



# Downtown Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program Guidelines

A Joint Program of:

El Paso Downtown Management District (DMD), Program Administrator

The City of El Paso

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) No. 5

Effective: October 26, 2023

## **DMD - Program Administrator Contact Information:**

El Paso Downtown Management District  
201 E. Main, Suite 107 • El Paso, TX 79901

Contact:

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Email: [jgudenrath@elpasodmd.org](mailto:jgudenrath@elpasodmd.org)
- Terry Mais – Office & Project Coordinator (Records / Administration), direct (915) 400-2295  
Email questions and electronic application submission to [tmais@elpasodmd.org](mailto:tmais@elpasodmd.org)

## Downtown Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program

Thank you for your interest in the Downtown Commercial Façade Improvement Program. We encourage you to read the following guidelines thoroughly and then contact the El Paso Downtown Management District to set up an appointment to discuss your project and the grant process. These small steps will help ensure a smooth and efficient application process.

### 1. Program Description

The purpose of the Downtown Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program (The Program) is to provide funding to existing business and/or property owners to make improvements to the exterior of buildings located in the boundaries of the program area identified on Exhibit A that follows. The DMD encourages interested applicants to schedule an appointment to meet with the DMD regarding the outlined requirements contained in this document for participation in the Program.

#### *Definition of FAÇADE*

1. *The exterior of a building facing a public street.*
2. *The exterior of a building not facing a public street, but more than 50% visible from a public street, sidewalk or public space (not including alleyways).*

The Program will provide matching grant funds on a **reimbursement basis only** for approved eligible **exterior** renovation improvements that are attached to or a part of a physical building structure to include restoration, preservation, and/or rehabilitation of commercial property within the eligible area of Downtown El Paso (see map that follows).

**A.** Subject to approval and funding availability, the matching grant funds when awarded are a dollar for dollar match (1:1 ratio) meaning once the total approved eligible improvement costs are confirmed paid in full, The Program **reimburses** The Participant for one half of these improvement costs which is the grant amount awarded. See table below for grant award calculation examples:

Total <b>Approved Eligible</b> Façade Improvement Costs	Required Matching Investment Amount by Property / Business Owner	Possible Grant Program Award
\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
\$15,000.00	\$7,500.00	\$7,500.00
\$30,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00
<b>Projects Located within DMD Boundaries \$60,000.00 and above</b>	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00

**B.** Subject to approval and funding availability, the matching grant funds, when awarded to eligible projects meeting the criteria *listed below*, are two dollars for every private investment dollar match (2:1 ratio) meaning once the total approved eligible improvement costs are

confirmed paid in full, The Program reimburses The Participant for two thirds of these improvement costs which is the grant amount awarded. See table below for grant award calculation examples:

Total <b>Approved Eligible</b> Façade Improvement Costs	Required Private Investment Matching Amount	Possible Grant Program Award
\$3,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00
\$15,000.00	\$5,000.00	10,000.00
\$30,000.00	\$10,000.00	20,000.00
<i>Projects Located within DMD Boundaries</i> \$45,000.00 and above	\$15,000.00	\$30,000.00

**Critical Corridors:**

1. Legal parcels adjacent to El Paso Street between Mills Avenue and Sixth Street.
2. Legal parcels adjacent to the Downtown El Paso Streetcar Tracks within the DMD boundaries. This area includes:
  - Franklin Avenue between Santa Fe and Kansas Streets
  - Kansas Street between Franklin and Father Rahm Avenues
  - Father Rahm Avenue between Kansas and Santa Fe Streets
  - Santa Fe Street between Father Rahm and Franklin Avenues
  - Oregon Street between Franklin Avenue and the south side of Wyoming Street
  - Stanton Street between Franklin Avenue and the south side of Wyoming Street
3. Legal parcels adjacent to Mills Avenue between El Paso Street and Mesa Street.
4. Legal parcels adjacent to San Jacinto Plaza. This area includes:
  - Mesa Street between Main Drive and Mills Avenue
  - Mills Avenue between Oregon and Mesa Streets
  - Main Drive between Oregon and Mesa Streets
  - Oregon Street between Main Drive and Mills Avenue

**Historic Landmarks**

1. Legal parcels designated a historic landmark or located within the Downtown Historic District.

**Small Businesses**

1. Legal parcels with street level and street-facing small business tenants.

**C.** The grant program award amount limits of reimbursement for approved eligible improvements per eligible property project are:

Maximum grant program award amount	\$30,000.00
Minimum grant program award amount	\$1,000.00

Grant Applicants are considered on a first-come, first-serve basis. One application per legal parcel as identified by a City of El Paso property tax account number for Real Property.

