



## 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.



**Uptown Corridor Improvement Authority  
Facade Improvement Program  
Application Form**

In order to review a request for assistance under the Uptown Facade Improvement Program, the Design Committee needs information about your project. This information will confirm that your project qualifies for assistance under the program. Please read all instructions carefully and complete all sections of the application. If you need additional room to answer any question, attach additional pages of exhibits.

**Part A: Property Information**

A1. Property Location & Description

Property Address:

Parcel Number:

A2. Building Information

Current use of property:

Proposed use of the property:

Building Information:

Number of floors in building:                      Total Linear Frontage Area:

Is the building storefront vacant or occupied?

A3. Project Information & Description

Describe in detail what is intended to be done to improve the facade of this building. Attach additional pages as needed.

A4. Project Cost

Total estimated project cost: \$

Amount of requested assistance: \$ (Maximum \$20,000)

A5. Project Architect (if applicable)

Name:

Phone:

A6. Required Attachments:

The following items must be attached in order to process this application:

- Photo / Elevations / Renderings
- Project Budget
- Certificate of Appropriateness (if the building is located in a historic preservation district).
- Proof of funds to complete described work

**Part B: Threshold Criteria**

*If a "No" response is given to any of these questions, it does not qualify for assistance under the Uptown Facade Improvement Program.*

B1. Is this project located within the boundaries of the Uptown Corridor Improvement Authority? (See attached map.)

B2. Will the proposed funds be used exclusively for the improvement or restoration of an existing building's facade?

B3. Have all applicable City permits been obtained?

## Part C: Point Evaluation System

C1. What percent of the total project rehabilitation cost does the request represent?

- 15 points 6% - 20%
- 10 points 21% - 40%
- 5 points More than 40%

C2. What is the current occupancy status of the building proposed to be rehabilitated?

- 15 points Vacant
- 10 points Occupied, but vacancy exceeds 50% of building space
- 5 points Occupied, but vacancy is less than 50% of building space

C3. What percentage of total building frontage will be rehabilitated through the project?

- 25 points 100%
- 15 points 75% - 99%
- 10 points 50% - 74%
- 5 points 20% - 49%
- 0 points Less than 20%

C4. When completed what percentage of total building frontage will be transparent?

- 15 points 70% or more
- 10 points 60%-69%
- 5 points 50-59%
- 0 points 50% or less

C5. Are exterior renovation plans consistent with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation?

- 10 points Yes
- 0 points No

C6. Will the renovations remediate existing code violations or non-conforming conditions?

- 10 points Yes
- 0 points No

C7. Does the renovation involve the activation of a currently vacant storefront?

- 10 points Yes
- 0 points No

C8. When completed, will the project be owner-occupied? (no points assigned)

## Part D. Applicant Information

### D1. Applicant Information

Identify the person or organization requesting assistance. If an organization is requesting assistance, please indicate the name of the organization exactly as it is registered and indicate the name of the person that should be contacted. If an individual is requesting assistance; please indicate the full name of all persons having an interest in the property.

Name:

Organization:

Address:

City:

Applicant's Telephone:

Daytime:

Evening:

Organization: If the applicant is not an individual, indicate type of organization:

- Partnership
- Corporation
- Limited Liability Corporation
- Other
- EIN#:

### D2. Applicant Interest

Identify the applicant's legal interest in the subject property:

- Property owner having title
- Land contract vendee
- Purchaser by option or purchase agreement
- Lessee
- Other:



D3. Request

Applicant must read the following statement and sign the application below.

The undersigned hereby request that the Uptown Corridor Improvement Authority provide assistance to the project described in this application for the express purpose described above. The applicant affirms and acknowledges the following:

That the applicant has legal interest in the property as described in Section D2 of the application.

That the offer of assistance will only be effective only upon execution of the agreement between the applicant and the Uptown CIA.

That the answers and statements contained in this application and in the attachments are in all respects true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print or Type Applicant Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

D4. Owner's Signature

If the applicant is not the owner or the property, the property owner must read the following and sign below.

The undersigned hereby affirms and acknowledges that he, she or they are the owner(s) of the property described in the application, are aware of the contents of this application, and hereby authorize the applicant to submit this application and represent the undersigned in the matter being reviewed by the Design Committee and Uptown CID.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print or Type Name of Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Owners Address:

Phone Number:

Return completed application with attachments to:

Uptown Corridor Improvement Authority  
PO Box 6632  
Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6632

Phone: 616-920-0383  
Email: [imiller@uptowngr.com](mailto:imiller@uptowngr.com)

# Uptown Corridor Improvement District Boundary Map

