

RICHMOND HIGHWAY FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (FIP)

GRANT GUIDELINES

- I. **OBJECTIVE.** This Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization and Reinvestment (OCRR)/ Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation (SFDC) initiative encourages improvement of the aesthetic quality of business and commercial properties located on or visible from Richmond Highway.
- II. **PROGRAM AREA.** The Program Area is the Richmond Highway Commercial Revitalization District (CRD), which is approximately 7.5 miles in length from the I-495 Capital Beltway to Woodlawn Plantation/Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway.
- III. **INCENTIVES.** The FIP provides property and business owners within the Richmond Highway Commercial Revitalization District (CRD) with financial incentives and design services to encourage exterior building and site improvements to commercial properties. The maximum design services reimbursement is \$3,500, which covers design and illustration cost of façade improvement project concept. Any additional design fees, to include construction plans, would be at expense of applicant. The program provides matching grants between \$5,000 and \$25,000.
 - a. The grant is disbursed as a reimbursement to the property owner for completion of approved improvements.
 - b. No more than 50% of project costs can be covered through the grant.
 - c. Façade Improvement Grants are up to a maximum of \$25,000.
 - d. Applicants may be awarded only one grant per project or property.
- IV. **QUALIFYING IMPROVEMENTS.** Grants are limited to exterior visible façades of buildings, site and other aesthetic improvements (i.e., signs, lighting, landscaping, new roofs when visible). New construction does not qualify for the program; however, projects may include building additions.
 - A. **Improvement Guidelines.** Guidelines are contained in the Richmond Highway Façade Improvement Design Guidelines booklet which can be found online at http://www.sfdc.org/main_facade.html, or a copy is available at the SFDC office.
 - B. **Qualifying Improvements**
 - Façade renovations (eg, Repair, painting, and re-siding of exterior walls including cornice, roof, decorative features, etc)
 - Exterior building renovations
 - Building expansion
 - Painting
 - Repair, replacement or installation of lighting

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Repair, replacement or installation of exterior canopies or awnings

Repair, replacement or installation of on-site commercial signage

Repair, replacement or installation of installation of landscape improvements such as retaining walls, steps, and plantings. Landscape plantings are identified as trees, shrubs, and groundcover

Pedestrian enhancements such as sidewalks, pavers, and improved access to the site/building

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements to the outside and entry of the building (not interior improvements)

C. Non-Qualifying Improvements (Not All Inclusive)

Improvements made prior to approval of Grant

Non-fixed improvements

Purchase of property inventory

Equipment

General periodic maintenance

Annual landscape vegetation

Sweat equity

Debt refinancing

Business payroll and working capital

V. APPLICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW. There are two components to the Façade Improvement Program: Design Services, and Façade Improvement Grants.

A. Design Services

- Design Services are limited to conceptual renderings and for expansions that are no greater than 2,000 square feet (SF) or 33% of existing the existing building, whichever is less.
- The maximum design services reimbursement is \$3,500, which covers design and illustration cost of façade improvement project concept. Any additional design fees, to include construction plans, would be at expense of applicant
- Contact the SFDC to receive an application, and a copy of Design Guidelines. Among other things, the project scope, appropriate use of the grant funds, and the need for Design Services will be discussed. If the applicant elects to proceed, he/she needs to hire an architect or landscape architect depending on the scope of the project.
- The applicant must hire an architect/landscape architect to provide design services which includes development of a concept plan and presentation of it to the FIP Design Review Committee (DRC). SFDC maintains a list of potential architect/landscape architects, or the applicant may hire their own. It is the responsibility of the applicant to coordinate the design assistance.
- Design Services Fee reimbursements are for a maximum of \$3,500.

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- A signed agreement between SFDC and project architect/landscape architect is required prior to commencement of work, to be eligible for reimbursement; and,
- In accordance with SFDC contract with architect/landscape architect, reimbursement for design services is released in two phases; generally a 50-50 split. The first payment covers the initial concept plan work, and the second payment is released upon approval of final design by the Design Review Committee (DRC).

B. Façade Improvement Grant.

Step 1. FIP Application Requirements. Each application must include the following information; and, be submitted to SFDC and OCRR no later than 1-week prior to scheduled DRC review date. The applicant should also bring a copy of the application material to the DRC review.

