



Summary: Downtown Facade Improvement Program

Purpose:

The program, managed by the City of Reading Tax Increment Finance Authority (T.I.F.A.), aims to enhance the historic and architectural integrity of building facades in downtown Reading. It provides financial incentives for exterior improvements that promote economic vitality, business retention, and a cohesive downtown aesthetic.

Eligibility

Who can apply?

- Property owners within the Reading downtown district
- Business owners within the district (tenants require property owner approval)
- Applicants must secure **TIFA/Planning Commission approval**

Conditions:

- All city accounts and property taxes must be current
 - Project elements must have a useful life of at least **10 years**
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Eligible Costs

The program covers **exterior** improvements, including:

- ✓ Windows, doors, walls, and other architectural elements
- ✓ Masonry repair or cleaning
- ✓ Awnings and exterior lighting
- ✓ Historically accurate renovations (e.g., restoring vintage elements, removing unsuitable modern treatments)
- ✓ Converting facades to retail/entertainment use (if historically appropriate)
- ✓ Architectural fees (up to **\$700**)
- ✓ Materials and labor related to eligible improvements

Note: Work must be completed by **licensed contractors** and properly barricaded when in public spaces.

Ineligible Costs

- ✗ Expenses incurred before project approval
- ✗ Property acquisition, mortgages, loan fees, appraisals, legal fees
- ✗ Site plan/building permit fees
- ✗ New construction or interior decor costs
- ✗ Work performed by applicants, relatives, or unlicensed individuals
- ✗ Personal property items (e.g., furniture, counters, display cases)

Funding Details

- 💰 **Maximum Grant:** Up to **\$10,000** (with potential for **\$15,000** if project meets 4+ priorities)
- 💰 **Minimum Grant:** \$1,500
- 💰 **Applicant Contribution:** 25% of total project cost required

T.I.F.A. covers 75% of eligible expenses, up to programming limits.

Project Priorities

Priority will be given to projects that:

- ✓ Are on **corner lots**
- ✓ Have **owner-occupied buildings**
- ✓ Preserve **community institutions** (e.g., banks, theaters)
- ✓ Remove **boarded-up windows** or long-standing deterioration
- ✓ Improve pedestrian access and connectivity
- ✓ Restore the **historic** condition of a building

Application Process

📌 Submit completed applications with:

- Detailed **improvement plan**
- Itemized **budget** (showing private and public contributions)
- Signed **contractor estimates**


✅ **T.I.F.A. Board Review Process:**

1. Initial review for location & eligibility






2. Approval for project consideration
 3. **Final plan submission & contractor estimates**
 4. T.I.F.A. **final approval** → Construction can begin
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Post-Approval Requirements

- Any **project changes must be re-approved**
- **Periodic inspections** will be conducted to ensure compliance
- **Project must be completed within 1 year** (extensions may be granted under special circumstances)
- **Final inspection & documentation** required for reimbursement

 *Failure to comply with program rules may result in disqualification for 1 year.*

Key Takeaways:

-  Encourages **historic preservation & economic growth**
-  Covers **75% of eligible costs** (up to \$10K or \$15K with priority criteria)
-  **Strictly exterior** improvements only
-  **Planning Commission & T.I.F.A. board approval required**
-  **Licensed contractors only**

For more information:

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