

**CITY OF READING**  
**TAX INCREMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY**  
**DOWNTOWN FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

**PURPOSE:**

The City of Reading Tax Increment Finance Authority (T.I.F.A.) has determined that a portion of the revenues collected by the T.I.F.A. plan should be used to enhance the building facades found in downtown Reading. The downtown facade improvement program should be made to promote historic preservation recognizing the inherent qualities of the buildings so that a consistent and appropriate character can be retained and reinforced. The program also lists establishment of facade improvement guidelines as a priority.

The appearance of individual buildings, storefronts, signs, alleys, window displays, parking lots and sidewalks establishes the visual character of the downtown and plays a major role in the marketing success of the business district.

The purpose of the facade improvement program is to encourage historically accurate improvements to commercial facades visible from the public right-of-way. The grant money is intended to provide financial incentives for quality facade development.

It is also the intent of the program to strengthen the economic viability of downtown Reading by improving the exterior physical appearance of the buildings. The public perception of the downtown retail district has a great deal of influence on its economic success. By improving its physical appearance the downtown will have a much greater potential for attracting and retaining businesses as well as creating an image of strong economic health and vitality.

**ELIGIBILITY:**

- Owners of real property within the Reading downtown district
- Owners of business establishments within the Reading downtown district.  
Tenants will need approval from the property owner
- Must have approval of Planning Commission

**ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS:**

- Property taxes and other city accounts must be current

- Project components must have a useful life of at least 10 years

#### ELIGIBLE COSTS:

- Exterior improvements only
- Repairs or replacement of windows, doors, walls or other appropriate architectural elements
- Exterior painting (only in conjunction with other major improvements; painting is not to exceed 50% of total project cost)
- Awnings
- Exterior lighting
- Masonry repair or cleaning
- Conversion to retail or entertainment storefront (must be compatible with historic architecture)
- Restoration of vintage elements:
  - Removal of historically unsuitable “modern” facade treatments
  - Removal or replacement of historically unsuitable signs and/or lighting (new signs/lights must be compatible with existing architecture)
  - Repair or restoration of original brick and woodwork
- Architectural fees (up to \$700.00)
- Materials and labor for work performed in association with above-mentioned improvements

Note: All work performed in association with the facade improvement program shall be performed by licensed contractors. Any work that requires the use of scaffolding lifts or other construction equipment in a public area must be effectively barricaded to protect the public from danger.

#### INELIGIBLE COSTS:

- Expenses incurred prior to approval of site plan by the committee
- Property acquisition
- Mortgage or land contract financing
- Loan fees
- Site plan or building permit fees
- New construction
- Appraiser, attorney and/or interior decorator fees
- Wages paid to applicant, relatives and/or friends for work associated with the facade improvement (e.g. payments under the table)

- Furnishings, trade fixtures, display cases, counters and/or other items taxed as personal property
- Reusable and/or removable items
- Any portion of expenses for which applicant pays contractor in merchandise and/or in-kind services.

**PROJECT PRIORITIES:**

Applications containing the following characteristics will have priority in the appropriation of project funds:

- Projects identified on corner lots
- Projects in which the building is owner occupied
- Projects containing a high ratio of private to public dollars
- Projects preserving community institutions (e.g. banks, theaters, etc.)
- Projects designed to remove and/or replace boarded windows
- Projects designed to resolve deteriorated/inappropriate/unsightly conditions that have existed for many years (boarded windows, deteriorated electrical fixtures, etc.)
- Projects that enhance pedestrian movement from the rear to the front of buildings
- Projects designed to restore the historic condition of the building facade or posterior (see eligible costs: Item # 8)
- Projects that will complete the improvement of a block or portion of a block (e.g. replacement of an inappropriate facade that exists on a block containing many appropriate, well-preserved or improved facades)

**PROGRAM AMOUNTS:**

Maximum Program Amount: \$7,500.00

Minimum Program Amount: \$1,500.00

Maximum Amount Available for Architectural Design: \$700.00

Money allocated on behalf of the facade improvement program will be made on a 75-25% ratio. The applicant must invest at least 25% of the total project cost to receive the remaining 75% from the T.I.F.A. The 75% provided from the T.I.F.A. is not to exceed \$7,500.00. For example, a project totaling \$7,500.00 may receive \$5,625.00 from the T.I.F.A. likewise a project totaling \$12,000.00 may receive the maximum of \$7,500.00 even though it does not equate to 75% (\$9,000.00) of the total project cost.

Note: If more than four of the project priorities are met then the T.I.F.A. reserves the right to adjust the maximum program amount up to \$15,000.00

#### PROGRAM APPLICATIONS:

- A facade improvement program application can be obtained at the following location:

Reading City Hall  
113 South Main Street  
517-283-2604

- The application is completed by the property owner(s) or tenant(s) of the building with owner's consent and returned to reading City Hall where it will be reviewed for accuracy and issues of compliance by the T.I.F.A. board.
- The application is reviewed by T.I.F.A. board to verify that it is located in T.I.F.A. downtown district. T.I.F.A. board will provide a preliminary review outlining how well the project meets the program objectives
- If the application meets the program objectives the applicant will be notified that the project has been accepted for consideration
- The applicant must submit a detailed plan illustrating proposed improvements. Also a detailed breakdown of all costs including a project budget illustrating both private and public expenditures.
- A signed estimate from a qualified contractor is required.
- Once a plan is submitted it will be taken before the T.I.F.A. Board for review
- If approved then the project construction may commence
- If a plan is inconsistent with program objectives it will be returned with request for modification

Note: T.I.F.A. board reserves the right to recommend program awards it deems to be in the best interest of the City of Reading and the facade improvement program. T.I.F.A. board reserves the right to nullify program awards that are found to be non-compliant with the conditions of this program. If the applicant is found to be non-compliant they may not reapply to the program for a period of one year following the decision.

#### POST APPROVAL PROCEDURES:

- Any changes in the scope of work must be approved by T.I.F.A. prior to construction
- All approved changes in work verification shall be attached to the original site plan in the form of an addendum and dated

- T.I.F.A. board members may conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance with the site plan and adopted eligible activities
- Project should be completed within one year of approval. Only under extenuating circumstances will a single extension time to complete the project can be requested in writing and may be awarded by the T.I.F.A. board
- Upon completion of the project a T.I.F.A. board member(s) will photograph the new facade and submit it at a T.I.F.A. board meeting to ensure that all components of the site plan are met
- After final project inspection T.I.F.A. will reimburse the applicant for the approved funding amount
- This program is subject to availability of funds

Projects will be limited to two projects per a twelve month period. Questions and comments regarding the downtown facade improvement program should be directed to a T.I.F.A. Board Member(s).