Howell Main Street Façade Grant Program Guidelines

Bringing History Back to Downtown Storefronts

Background
The Façade Incentive Grant Program is a program of the Design Committee of Howell Main Street Inc.

Program Purpose
The grant program was created to encourage private investment through the historically sensitive rehabilitation and dramatic improvement of facades in downtown Howell, to encourage good design that will serve as quality examples, and to preserve the architectural character that is distinctive to Howell. By improving the appearance of the building facades, the Program serves to improve the economic viability of the downtown.

Source of Funding
This program is funded by Howell Main Street Inc. Recommendations for funding grant applications will be made by the Main Street Design Committee. The Howell Main Street board will make all final grant funding decisions. The number of projects receiving grants in a fiscal year is based on program budget, with a new funding cycle beginning July 1. Grants are awarded on a first-approved, first-funded basis.

Program Target Area
The target area for the Howell Main Street Façade Incentive Grant Program is the Downtown Development District. (See Exhibit A)

Eligible Applicants

1. DDA District (see map) historic commercial buildings (older than 50 years), used for commercial purposes, and conforming to zoning use are eligible to apply for grant funds.

2. Applications for projects must be reviewed by the Design Committee and approved by the Howell Main Street Inc. Board prior to commencement of rehab work. Any applicant submitting an application after commencement of exterior demolition or construction becomes ineligible to receive a grant.

3. Owners or tenants may request grant funds; however, tenants must submit a notarized letter of permission from the property owner with their application. Please note only one grant will be given per commercial building.

4. No building shall receive more than one façade incentive grant award in any three-year period.

Eligible Improvement Projects
- Exterior brick or wall surface cleaning to restore and repair historic façade
- Pointing of brick/Mortar joint repair
- Patching and painting of façade walls when done in conjunction with other work
- Window and/or door replacement/repair
Cornice repair and/or replacement

Funding Guidelines

1. Grants will reimburse 50% of the project costs up to the following maximums:
   - Front Façade* $10,000
   - Rear Façade** $5,000
   - Side Façade** $2,500

   *Buildings on a corner have two front facades.
   **Rear/side facades are eligible if adjacent to a public alley, street, or parking lot.

2. Grant funds cannot be used for any of the following: interior improvements or furnishings, financing or refinancing debt, loan origination fees, property acquisition, building permits or development review fees, property appraisals, legal fees, architectural fees, landscaping, interior maintenance, signs and awnings with signage (see Sign Incentive Program) or labor costs paid to owner/applicant or relatives of the owner/applicant.

3. All rehabilitation projects must meet City of Howell zoning and building codes.

4. Any grant for surface cleaning must ensure that gentlest means of cleaning is used and environmental permits are obtained if removing lead based paint or discharging paint materials into the City’s storm sewer. Cleaning methods that damage the historic building materials, particularly sandblasting, shall not be undertaken.

5. Projects funded by grant monies must be completed within one year of the date that the grant is awarded. An extension may be approved at the sole discretion of Howell Main Street under significant special circumstances.

6. Any improvements that have been made through the Façade Incentive Grant Program must be maintained by the applicant and may not be removed or significantly altered for a period of five years, according to the Historic Preservation Easement shall be executed upon payment of a grant award.

7. All applicants must have all property (real and personal) taxes paid to date.

P No grant funds will be released until 100% of the approved façade work is complete and final inspections of the work are satisfactorily completed. This grant is awarded on a reimbursement basis with funds released upon provision of adequate proof of payments to contractors and waivers of lien.

Step-by-Step Application Process

1. A grant application must be completed and submitted to the Howell Main Street Inc. Office. Funds for this program are allocated based on funding availability. Estimates for the façade work to be performed must be submitted on letterhead from licensed, qualified contractors that will perform the work. Two estimates are required, and three estimates are recommended. The exact amount of funding being requested shall
be based on the estimate selected and outlined on the application. Proof of funding should be provided. If the cost of the project exceeds the initial estimate, the applicant only receives the original grant amount approved.

2. If an applicant wants to phase in the improvements he/she may do so. However, he/she will be required to submit a new application, application fee and outline the work to be performed in connection with each new phase of work. An applicant may phase a substantial project over the course of three years. In doing so, the applicant must perform at least one phase in every consecutive year until the project is complete. At the end of each phase, the applicant may apply for reimbursement of only the amount expended in the completion of the immediately preceding phase. No costs or reimbursements will be considered for any phases other than the one immediately preceding the request for reimbursement. For example, if Phase 1 was completed on January 1, 2017, Phase 2 was completed on January 1, 2018 and Phase 3 was completed on January 1, 2019, and the applicant only applies for reimbursement on January 2, 2019, he/she is only entitled to reimbursement of the costs associated with Phase 3.

