



Downtown Signature Signage & Lighting 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 14, 2025

DMD - Program Administrator Contact Information:

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

Contact:

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

Downtown Signature Signage & Lighting Grant Program

Thank you for your interest in the Downtown Signature Signage & Lighting Grant 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 Signature Signage and Lighting Grant Program (the “Program”) is to encourage installation and/or rehabilitation of historic and/or artistic signage and/or lighting within the boundaries of the program area identified on Exhibit A.

Definition of SIGNATURE for the purposes of this program:

1. historic and/or artistic signage that is not used for brand advertising or any other revenue generating purpose
2. something that serves to set apart or identify

NOTE: The “signature” nature of a proposed project will be determined by the Economic & Residential Development Committee. Standard improvements to signage and lighting will not be considered under this program, however, may be considered under the Downtown Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program.

The Program will provide matching grant funds on a reimbursement basis only for approved eligible exterior signature signage and lighting associated with buildings within the eligible areas of Downtown El Paso. Proposed projects will be evaluated based on innovation and creativity.

Subject to approval and funding availability, the matching grant funds when awarded are one dollar for every eligible matching dollar invested (1:1 ratio) meaning once the total approved eligible project and/or improvement costs are confirmed paid in full, The Program reimburses The Participant for one half of the project and/or improvement costs which is the approved grant amount awarded.

Example of investment matching requirements:

Total Approved Eligible Signature Signage & Lighting Project Costs	Required Matching Investment Amount by Property / Business Owner	Possible Grant Program Award
\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
\$15,000	\$7,500	\$7,500
\$50,000 and above	\$25,000 and above	\$25,000

The Program grant award amount limits of reimbursement for an approved eligible project and/or improvements per eligible property project are:

Maximum grant program award amount	\$25,000.00
Minimum grant program award amount	\$1,000.00

Grant applications 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. Establish recognizable signage within the downtown.
- b. Illuminate the pedestrian corridors to positively impact the aesthetics, activation, marketability, and perception of the downtown area.
- c. Increase property values.
- d. Serve as a catalyst for continued private sector investment through visible improvements.
- e. Offer the private sector and small businesses an incentive program to invest in downtown.

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 Project / Improvements / Costs include the following:

- a. Signature Signage – new, repair or replacement. Rooftop signs, blade signs.
- b. Lighting Installations – new, repair or replacement
- c. Rooftop art, so long as it is visible from the right of way and lit at night
- d. Demolition deemed necessary to facilitate the proposed improvements
- e. Equipment Rental
- f. Installation costs
- g. Design and engineering fees, construction drawings / building plans

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

- a. Brand Advertising (or other revenue generating use)
- b. Billboards
- c. Barricades
- d. Debris clean-up/control, dumpster fees
- e. Demolition deemed **not** necessary to facilitate the proposed improvements
- f. In-kind, donated, "sweat equity" or similar no cost improvement work
- g. Interior renovations or improvements
- h. Parking Meter rental
- i. Permits

- j. Power-washing
- k. Project / improvement costs completed prior to receipt of the DMD's written Formal Notice to Proceed
- l. Sales Tax
- m. Standard building exterior renovations, improvements or lighting (See Downtown Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program)
- n. Surveys – asbestos, lead testing
- o. 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 Economic & Residential Development Committee (The Committee) for The Program.

Historic District

Applicants whose project is associated with a property 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:

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

To obtain more information about Historic Design Requirements/Guidelines visit:

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

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 Signature Signage & Lighting 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 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 signage and / or lighting plans / work.
- Brief description of project (150 words or less).
- **Certified** City of El Paso Tax Certificate of corresponding legal parcel of proposed improvement project indicating property taxes are paid and account is in a current status.
- Costs estimates and project scope (detailed itemized breakdown) of proposed signage and/or lighting improvements.
- Proof of current property ownership.

- Current color photograph(s) of site and structures relating to the project / improvement work area.

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

a. Application Submission

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 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 schedule an appointment*** with the DMD Office & Project Coordinator. 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.

b. Application Review

Preliminary review of the Application will be performed at the time of the scheduled appointment 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 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, At-Large Committee 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 project.

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

- Is the project “signature” in nature? Failure to meet the DMD’s identification of “signature” will automatically cause the application to be rejected . Standard signage and lighting are eligible costs under the Downtown Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program.
- Does the project revitalize; improve the appearance; positively impact the aesthetics, marketability, and / or perception of the downtown area?
- Does the project add substantial visible improvement to the exterior appearance of the building; have the probability to increase the parcel’s property value?
- Does the project restore or create distinctive architectural details of an existing sign or lighting installment?
- Does the property where the project is located currently have an operating

business or signed lease?