**Important Note: An eligible commercial Property is defined as a legal parcel identified by a City of El Paso property tax account number for Real Property.**

## **2. Program Goals**

- a. Revitalize and improve the appearance of downtown buildings to positively impact the aesthetics, marketability, and perception of the downtown area;
- b. Increase property values;
- c. Serve as a catalyst for continued private sector investment through visible improvements with an emphasis on small business support and development;
- d. Offer the private sector an incentive program to invest in downtown buildings with an emphasis on historic landmarks; and
- e. Restore distinctive architectural details of existing buildings by removing inappropriate or incompatible finishes.

## **3. Eligible Applicant Criteria**

- a. Legal property owner and/or business owner / tenant with written property owner consent
- b. Must actively pay property taxes on proposed project's property maintaining a current account status
- c. No other debts in arrears to the City of El Paso to the best of their knowledge
- d. Must obtain and provide proof of no current code enforcement actions pending against the property that would not be mitigated by the improvement project by visiting website: <https://aca-prod.accela.com/ELPASO/Default.aspx>  
Searches are available for all violations, i.e.; Building, Enforcement, Environmental, Animal, Fire, and Health.
- e. Must not have received an award(s) under this program with \$25,000.00 being the maximum façade improvement grant allotted to each real property legal parcel within a previous eight (8) year period.

## **4. Eligible Improvements / Costs include the following:**

- a. Artistic design elements – elements that serve to enhance and/or improve as part of the overall project
- b. Awnings / canopies – new, replacement, repair and/or removal
- c. Bird Spikes / Deterrents
- d. Brick (exterior) – repair of damaged
- e. Cleaning (exterior) – restorative in nature
- f. Demolition deemed necessary to facilitate the proposed improvements
- g. Design and engineering fees, construction drawings / building plans
- h. Doors – new, repair and/or replacement, restoration
- i. Entrance (main front) – ceramic/flooring installation; eligible only when exterior, visible and within property boundaries
- j. Entrance (main front) – recessing of and/or reconfiguration
- k. Fencing (security) – temporary fencing in place during construction
- l. Finishes (exterior) – removal and/or restoration of deteriorating finishes
- m. Glass (exterior storefront) – replacement, restoration

- n. Grate and grate boxes – removal or conversion of solid grates to open mesh style
- o. Historical architectural elements – preservation, restoration, rehabilitation
- p. Landscaping
- q. Lighting (exterior) – new, repair and/or replacement
- r. Moldings – crown (wood) or foam
- s. Outdoor Dining Areas (semi-permanent improvements)
- t. Painting (exterior)
- u. Removal of extraneous elements including security doors and security elements.
- v. Signs (exterior) – new, removal, repair and/or replacement
- w. Streetscape improvements
- x. Tile
- y. Windows (exterior) – repair and/or replacement, restoration

**5. Ineligible Improvement / Costs include the following:**

- a. Acquisition of property
- b. Barricades
- c. Debris clean-up/control, dumpster fees
- d. Demolition deemed **not** necessary to facilitate the proposed improvements
- e. Driveway repair
- f. Equipment rental
- g. Fees – miscellaneous
- h. Grout and sealant application (unless part of floor installation as defined in Eligible Cost Line Item l. above.)
- i. Improvement costs completed **prior** to receipt of the DMD's written Formal Notice To Proceed
- j. In-kind, donated, "sweat equity" or similar no cost improvement work, services or materials
- k. Interior renovations or improvements
- l. Parking lot repair
- m. Parking meter rental
- n. Permits
- o. Power-washing
- p. Roof repair or replacement
- q. Sales tax
- r. Security elements
- s. Sidewalk repair
- t. Surveys – asbestos, lead testing
- u. Utility costs

**6. Design Requirements**

Applicants are encouraged to promote historic preservation by respecting original features of the building including the use of color and suitable materials, energy efficiency, accessibility standards in the design of the improvements, limiting additional signage by incorporating it into the building's design; and using suitable landscaping that will aid in the preservation of community scale and character, to the extent that they are financially feasible or required by law. All improvements must conform to applicable city building codes, zoning ordinances, local and state laws and to the design guidelines adopted for the area (i.e., The Union Plaza District) and approved by the Façade Review Committee (The Committee) for The Program.

