



## **Uptown Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) Facade Improvement Program**

### **Awards and Funding**

The Uptown CIA Facade Improvement Program will provide matching funds up to \$20,000 for improvements to the facades of commercial buildings. Grants require a minimum 30% match from the applicant for all eligible expenses. Funding is provided on a competitive basis. Total funds available for the project through June 30, 2021 are \$40,000 through the Uptown Corridor Improvement Authority.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible to participate in the program, the property must be located within Uptown Corridor Improvement Authority boundaries (see the attached map). The property must contain an active commercial business or be undergoing renovations for the opening of a business within one hundred and twenty (120) days from the date of award approval. Businesses leasing space can apply with written permission from the property owner. All applicants and properties must be in good standing with respect to all local, State and Federal taxes. Applicants in litigation with the City of Grand Rapids will not be considered.

Uptown will reimburse the applicant directly for no more than 70% of total project costs and no more than the amount stated in the original agreement. A single payment will be made upon completion of the project, subject to site review and the submission of proper receipts and copies of paid invoices.

### **Goals**

- 1) Installation of a new façade
- 2) Major enhancement to an existing façade

This does not include regular maintenance and upkeep of existing exteriors. In general the successful application will be one that requires a building permit from the City of Grand Rapids.

### **Eligible Improvements**

Significant upgrades or alterations to building exteriors are eligible if consistent with the attached Design Guidelines. Whenever possible upgrades to the rear façade (facing the alley) and green building treatments are highly encouraged. Storefront improvements require compliance with barrier free design requirements. Such improvements must conform with the Design Guidelines. If performed by a licensed contractor, all material and labor costs that adhere to the Design Guidelines are eligible expenses. Property or business owners cannot charge labor for their own time, or their employees' time. However, "do-it-yourself" expenditures on materials are eligible.

## **Application & Review Process Formal Application**

To be considered for a grant applicants must submit the following information to the Uptown Corridor Improvement Authority Design Committee via email to: imiller@uptowngr.com.

Applications will be reviewed monthly on a first come first served basis.

1. Application cover sheet (attached)
2. Detailed written description of the improvements, including materials to be used.
3. Contractor(s) estimates
4. Graphic rendering of proposed changes.

## **Preliminary Review**

Applications will be evaluated on two criteria: (1) completeness and (2) adherence to design guidelines. Satisfactory applications will be considered for formal approval. Incomplete applications or projects not meeting the Design Guidelines will be rejected. Denied applicants will be provided with an explanation that details the reasons for denial. If a denied applicant remedies the concerns outlined, the application may be resubmitted.

## **Formal Review**

Applications passing the preliminary review phase will be awarded grants on a first come, first served basis. The amount of funding will depend upon the number of eligible applications, the quality of the project and the visual impact on the business district. The Uptown CIA reserves the right to approve and reject any and all requests. Partial or full funding may be awarded. Phased funding may be available based on available funds and priority to first-time applicants.

## **Design Assistance**

Applicants may receive up to \$5,000 in grant funds for design assistance. Design funds can be used to hire an architect to provide design consultation.

## **Payments**

Uptown will pay the applicant on a reimbursement basis upon submission of original contractor invoices after the work is completed. Work completed prior to program application approval will not be reimbursed. Reimbursement will be provided within 15-20 working days after submission of the receipts, Waiver of Lien, and verification of the completed work per site review of the Uptown Executive Director.

## **Permits & Approvals**

Improvements are subject to standard City approvals. Depending on how extensive the work, permits may be required for electrical and structural repairs. Any new signs will require a sign permit. Any changes to properties located in the historic district require review by the Historic District Commission.



## Uptown Corridor Improvement Authority Design Guidelines

The urban storefront is the physical expression of commerce within a city. The scale, proportion and placement of storefronts are designed to provide a permeable edge along the sidewalk and street that promotes an attractive and convenient shopping experience. This permeable edge provides physical and visual connection between the interior and exterior of the retail enterprise - inviting people to look, and walk, into the store.

Although storefront character varies from region to region, there are features common to almost all storefronts. The most typical configuration consists of a low wall at the sidewalk, known as a bulkhead, upon which large panes of glass are set. These panes of glass, or display windows, provide the visual connection between the inside and outside of the building and include the main store entrance, which is typically located in the center, or to one side, of the composition. This main entry is commonly recessed to provide a space for the door to swing into (so it is not swinging directly into the sidewalk) and also to provide protection from the weather to customers entering the store. Above the display windows there is often a band of narrow horizontal panes of glass known as transoms or clerestory glazing. These transoms are usually divided into small panes of decorative or colored glass, and in many cases will have an awning projecting from them. A horizontal expression band or storefront beam caps the storefront composition and extends the entire length of the glass that it is above. This beam is oftentimes used to advertise the business by accommodating signs, either applied within the beam itself, or as a projecting sign mounted perpendicular to the building wall.

A successful facade improvement project enhances the permeable edge of the Uptown commercial corridor through the renovation or rehabilitation of the building's features, signage, awnings, windows and doorways. These guidelines are intended to provide key principles and general direction with respect to facade renovations, not to dictate each and every design decision. The guidelines outline the framework from which each property and business owner can utilize their own creativity, or that of a professional architect or designer.

### KEY DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- All improvements must be compatible with applicable zoning codes, satisfy permit requirements, and conform to any other regulatory restrictions.
- Individual storefronts should be clearly defined by architectural elements, such as pillars, piers, or separations of glass.
- Building character could be emphasized by a unified treatment of the storefront that is compatible with, and visually supports the upper façade.
- Alterations over time that have acquired significance, e.g., art deco facades, should be preserved.
- If a building has historic or aesthetic merit, improvements should be designed to reveal the building's original style, form, and materials, whenever possible.
- Existing windows and doors should not be covered.

- Entrance character should be enhanced to become a strong element of the front and rear facades.
- Recessed entryways and/or alcoves shall be maintained for existing street level storefronts.
- The use of high quality, traditional materials such as brick, wood, concrete and tile is encouraged.
- Colors of all exterior materials should be coordinated.
- Painting of brick is only allowed if the brick was previously painted. This excludes cement block.
- All glass and window areas shall be clear, not tinted.
- Building lighting should be provided with directional and recessed lighting.
- Storefront improvements will require compliance with barrier free design requirements.
- Every sign should be of high quality and respect the architecture of the building and adhere to all City signage requirements.

## **PROHIBITED IMPROVEMENTS OR ELEMENTS**

- Repair or application of aluminum or similar slipcovers that cover the original facade
- Removal of original, decorative elements such as cornice ornamentation
- Covering of original windows and bays
- Mirrored glass
- Permanent window and door security bars, including sliding gates or roll-down panel systems
- Awnings made of shiny, high-gloss, and translucent materials such as vinyl or plastic
- Awnings that cover distinctive architectural features of the building
- Backlit awnings or signs
- Temporary signs, including banners.