Facade Improvement Grant Program

A. Description and Purpose*

Administered by the Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC), the Façade Improvement Grant (FIG) program offers up to $3,000 in matching grants and, in certain cases, design assistance to merchants and property owners in designated commercial revitalization districts in order to improve the appearance of individual building facades, signs and awnings, as well as the overall look of the retail district. Improvements must be to areas visible from the public way. The goal of this program is to leverage private improvements while making revitalization efforts affordable and creative.

FIG grants will be provided as a “dollar for dollar” match up to a maximum grant award on a single property of $3,000. For example, a grant could be used to pay for $3,000 of a $6,000 project.

B. How does the FIG Program Work?

• Applicants submit an application to the Baltimore Development Corporation Commercial Revitalization (CR) Team.
• BDC’s FIG Design Committee will review and approve proposed facade improvements in accordance with the guidelines. Applications are approved on a first-come first-serve basis.
• Draft and execute Grant Agreement
• The City does not reimburse for work done before application approval and contract signing.
• Applicants are responsible for obtaining all necessary building permits.
• BDC will inspect the project to ensure conformance with the Grant Agreement.
• The City will authorize reimbursement payment after completion in accordance with the approved plan.
• The City will not contract to perform any of the work, but will reimburse the applicant for approved expenses.

C. Eligible Applicants and Areas

Building owners and merchants (with owner approval) that are located in eligible designated commercial revitalization districts. Eligible districts include designated commercial revitalization areas, Retail Business District License areas (RBDL), Main Street Districts, and Main Street Affiliates.

D. Eligible Uses of Funds

• Architectural and related professional fees
• Labor, materials, fixtures, and other contract items necessary for the
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proper execution and completion of facade rehabilitation.

- Repair or alteration of exterior facades to recover and/or preserve significant historical and architectural features of the structure.
- Exterior painting
- Door and window replacements
- Installation of siding and trim treatments including awnings (cloth or fabric preferred) and flower boxes
- Appropriately scaled window areas for display or for looking into a retail business, restaurant or service business, with lighting to facilitate night viewing
- Signs which are attractively integrated into the architecture of the building including the window area, doorway and awning or canopy
- Removal of barriers to access for people with disabilities
- Removal of heavy, unattractive, roll-down security grates
- New facade construction or additions in keeping with the architectural context of the district will be reviewed and approved if it supports the goals of the community.
- For use by Commercial Retail tenants only.

General Guidelines

- Improvements conform to urban renewal plan design standards and/or local and national historic district guidelines, if applicable.
- Design and proposed use conforms to, or is in harmony with, the character and development pattern of adjacent and rear by business.
- The distinguishing original qualities and character of the building shall be preserved; removal of historical or distinctive architectural features may disqualify a project.
- Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, if replacement is necessary the new material should match the material being replaced in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.
- Contemporary design for alterations to existing properties is acceptable if such alterations does not destroy significant historical, architectural and cultural materials, and if such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property and adjacent buildings.

E. Ineligible Activities

- New construction
- Property acquisition
- Interior remodeling
Façade Improvement Grant Program (“FIG”) Application

Applicant Name: ________________________________ Business District: __________________________

Are you an MBE or WBE (circle one or both)  *Use/Occupancy Permit # __________________________

*Tax ID # __________________________  *Business License # ________________________________

Applicant Mailing Address: ______________________________________________________________

Phone: ___________________ Fax: ___________ _____________ E-Mail: _______________________

Owner _____ Tenant _____ If Tenant, Date of Lease Expiration: _____________________________

Address and business name for which this application applies: __________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Number of current employees? __________________

Describe your business and/or property. If vacant, describe plans for future occupancy and attach approved use & occupancy permit: _______________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Describe the proposed improvements (e.g., signage, windows/doors, exterior finishes, awnings, fencing, painting, repairs, etc.), and the materials you plan to use.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Attach current photos of property; cost estimates (two quotes) showing details of project; and drawings to show what is proposed (if applicable).