**Historic District**

Applicants whose project is determined to be a historically designated building or located within the City of El Paso Historic District must first obtain written certification and/or

Administrative Review Approval of the project from the City of El Paso Historic Preservation office or Historic Landmark Commission. Office contact and location information:

801 Texas Ave., El Paso, Texas 79901  
Phone: (915) 212-1567

**Visit website:**

[Planning \(elPASOTexas.gov\)](http://elPASOTexas.gov)

**to obtain more information about Historic Design Requirements/Guidelines.**

**7. Funding Availability**

Grant funding is limited and subject to availability. Applicants will be kept informed of funding availability as part of the application process.

**8. Application Process**

The required Façade Grant Program Application form is available at the DMD's principal office (location listed on the cover page of this document) and at the DMD website [www.downtownelpaso.com](http://www.downtownelpaso.com) click DMD Programs, then Grant Programs. The application must be completed in its entirety and include the required additional documentation listed on page 2 of the application, including, but not limited to, as summarized below:

- Color conceptual rendering (8 ½ x 11) of the proposed façade improvement work.
- Brief description of project (150 words or less).
- **Certified** City of El Paso Tax Certificate of corresponding legal parcel of proposed façade improvement project indicating property taxes are paid and account is in a current status.
- Costs estimates and project scope (detailed itemized breakdown) of proposed façade improvements.
- Proof of current property ownership.
- Current color photograph(s) of site and structures relating to the façade improvement work area.

**Important Note:      Application requires notary certified signature(s).**

**a. Application Submission (electronic submission preferred)**

The completed required Application Form and accompanying documents (The Application) must be submitted for review to the DMD at a minimum, one week prior to the next scheduled Economic & Residential Development Review Committee Meeting (Review Meeting). The deadline for acceptance of applications is 12 noon every first Thursday of the month. Completed applications received by the deadline will be reviewed at the next scheduled Review Meeting (typically held monthly every 2nd Thursday at 10:00 a.m. in the DMD office). The DMD is charged with conducting the initial review of submitted applications. To ensure the Application is reviewed in a timely manner, it is **highly recommended that Applicants have prior contact** with the DMD Office & Project Coordinator in order to receive clarification about application submission dates. Should the Office & Project Coordinator be unavailable, an appointment may be scheduled with the Executive Director. (Contact information for applicable DMD staff members is located on the cover page of this document). The Application will be date/time stamped at the time of submission/receipt at the DMD office or via email.

b. **Application Review**

Preliminary review of the Application will be performed at the time of its submission to determine whether it is complete and the requirements for submission have been fulfilled with subsequent advice to the Applicant of necessary changes or missing items that will need to be corrected as soon as possible. The DMD will then conduct a more extensive review of The Application and will again advise the Applicant if any insufficiencies or discrepancies remain to be corrected. ***Time is of the essence.***

The Application is then presented to the Economic & Residential Development Review Committee (The Committee) for review to make a recommendation for approval or rejection to the DMD Board of Directors (BOD) at the next scheduled monthly BOD meeting. The Committee is comprised of DMD Board members, City of El Paso staff members and when applicable, an officer of the City of El Paso Historic Preservation Office. Applicants are invited to attend The Review Meeting when their application is scheduled for review and recommendation. For clarification purposes, questions may be posed to The Applicant regarding the façade improvement project.

**Applications and potential grant awards will be based on how well the project addresses the following criteria:**

- **Does the façade project revitalize; improve the appearance; positively impact the aesthetics, marketability, and / or perception of the downtown area?**
- **Does the façade project add substantial visible improvement to the exterior appearance of the building; have the probability to increase the parcel's property value?**
- **Does the façade project restore or create distinctive architectural details of an existing building by removing inappropriate or incompatible finishes?**
- **Does the property where the façade project is located currently have an operating business or signed lease?**
- **If the building where the façade project is located has existing historically significant architectural elements, does the façade project maintain and / or restore the architectural details?**
- **Does the façade face an identified pedestrian corridor as identified by the Downtown Wayfinding Plan?**

The Committee will make their recommendation and present the Application to the BOD for final approval determination. The BOD has discretion to approve, modify or reject the Application and is not bound by any committee recommendation. The BOD typically meets every 4th Thursday of the month at 11:30 a.m. The meeting location is identified on the published agenda. Applicants are invited to attend the monthly BOD meeting.

Applicants will be notified in writing as to the status of The Application, approved, amended or rejected. The BOD reserves the right to postpone the decision.