- a. Photographs clearly showing existing conditions of the building to be improved,
- b. Written summary of proposed work,
- c. Design drawings and elevations that adequately and comprehensively show the proposed project including details of cornices, window, decorative elements, signs, etc.,
- d. If project includes pedestrian, sign, parking, landscape, and/or lighting improvements, a plan identifying location of improvements must be submitted,
- e. Exact samples of paint, colors and materials,
- f. Cost estimate provided by a Class A or B contractor, and
- b. If necessary, the property owner's written approval, and post improvement three-year rental agreement.

Step 2. Design Review Committee (DRC). The DRC reviews applications and makes recommendations on them to the OCRR based on the degree and quality of the improvements. A minimum of four (4) DRC members must be present to make recommendations of approval. Applicants and/or their agents should anticipate attending a minimum of two DRC meetings to present project proposal, and answer questions.

A. DRC Members. The committee includes eight (8) members, as follows:

- 1 Business owner
- 1 Property owner
- 1 SFDC Board Member – Lee District
- 1 SFDC Board Member – Mt. Vernon District
- 1 Fairfax County OCRR Staff
- 2 Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) staff
- 1 Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) staff

B. Approval Criteria. The DRC will review and evaluate applications in accordance with how they address the following criteria:

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1. Prevention/replacement of deteriorating conditions (eg, Age and condition of building);
2. Visual Prominence – The visual prominence of the building/improvement and its location and the potential positive impact on the attractiveness of the Richmond Highway corridor;
3. Potential Positive Impact – The potential positive impact of the improvement on the attractiveness of the individual site and building;
4. Aesthetic quality of the design proposal;
5. Adherence to Design Guidelines; and,
6. Comprehensiveness of the project.

C. Federal, State and County Permits. The Applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary zoning, permit and other approvals. Approval of a FIP grant does not waive the need to comply with any Federal, State and County regulations and requirements.

D. Application Process.

- a. Schedule DRC Review. Applicant contacts SFDC to schedule DRC review.
- b. Application Submission. Applicant submits application with required attachments to SFDC and OCRR at least 1-week prior to DRC meeting date.
- c. DRC Review. Applicant and/or agent presents proposed project to the DRC (attendance required), as follows:
 - 1st Meeting.* Work session - DRC reviews application, and provides comments and/or requests revisions or additional information, in accordance with Approval Criteria.
 - 2nd Meeting.* DRC reviews revisions. (Note: Revisions must appear on drawings presented to the DRC).
- d. DRC Determination. DRC will score the proposal based on FIP Approval Criteria and either recommend denial or approval to OCRR.
 - Applicant will be notified within 7-days of decision. (Note: Do not initiate construction until final OCRR approval is received and a contract signed.)
 - If recommended for denial, the DRC will state, in writing, the reasons for denial based on Evaluation Criteria, Design Guidelines, or Procedures.

Step 3. OCRR Action. OCRR will review and verify the application meets FIP requirements.

- If approved, the applicant must enter into a contract with OCRR and provide an original Federal Form W-9, *Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification*.
- Upon receipt of the Contract and W-9 form, OCRR will encumber the funds necessary for the FIP grant.
- If denied, the OCRR will notify SFDC, in writing, the reasons for denial within 7-days.

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VI REIMBURSEMENT. The project must be completed within one-year of contract date, or as amended, in writing, by mutual agreement. The approved Grant (reimbursement) will be paid after work is completed, reviewed, and approved by SFDC for consistency with the executed FIP agreement.

A. Reimbursement Procedures.

- a. Schedule Project Inspection. Contact SFDC to inspect project to certify completed according to approved plans.
- b. Request Reimbursement.
 - Using FIP coversheet, enter itemized invoice and payment information to total project cost; or, until you have established receipts that equal or exceed match grant.
 - Attach legible invoice(s) and payment receipt(s) in order presented on coversheet.
 - Submit itemized invoice-payment receipts to SFDC to verify eligible expenses, and accuracy.

B. Release of Funds. SFDC will forward itemized invoice-payment form and receipts to OCRR. Upon approval, OCRR will release the funds payable to the applicant (as identified on the W-9).