- **If the building where the project is located has existing historically significant architectural elements, does the project maintain and / or restore the architectural details?**
- **Does the parcel face an identified pedestrian corridor as identified by the Downtown Wayfinding Plan, El Paso Street, or the Streetcar route?**

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 Matching Funds Reimbursement Grant Agreement (The Agreement) between the Applicant, now referred to as The Participant (individual or entity responsible for payment of the signage and/or lighting project expenses), and the DMD. The Agreement will have been prepared and will accompany the Commitment Letter. The signature signage and lighting project information, 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 project and/or 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 project and/or improvements within three (3) years from the date of completion of the project and/or improvements 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 project and/or improvements, BOTH signatures require notary certification.

10. Final Field Inspection

Requests for reimbursement will only be processed after the project 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 Signature Signage & Lighting Program Reimbursement Request Form and Form W-9 in order to properly submit a reimbursement request. The Signature Signage & Lighting 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 project and/or 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 Signature Signage & Lighting 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 project and/or improvement costs (front and back copies of cancelled checks and /or electronic receipts along with corresponding invoices marked "PAID") 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 Matching Funds Reimbursement Grant;
- c. Statements from architects, contractors and/or subcontractors acknowledging that all payments have been received;
- 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 (8 ½ x 11) 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 project and/or improvement work in **full**.

Allow 30 days for processing of the Matching Funds Reimbursement Grant 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 program awards are subject to the IRS reporting guidelines related to the reporting of Miscellaneous Income via a Form 1099-MISC.

12. Maintenance Requirements

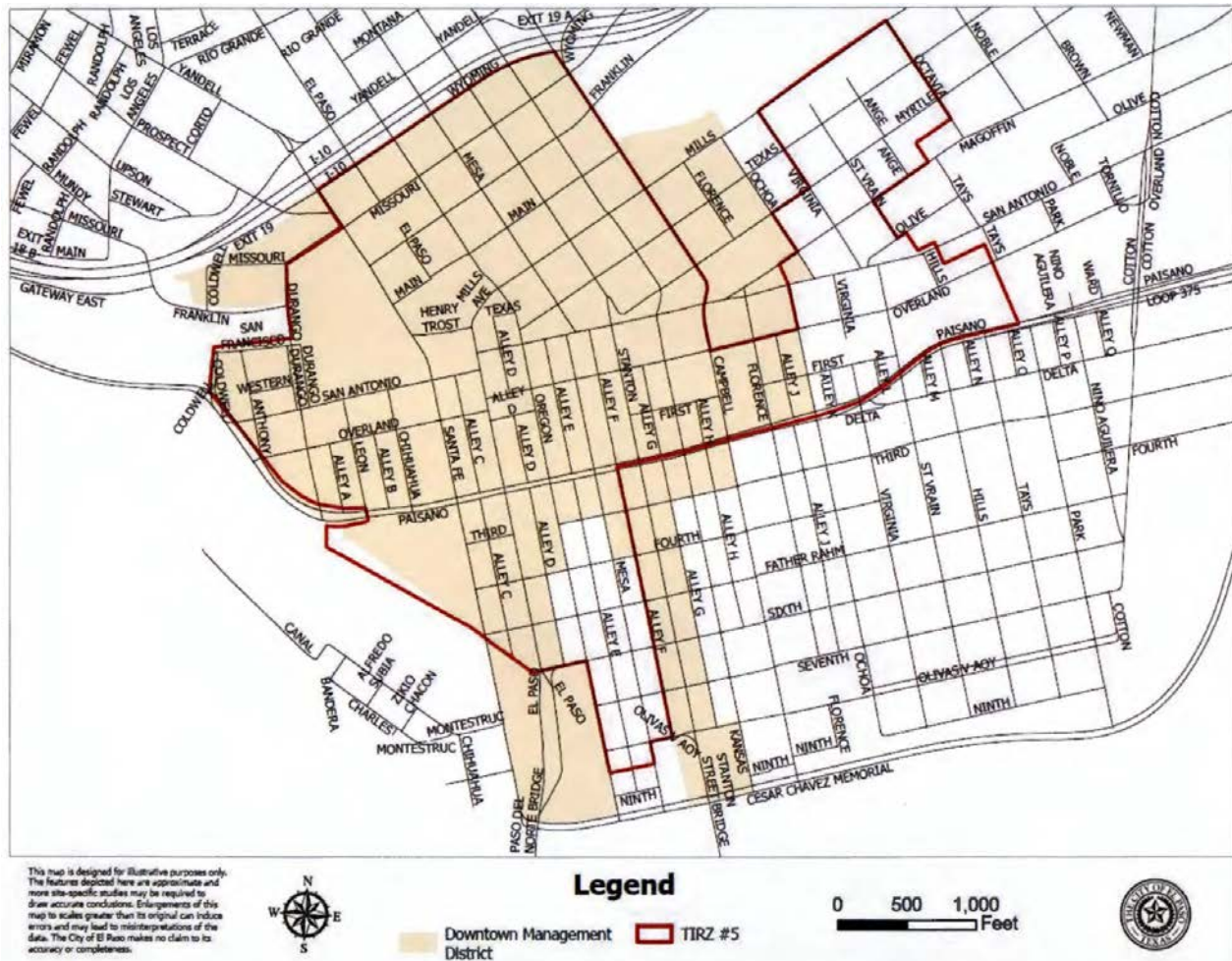
By accepting grant funds, The Participant commits to properly maintain all signage and/or lighting elements, keeping them operational and illuminated nightly for a minimum of three (3) years at the Participant's own expense. Any damage to the signage and/or lighting elements is to be repaired immediately by The Participant so that they remain in good, working condition. The Participant is required to perform any other repairs needed on an ongoing basis and to maintain appearances.