Applicant Signature: _________________________________________   Date: ___________________

Name (Print): _________________________________________________________________________

Owner, if other than applicant: I hereby certify that I am the owner of this building/land on which the proposed FIG project is situated, and that the foregoing applicant, in filing a FIG application for approval by the FIG Committee, is acting with my knowledge and consent.

Owner Signature: ___________________________________________ Date: ___________________

Name (Print): _________________________________________________________________________

If you are located in a Baltimore Main Streets district, you will also need to submit this application to the local Design Review Committee. Main Streets districts are designated (*) on the back of this page.

*Information required for all commercial/retail businesses. If you do not have a use/occupancy permit at the time of application, you must have one prior to reimbursement. Please note that proposed work may require permits and minor privilege approval which is solely your responsibility.

The FIG is a program of the Commercial Revitalization Division of the Baltimore Development Corporation.
Facade Improvement Grant Information

Congratulations on your decision to apply for a Façade Improvement Grant (FIG). Before you proceed, make sure that your proposed project qualifies:

- The FIG program is targeted to existing commercial businesses and properties.
- The FIG program is generally targeted to the following areas:
  * Belair-Edison
  * Brooklyn-Curtis Bay
  * Dolfield
  * East Monument Street
  * Edmondson Avenue
  * Federal Hill
  * Fells Point
  * Fort McHenry
  * Gardenville
  * Govans
  * Greektown
  * Hampden
  * Hamilton
  * Harwood
  * Howard Park
  * Irvington
  * Lauraville
  * Little Italy
  * Market Center
  * Mt. Washington
  * Old Town
  * Parklane
  * Pennsylvania Avenue
  * Pigtown
  * Pimlico
  * South Broadway
  * Waverly
  * 1000-1600 W. Baltimore Street
  * W. North and Hilton
  * 1700-2400 W. Pratt Street

- The FIG program cannot be used more than once in a one-year period for the same property.
- The FIG program cannot be used for new construction, acquisition, interior work, residential properties or rear facades.
- The FIG program cannot be used for work begun prior to receiving a commitment letter from BDC.
- The FIG program cannot be used for properties that are not in compliance with applicable zoning and urban renewal plans, unless the FIG will bring the property into compliance.

Design Guidelines
1. The project should make a noticeable contribution to the revitalization of the commercial district.
2. If the business district is pedestrian-friendly, where people enjoy walking, then the project’s design and should be in harmony with the character of the area. If the surrounding district is not pedestrian-friendly, then the project should begin to transform the area. Signs, ground floor windows and doors, lighting, and other decorative elements should be designed to appeal to pedestrians.
3. The distinguishing original qualities and character of the building shall be preserved; removal of historical or distinctive architectural features may disqualify a project. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced; if replacement is necessary, the new materials should match the materials being replaced in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.
4. Contemporary design for alterations to existing properties is acceptable if such alterations do not destroy significant historical, architectural, and cultural materials of the building and if such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property and adjacent buildings.

Permitting and code requirements: Contractors must secure required building permits and minor privilege permits and complete the project in accordance with all applicable codes, ordinances, and standard engineering practices. Contractors must be properly registered, licensed, insured, and pass a debarment check as required by law.

Timeframe: Construction must begin within 30 days after the contract is executed and be complete within 60 days thereafter, unless otherwise approved in writing by the FIG committee.

Change orders: The committee must approve all change orders in writing. Approval of change orders does not alter the original amount of the grant.

Maintenance of improvements: As part of the grant closing, the applicant shall agree in writing to maintain all improvements made per the approved plans in their finished state for a period of five years following completion of the project.

The FIG grant will be provided as a “dollar for dollar” match up to a maximum grant award on a single property of $3,000.00. The applicant pays for all of the work; BDC reimburses the applicant after the work is completed, consistent with the scope of work agreed upon in the application.

*In Main Streets and Main Street affiliate areas, you may be eligible for free architectural assistance.