3. If an applicant is requesting funding for more than one building, the applicant must complete a separate application for each building. Each eligible building will be considered a separate project for the purposes of grant funding.

4. A $250 application fee and proof of project funding must accompany the completed application form made payable to Howell Main Street Inc.

5. Main Street staff will forward the application to the City of Howell Community Development Department to make sure the work proposed complies with the City’s zoning and building codes. If the work proposed meets zoning and building codes, it will be returned to Main Street staff. If the work does not meet zoning and building codes, the applicant will be contacted for a meeting with the Community Development Department to work through the zoning and building code issues. A revised application may be required. No grant may be awarded to proposed work that does not meet City of Howell Zoning Ordinances or the Michigan Rehabilitation Code. This preliminary review will not replace City requirements for obtaining zoning approval or building permits.

6. Once an application is returned to Main Street staff, it will be reviewed by the Main Street Design Committee, who serves as the grant review committee. The Design Committee will use the Downtown Design Guidelines project rating and approval criteria to recommend approval of grant awards. Applicants will be notified of Design Committee’s recommendation by Main Street staff in a formal letter. The final grant decision will be made by the Howell Main Street Inc. Board.

7. Once the façade design has been approved, the applicant will be notified in writing and the amount of the grant will be clearly stated in the letter. The program participant will then sign an Historic Preservation Easement (please see sample in Exhibit B) which guarantees the maintenance and preservation of the improvements for a period of five years. The Easement will be expeditiously filed with the Livingston County Register of Deeds by the Howell Main Street/DDA Office.
8. The Design Committee must approve changes in the work specifications, subject to approval by the Howell Main Street Inc. Board. **Deviations from an approved plan may disqualify the applicant from the grant program.**

9. “Before” and “After” pictures must be taken by the applicant and be submitted to the Howell Main Street Office upon completion of the project.

10. When a façade improvement project is completed and “Before” and “After” pictures are submitted, it will be examined by Main Street staff, Community Development Department staff, a licensed architect, builder, or code official hired to serve as grant inspector, to insure that the work has been completed as specified in the grant application, as approved by the Design Committee and Main Street Board.

11. Once staff and grant inspector have verified completion of the façade improvement project, the applicant must submit copies of invoices, receipts, and an itemized statement of the total cost of the project signed by the applicant. All documentation for payment must be provided at one time to the Howell Main Street Inc. for one payout. Receipts must be provided no later than 60 days after completion. After receipt and verification of the information, Howell Main Street will release the grant money to the applicant. **The grant is awarded on a reimbursement basis.**

**Project Rating and Approval Criteria**

The Design Committee will base their recommendations for grant awards on the following:

1. Applicants must submit all items specified in the grant application.

2. The improvement must be planned for a building in the program target area (DDA District).

3. The property owner must agree to adhere to the Howell Main Street Façade Incentive Grant Program Guidelines.

4. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These standards can be found at www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rehabstandards.htm.

5. Changes to the façade of the buildings should not remove, alter, damage or cover-up significant architectural features of the building which are original or which reflect a major alteration that is itself architecturally significant.

6. Changes to the façade of buildings should either:

   a.) partially or fully restore the historic appearance of the building based on actual evidence, including photographs, written documentation, data on the building or site or other data.
b.) represent a treatment which blends into and is compatible with the building and adjoining buildings.

7. In general, the Design Committee will encourage repair and preservation of existing features of facades, unless alterations to these facades have resulted in an incoherent, unattractive or inharmonious appearance. While encouraging correction of such alterations, the committee will advocate minimal alterations of harmonious features.

8. For facades which have previously been substantially altered and for which a new treatment is chosen, such a treatment should conform with the features, materials, rhythms, color and general appearance of the building and those adjoining, particularly if the building is one in a row of buildings with identical or similar design features.

9. Paint colors should either be based on original colors obtained from paint samples on the buildings historic color samples, or be compatible with adjoining buildings and colors in downtown Howell. Trim colors, which highlight building details, are encouraged. Spectacular colors should be avoided.

**Program Amendments**
The details of the Howell Main Street Façade Incentive Grant Program may be amended at any time during the fiscal year - subject to the formal approval of the Howell Main Street.

All decisions of Howell Main Street Board are final. There is no appeal process in place therefore there will be no appeals accepted.

**Contact Information**
For questions or to apply for the Façade Grant Incentive Program, contact the Howell Main Street.

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