The Participant also agrees to return a pro-rated amount of the grant program award received if any portion of the signage and/or lighting installation is removed or inoperable within three (3) years of the project completion date.

13. Promotional Rights

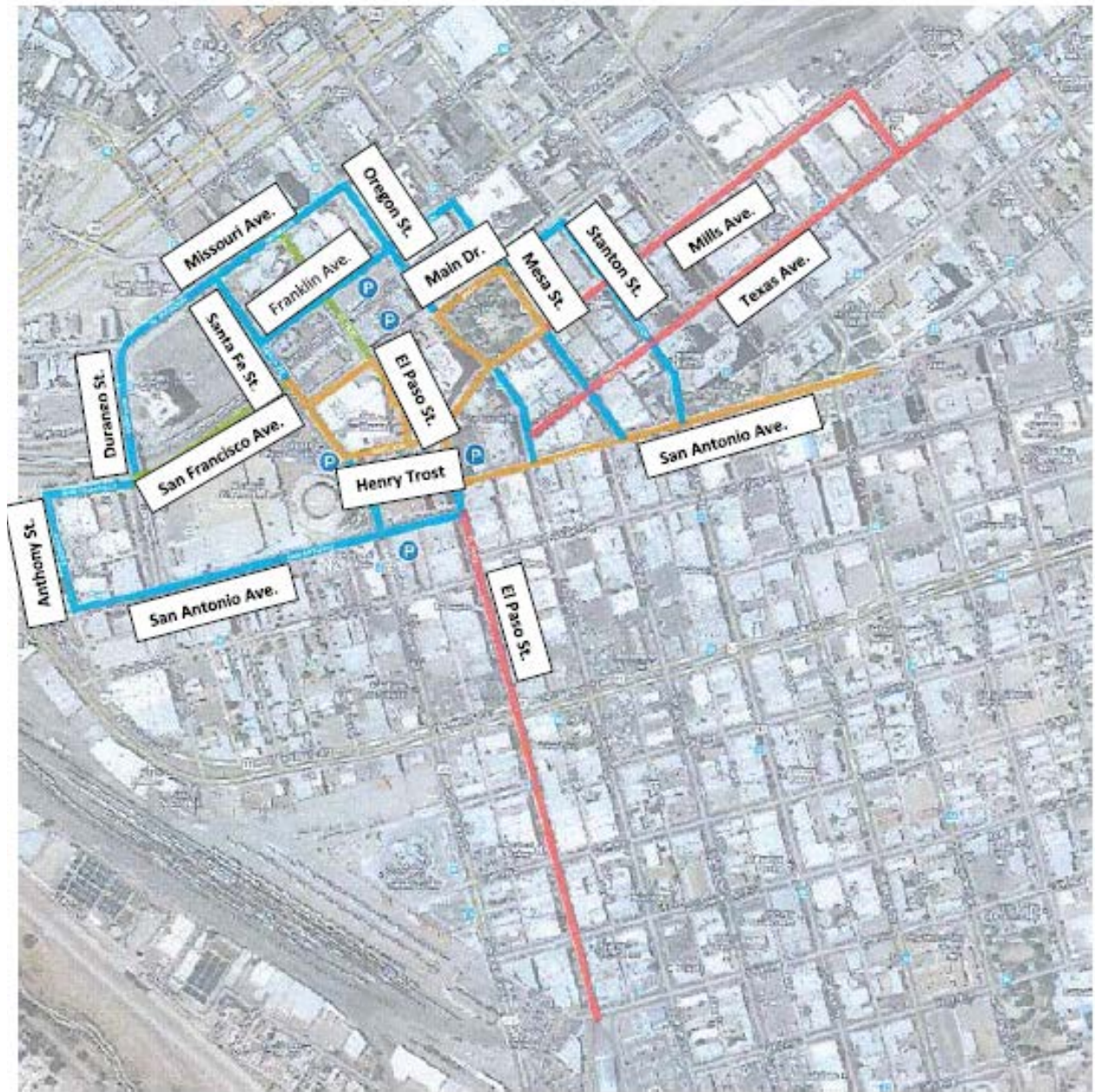
By accepting grant funds, the Participant authorizes the City of El Paso and the DMD to promote the project and property including, but not limited to, displaying a sign at the site during and after construction indicating participation in the Program, and using photographs and descriptions of the project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



El Paso Streetcar Route



EL PASO STREETCAR
OFFICIAL ROUTE