**9. Matching Funds Reimbursement Grant Agreement**

In the event, the Application has received final BOD approval, a Commitment Letter will be issued to the Applicant that includes, the establishment of a commitment period for completion of the project and information regarding the execution of the required Reimbursement Grant Agreement (The Agreement) between the Applicant, now referred to as The Participant (individual or entity responsible for payment of the façade improvement expenses), and the DMD. The Agreement will have been prepared and will accompany the Commitment Letter. The façade improvement project information and specifics and the terms and conditions of the Participant's obligations for receipt of grant funds are outlined in the Agreement including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Property and project scope location/identification along with Exhibit attachments identify the specific approved facade improvements to be undertaken;
- b. Maximum amount of the approved allowed reimbursement grant funds;
- c. Contract performance deadlines and dates including, but not limited to, submission of building permit(s) and other applicable permits or approvals
- d. Project monitoring and right of final inspection by DMD staff or other City of El Paso personnel;
- e. Compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws;
- f. Promotional rights to the City of El Paso and the DMD;
- g. Maintenance requirements;
- h. Removal / alteration of façade improvements within three (3) years from the date of completion of façade improvement project and subsequent recapture of prorated grant funds.

**Important Note:** The Participant must promptly return the executed Agreement to the DMD office. In the event the Participant is not the legal property owner, the property owner must also provide signature consenting to the facade improvement project, BOTH signatures require notary certification.

#### **10. Final Field Inspection**

Requests for reimbursement will only be processed after the façade improvement work is completed and approved following a final field inspection by the Program Administrator and/or authorized City of El Paso personnel in order to verify compliance with the project scope.

#### **11. Reimbursement Requests**

Along with written inspection approval of the Work from the DMD, The Participant will receive a Façade Program Reimbursement Request Form and Form W-9 in order to properly submit a reimbursement request. The Façade Program Reimbursement Request must be submitted and received in the DMD office within twenty-one (21) calendar days from the date of the written final inspection approval notice. The Participant agrees that reimbursement of the eligible façade improvement costs are subject to the following terms and conditions contained within The Agreement under "Section 6. Payment Processing" relating to the required proper documentation to be included with the Reimbursement Request Form:

- a. A completed and signed Façade Program Reimbursement Request Form and Form W-9 (completed with The Participant's information) as provided by the DMD;
- b. Proof of payment of all façade improvement costs (front and back copies of cancelled checks and / or electronic transaction receipts along with corresponding invoices marked "PAID" with zero balance) must demonstrate payment was made by The Participant. Invoices shown to be paid by other than The Participant will not be included in payment of the Reimbursement Grant;
- c. Statements from architects, contractors and/or subcontractors acknowledging that all payments have been received and / or;
- d. Notarized final lien waivers from all contractors and/or subcontractors, where applicable;
- e. Proof of any applicable final governmental inspections (e.g., planning or building permits or certificates of occupancy); and
- f. Digital color photograph(s) are preferred that accurately reflect the completion of the Work. When lighting is a component of the grant project, day and evening photographs are required.

Documentation submitted along with the Reimbursement Request Form is subject to the



review and approval of the Program Administrator. Further, reimbursement under The Program means that no reimbursement payment will be issued until The Participant has paid for the facade improvement work in **full**.

Allow thirty (30) days for processing of the Grant Reimbursement payment which will be processed in the form of a check made payable to The Participant. The Participant will be notified once the check is available for release and will require signature by an authorized party.

**Important Note: Grant funds are subject to the IRS reporting guidelines related to the reporting of Miscellaneous Income via a Form 1099-MISC.**

## **12. Maintenance Requirements**

By accepting grant funds, the Participant commits to properly maintain all façade improvements, keeping them clean and free of graffiti for a minimum of three (3) years at the Participant's own expense. Any damage to the façade improvements is to be repaired immediately by The Participant so that the property remains in good condition. The Participant is required to touch up painted areas and perform any other repairs needed on an ongoing basis and to maintain building appearance including the cleaning of any awnings at least once a year. The Participant also agrees to return a pro-rated amount of the grant funds received if any portion of the facade improvement is removed within three (3) years of the project completion date.

## **13. Promotional Rights**

By accepting grant funds, the Participant authorizes the City of El Paso and the DMD to promote the project and property including, but not limited to, displaying a sign at the site during and after construction indicating participation in the Program, and using photographs and descriptions of the project and property in the City of El Paso's and the DMD's printed promotional materials, press releases, and websites.

## **EXHIBIT A - Program Area**

## El Paso Downtown Wayfinding Plan

El Paso Downtown Wayfinding Plan

