



# Façade Improvement Grant Guidelines & Application

## Façade Improvement Guidelines

### Introduction

The Helena Business Improvement District (HBID) Façade Improvement Grant (FIG) program began in 2018. The program is designed to promote the improvement of commercial and multi-use properties located within the Business Improvement District by helping property owners upgrade, rehabilitate, and preserve the facades of eligible structures in Historic Downtown Helena. The FIG program aims to make revitalization efforts more affordable by providing matching grant funds up to \$5000.

Since 2018, the program has helped fund *eleven projects* equaling **\$44,983**.

### General Provisions

The policies and procedures contained within these guidelines are to present the criteria which govern the façade improvement activities assisted with funds made available through the HBID FIG program.

**Purpose:** FIG grants are provided to owners or tenants (with documentation) in recognition of the positive impacts that individual building improvements can have on overall appearance, quality, growth, and vitality of the downtown.

**Objectives:** Façade improvement activities, assisted with funds made available through the FIG program, are intended to meet the following objectives:

- To encourage the leveraging of new private investment into Downtown Helena in the form of fixed asset investment related to exterior building improvements;
- To preserve, enhance, and restore the historical and architectural significance of buildings in Downtown Helena;
- To promote a positive and proactive business climate in Downtown Helena that encourages the revitalization of buildings and supports business improvement; and
- To increase visual impact and curb appeal.

### **Guidelines for Improvements**

- Design Guidelines for Improvements in the Downtown Helena Historic District – document can be found on our [website](#) or by contacting Helena/Lewis and Clark Co. Heritage Preservation office.
- Is your building affected by façade easements? Find out [here](#).

**Eligible Improvements Grants** - eligible improvements may include:

- Awnings – repair or installation
- Rehabilitation or compatible reconstruction of storefronts
- Removal of metal siding and exterior slipcovers (surfaces), exterior cleaning, painting, and/or paint removal
- Masonry repair and repainting
- Repair and replacement of architectural details or materials
- Window repair or replacement (removal of historic windows is not recommended by the Historic Preservation office)
- Improvement to backs of buildings are eligible if done in conjunction with a front façade improvement or if the front façade is already considered satisfactory according to program guidelines

**Ineligible Improvements Grants** - ineligible improvements may include:

- Improvements made prior to grant approval
- Interior rehabilitation unless it is essential to rehabilitate the building's façade
- Interior decoration
- Refinancing of existing debt
- Inventory and equipment
- Sweat equity (payments for applicant's own labor), although building materials/supplies are eligible for funding if the applicant does not use an outside contractor
- General business operations expenses (payroll, taxes, utilities, etc.)
- Business signs
- Lettering on awnings

**Building Design Requirements** - the goal is to return the building facades in the downtown area to their appearance following their initial construction; however, it is recognized that some buildings may have a different period of architectural significance that supersedes the original construction appearance. An additional goal is not to try and recreate some past time in the history of Helena; instead, it is to draw upon the architectural and historic distinctiveness of the downtown to enhance its value.

- Exterior renovations shall, to the extent practical, preserve and promote the significant architectural and historic features of the building.
- All construction work shall comply with applicable local, state, and federal building codes.
- The program is geared towards façade projects that protect the historic integrity of the building and improve the overall appearance of the downtown area.
- Ideal projects will retain or repair original features, use historic materials, and not harm or remove historic materials. For example, installation of vinyl siding would not be funded but the repair and repainting of original wood siding would.
- Projects should draw upon the history and architecture of the building while still reflecting the current use.
- Creative new uses for existing building stock will be strongly encouraged, as well as modern yet compatible awnings, signage, lighting, and other fixtures to enhance the appearance of storefronts and downtown.

**Terms and Conditions**

- Grant amounts are subject to the availability of program funds but shall not exceed \$5000. The Façade Grant Committee has the authority to recommend award of grants exceeding the \$5000 if a project is deemed beneficial to the FIG program objectives.
- Grantees will be required to sign a grant agreement guaranteeing the project will be completed according to the details included on the grant application and approved by the Façade Grant Committee.
- Grants will be paid in a lump sum at the end of the project as a reimbursement of costs incurred. Invoices need to be sent no later than the project completion date or as modified in the grant agreement.
- Awarded grantees will cooperate with any efforts of the HBID to publicize the grant award.

## Award Execution Steps

1. Applications will be reviewed by the Executive Director for completeness and if necessary, given back to applicants who will have a 14-day opportunity to make necessary changes before the review committee meets to approve or reject the applications.
2. Within 45 working days of the application deadline, the Façade Grant Committee will meet to score applications and will reject or accept proposals.
3. A written Notice of Award will be emailed and/or mailed to the applicant explaining the terms of the grant and confirm the Grant Agreement signature.
4. A written Rejection of Award will be emailed and/or mailed in a letter to the applicant. Any applicant who receives a rejection letter is encouraged to reach out to the Administrator for tips on how to make a competitive application.
5. **Official Rules are final and binding:**
  - By entering this FIG competition, applicants/grantees (“*Competitor[s]*”) acknowledge that they have read and understand these Official Rules, and fully accept and agree to be bound by the outlined terms.
  - Applicants acknowledge compliance with the Official Rules, including, without limitation, eligibility requirements and the decisions of the HBID.
  - Any competitor disputing these Official Rules shall be disqualified. **Failure to comply with these or any other Official Rules will result in disqualification.**
  - All decisions of the HBID, and/or its judges, are final and binding on all matters relating to this competition.

## Distribution of Funds

Prior to releasing grant funds, the following documentation must be in place.

