Subject to funding availability and based on a separate vote of approval by the Economic Development Corporation 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 Corridor Improvement Authority districts are not eligible. The DDA has its own FIP and qualified applicants should apply with to the DDA. The CIA will potentially have their own FIP. The EDC may also consider working as a partner with the CIA to build enhancing programs for CIA properties. Owners, tenants with owner's approval, or both who have commercial property located within the Township may apply for FIP funds. This includes the Economic Development Corporation 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 Township 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). 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 EDC 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/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)

Program Financing:

The EDC will reimburse 50% (no more than \$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 Economic Development Corporation. A project is only eligible for ½ of the project costs for reimbursement, no more than \$20,000 per improvement, once every 10 years.

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/signage
- Sidewalks (From the Public Sidewalk to the Business)
- Asphaltting Of Customer/Public Parking Area
- 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 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 EDC'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 90 days and been completed within six months (180 days) of the EDC funding commitment, the EDC will re-evaluate the status of the project. At its discretion, the EDC reserves the right to cancel or extend the funding commitment.

Other Program Guidelines

1. The EDC 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 and similar improvement will not be approved before a 10 year period.
3. At the EDC's discretion and with a majority vote of the Economic Development Corporation 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 EDC.

Application, Approval, and Payment Procedures

1. Contact the Meridian Charter Township Economic Development Director for grant 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 Planning Staff, EDC Staff and or Economic Development Corporation Chairperson.
3. Submit completed application, design plans, cost estimates to the EDC staff person at 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864. The EDC accepts applications throughout the year.
4. The application is reviewed by staff to verify that the location is within the EDC 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 EDC'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 Meridian 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 his/her project has been accepted for consideration.
8. Each application shall be reviewed by the Economic Development Director and Planning Staff. A written recommendation for approval, modification or rejection shall be prepared for consideration by the EDC at their next regular meeting.
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 back to the EDC 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 EDC 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 EDC 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 EDC. Only under extenuating circumstances, an extension of time to complete the project can be requested in writing and may be awarded by the EDC.
- Upon completion of the project improvement, EDC staff will photograph the new façade and submit it to the EDC to ensure that all components of the site plan are met.
- After final project inspection, the EDC 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 EDC. 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 (10 years maximum).