Howell Main Street/DDA Sign Incentive Program

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) developed a Sign Incentive Program to improve the quality and appearance of signs throughout the DDA district and to promote the use of the Design Guidelines for downtown.

Objectives:
This program seeks to bridge the gap in cost between standard signage and highly functional, attractive signs that complement Downtown’s historic buildings and create a more attractive Downtown Development District. The intent of the program is to support a three-dimensionally faced (minimum ½ inch thickness), single-faced, symbolic, projecting signs. Replacement signs of similar construction and quality, or duplications of existing signs with minimal changes, may not qualify for the incentive.

The Incentive Program provides a grant of 25% of the approved sign costs, up to a maximum of $1,000 per applicant. Incentives will be given each fiscal year on a first-come, first-served basis, up to available funds for the year. Sign incentive awards must be approved by the Design Committee and the Howell Main Street DDA Board before a sign is installed.

Any business located within the Howell Downtown Development Authority District may apply for an incentive. The approval process can take up to 45 days if the applicant has met all criteria and is approved by the Design Committee and the DDA board on first review.

Sign incentives are granted at the discretion of the Design Committee with approval from the DDA board. In order to receive a sign incentive, the applicant must submit a sign design that meets the DDA’s Design Guidelines, the City’s Sign Ordinance and the program objectives. The Design Committee and the City’s Zoning/Building official will review all signs that are seeking an incentive. A sign may be approved by the Building Official and installed without Design Committee approval or Grant Funding.

Any sign that is non-conforming or legal non-conforming must be brought into conformance with the current sign ordinance and any zoning ordinances that apply.

Because awnings were historically important design elements in traditional storefronts, awning signs will be considered for a Sign Incentive award. To be considered for an award, awning signs must meet the Design Guidelines for downtown and include the business name and either their logo or a representative symbolic character.

Window lettering and/or graphics will be considered for a Sign Incentive award when proposed in conjunction with another type of eligible sign; in this case the entire proposed sign project is awarded a Sign Incentive.

Businesses located within the DDA District, but outside of the Central Business District boundaries, may receive consideration for single-faced, flush mounted signage. Such variances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and require attendance at Design Committee meeting by the business owner.

The Sign Incentive Process:

1. Pick up and review the following items available on the third Floor of City Hall:
   a. Sign Incentive Program application
   b. City of Howell Sign Permit Application
   c. DDA Design Guidelines

2. Complete the applications and submit to the Main Street DDA office at 118 W. Clinton St. Completed Application MUST Include the following:
   a. Both Sign Face Views (*If applicable*)
   b. Cross Section View
   c. Dimensions
   d. A Color Copy Print of Sign Design
   e. Materials Used (including mounting hardware to hang sign)

3. The Main Street DDA Director and the City’s planning and zoning staff will review the sign permit application and incentive application for conformance to the City’s Sign and Zoning Ordinances. Incomplete applications will not be submitted to the Main Street DDA Design Committee for review. If the applicant has filed an application for the Sign Incentive Program, the City of Howell Sign Permit may not be approved until the Design Committee has reviewed the application and proposed design.
4. Applicant must attend the Design Committee meeting in person. The Design Committee meets monthly at the Howell Main Street DDA Office, located at 118 W. Clinton S, the second Wednesday of the month at 5:00 p.m.

5. Design Committee will review the sign application and proposed design. Applications will be reviewed on the appropriateness and compatibility of the sign design to the Design Guidelines, sign size, sign color, sign placement on the building/site, relationship to adjacent properties and program objectives as noted above.

6. If the sign design is deemed to meet Design Guidelines and fulfill the program objectives, the Design Committee will submit the application to the DDA Board with a recommendation for funding approval. Upon review and approval by the DDA board, a letter will be sent to the applicant confirming approval and the determined incentive grant amount. The approval process can take up to 45 days if the applicant has met all criteria and is approved by the Design Committee and DDA Board on first review.

7. If the sign design is deemed inappropriate or incompatible with the Design Guidelines and program objectives, the Design Committee will table the application and will provide a letter to the applicant suggesting changes to the design. If the applicant submits a new sign design based upon Design committee recommendations, the application will be reviewed a second time. Each application will supersede and override any previous application.

8. The applicant must submit a work order or invoice from their sign company indicating the total cost of the sign before an incentive check may be issued. Reimbursement will only be made once the City grants a sign permit, conducts a final sign inspection/approval and receives a copy of the paid invoice. A check in the amount of the approved incentive will be mailed to the applicant. (It may take up to 30 days for the incentive check to be issued after the final sign inspection.)

Incentive Program Requirements:

1. Applicants leasing their space must provide a letter providing permission from the building owner to apply for the incentive. The letter must indicate an awareness of the rules and requirements of the program.

2. Applicants receiving incentives must have a sign design that conforms to the City of Howell Design Guidelines. Creative signs, which include three-dimensional, symbolic, projecting signs are preferred. Signs that are not three-dimensional or projecting will require an explanation from the applicant and discussion with the Design Committee.

3. Signs incentives will not be given to internally lit panel signs or standard corporate franchise signs.

4. Only one incentive will be granted to an applicant each three fiscal years (July 1 to June 30). Priority will be given to applicants who have not yet received an incentive. Signs for side or rear entrances are eligible for assistance, but each applicant may not receive more than one award every three fiscal years – July 1-June 30.

5. Applications will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis.

6. The Design Committee may deny a sign incentive to any applicant that does not make recommended changes to their sign design after a first review. Every effort will be made to work with applicants so that an incentive can be granted. Once the Design Committee and DDA board deny an application, the applicant will be required to wait until the next fiscal year to re-apply for an incentive.

7. Non-conforming signs will be considered for a sign incentive, provided that the applicant agrees to bring the sign into compliance with the City sign ordinance.

8. The Design Committee will examine total cost of any proposed sign to ensure that the sign incentive is being used appropriately.

9. All incentive checks will be written to and mailed to applicants. A work order or invoice from a sign company is required to confirm the total cost of the sign.

10. Sign maintenance is not eligible for this program.

11. All decisions of the DDA board are final.

(Examples of Approved signage that is three dimensional and/or projecting.)
Howell Main Street DDA
Sign Incentive Program Application

Business Name ________________________________________________________________

Address of Proposed Sign Installation: ____________________________________________

Name of Applicant _____________________________________________________________

Applicant is the _____ building owner _______ business owner

Contact Phone Number _____________________________ Email __________________________

Sign Company Information

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address _________________________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________ Contact _________________________________

Sign Costs

Total Estimated Total Cost of Sign: $____________________________

Materials $____________________________

Design Services $___________________________

Installation $____________________________

Amount of Funding Requested $____________________________

Enclosure Check List

_____ Sign Incentive Program Application

_____ Sign Permit Application from City of Howell

_____ Written permission from building owner (if applicant is leasing)

_____ Color print of sign design, drawn to scale, including dimensions and colors, cross-section view

Signature of Applicant(s) ________________________________ Date __________

Date Received: _____________________________

Date Reviewed: _____________________________ Approved Tabled Denied

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