1. **Evidence of Program Expenditures** – documentation shall be provided by the awarded applicant of expenditures prior to the release of funds which can include bills, invoices, or receipts for materials. All documents shall be reviewed and approved by the Executive Director.
2. **Inspection** – the Executive Director shall perform a visual inspection to ensure the project activities were completed per the grant agreement. A photograph of the completed project will be filed.

**Mail Application to:  
Helena Business Improvement District  
Micky Zurcher, Executive Director  
Façade Improvement Grant  
330 Jackson St.  
Helena, MT 59601**

# 2022 Re-Advertised Façade Application

Application Deadline September 15, 2022  
Project must be completed by June 1, 2023

We seek to assist the applicant by providing what the grant committee looks for while scoring the applications. By providing detailed information you will be competitive.

**YOUR APPLICATION MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING. FAILURE TO INCLUDE ANY OF THESE ITEMS OR ANY OF THE INFORMATION REQUESTED WILL RESULT IN YOUR APPLICATION BEING REJECTED.**

## 1. Cover Letter

- a. Business name & address and mailing address. (1 point)
  - i. Indicate on the attached boundary map where your project is located. Only applications within the boundary are accepted.
  - ii. Summarize the project's improvements indicating how it addresses visual impact and curb appeal. (5 points)
  - iii. Indicate the investment (3 points)
    1. amount being requested,
    2. total project cost, and
    3. completion date of project.
  - a. Private funds leveraged: applicant must leverage a minimum of one dollar (\$1) of private funds for every dollar (\$1) of grant funds being requested.
  - iv. Is the project multi-use, commercial or residential changing to commercial (1 point)
- b. Impact of the Project: detail the overall impact by answering in narrative form. Eligible costs must be structural (permanent) to the façade. (Yes/No answers are not detailing)
  - i. How does the project bolster the neighborhood and encourage development? (25 points)
  - ii. If the building is historic, does the project seek to restore the historical or architectural significance of the building? (25 points) Please see **Historic Building Consultation** section below.
  - iii. What is the expected lifetime of the proposed improvements? (10 points)
- c. Community Contribution: is the applicant a good neighbor.
  - i. How do you maintain the area around the business to help keep it clean and free of debris on a consistent basis? (20 points)
  - ii. Does the applicant participate in organized Downtown Helena promotions, events, or other community-based activities? (10 points)

## 2. Attachments to Cover Letter

- a. **Building Owners** must attach a copy of the **recorded deed** for the property. The deed must show the Applicant and Grantee on the deed are the same entity/person(s).
- b. **Tenants** must attach:
  - i) a signed copy of lease showing remaining lease term; and
  - ii) a Letter of Support from the landlord giving permission for the project with written confirmation of the remaining lease term.
  - iii) tenants must have at least three (3) years remaining on the least or the application will be rejected.
- c. Sketches or drawings of the proposed improvements and color photographs of the property in JPEG form emailed to [mzurcher@helenabid.com](mailto:mzurcher@helenabid.com). The more pictures the better.
- d. Five (5) hard copies of all materials by the application deadline
- e. **Historic Building Consultation** – exterior renovations shall to the extent practical, preserve and promote the significant architectural and historic features of the building. Modifications to listed historic buildings must be reviewed and approved by the local Heritage Tourism Council and included in the application.
  - i. You must contact the Helena/Lewis and Clark Co. Heritage Preservation Officer (HPO) to confirm the historic status of your building (**the southern portion of the HBID is in the Helena Historic District**).
    1. An attached email or letter to your application indicating whether your building is historic/non-historic. If your building is historic, the email/letter must indicate that your project has been reviewed and recommended by the Heritage Preservation office.

Pam Attardo  
Heritage Preservation Officer  
City-County Building  
316 N. Park Avenue  
Helena MT 59623  
Phone: 406-447-8357  
[pattardo@lccountymt.gov](mailto:pattardo@lccountymt.gov)

Map - Helena Business Improvement District (HBID) – Additional Map [Here](#).





## Façade Improvement Grant Agreement

- A. Grantee agrees complete the project as described in the application and approved by the Façade Grant Committee. This grant may be used only for eligible project activities described in the Grantee’s façade improvement grant application and approved by the Façade Grant Committee and the HBID Board of Trustees.
- B. Grantee agrees to complete the project by June 30<sup>th</sup> of the ensuing year.
- C. Grantee agrees to preserve and promote the significant architectural and historic features of the building.
- D. Grantee agrees to provide additional information and documents as the HBID may request and allow HBID and its representatives to have reasonable access to the site for the purpose of evaluating the progress and completion of the project.
- E. Grantee agrees to the grantee’s best knowledge and belief, their project complies with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and codes.
- F. Grantee agrees to maintain the property and improvement.
- G. Grantee agrees to allow the HBID to promote the project including, but not limited to, displaying a HBID logo sign at the site during and after construction, and using photographs and descriptions of the project in HBID promotional materials and/or social media.
- H. HBID reserves the right to withhold any payments to be made under this grant award if, in the HBID’s sole discretion, such action is necessary: (1) because Grantee has not fully complied with the terms and conditions of the grant; (2) to protect the purpose and objectives of the grant; or (3) to comply with any law or regulation applicable to Grantee, to HBID, or this grant.

On behalf of Grantee, I understand and agree to the foregoing terms and conditions the HBID grant, and hereby certify my authority to execute this agreement.

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*Business / Organization Name*

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*Applicant’s Signature*

*Date*

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*Building Owner’s Signature*

*Date*