

RICHMOND HIGHWAY FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (FIP) GRANT GUIDELINES

September 18, 2012

- I. **OBJECTIVE.** This Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization (OCR)/ Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation (SFDC) initiative encourages improvement of the aesthetic quality of business and commercial properties located on or visible from Richmond Highway.
- II. **PROGRAM AREA.** The Program Area is the Richmond Highway Commercial Revitalization District (CRD), which is approximately 7.5 miles in length and runs from the I-495 Capital Beltway to Woodlawn Plantation/Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway.
- III. **INCENTIVES.** The FIP provides property and business owners within the Program Area with financial incentives and design services to encourage exterior building and site improvements to commercial properties. A matching grant of between \$5,000 and \$25,000 is available for eligible facade and site improvements. In addition, design services may be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$3,500 for the design and illustration of the façade improvement project concept.
 - a. The FIP grant is disbursed as a reimbursement to the property owner for completion of approved improvements.
 - b. No more than 50% of project costs can be covered through the grant (eg, eligible expenses at \$1:\$1 ratio).
 - c. FIP grants are up to a maximum of \$25,000.
 - d. Applicants may be awarded only one grant per project or property.
- IV. **QUALIFYING IMPROVEMENTS.** FIP grants are limited to exterior visible façades of buildings and site and other aesthetic improvements (i.e., signs, lighting, landscaping, new roofs when visible). New construction does not qualify for the program.
 - A. **FIP Design Guidelines and FIP Grant Guidelines.** The purpose of the *Façade Improvement Program Design Guidelines* ("Design Guidelines") is to provide guidance to property owners as they plan their improvements, describing typical building types, aesthetics and range of improvements, including suggestions for types of FIP eligible improvements. The FIP Grant Guidelines provide an overview of program requirements, qualifying improvements, and evaluation criteria. Go to www.sfdc.org to view and/or print a copy of the FIP Design Guidelines, and the FIP Grant Guidelines. A copy of the guidelines is available for review at the SFDC office.
 - B. **Qualifying Improvements.**
 - Façade renovations (e.g., Repair, painting, and re-siding of exterior walls including cornice, roof, decorative features, etc)
 - Exterior building renovations
 - Building expansions
 - Painting
 - Repair, replacement and/or installation of exterior lighting
 - Repair, replacement and/or installation of exterior canopies or awnings
 - Repair, replacement and/or installation of on-site commercial signage
 - Repair, replacement and/or installation of landscape improvements such as retaining walls, steps, and plantings. Landscape plantings are identified as trees, shrubs, and groundcover
 - Pedestrian enhancements such as sidewalks, pavers, and improved access to the site/building

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements to the outside and entry of the building (not interior improvements)

C. Non-Qualifying Improvements (Not All Inclusive)

Improvements made prior to approval of Grant

Improvements that are not permanent

Purchase of property

Equipment

General periodic maintenance

Annual landscape vegetation

Sweat equity

Debt refinancing

Business payroll and working capital

V. FIP PROJECT APPLICATION, EVALUATION AND GRANT PAYMENT PROCESS. Each proposed FIP project is subject to review and approval by the SFDC Design Review Committee (DRC), and OCR. Participants are reimbursed up to the maximum approved FIP Grant amount upon project completion and verification of contract compliance and review of invoice-payment receipts.

A. FIP Project Evaluation and Grant Award Process.

Step 1. Pre-Application Meeting, Design Services and Design Services Assistance. Prior to submitting an application the applicant should contact SFDC to schedule a pre-application meeting with the SFDC DRC.

A. Pre-Application Meeting. The Pre-application meeting provides the applicant the opportunity to:

- a. Informally present the proposed project to SFDC and OCR staff to receive comments based on the *FIP Grant Guidelines*, and *Design Guidelines*.
- b. Discuss the proposed project scope, appropriate use of FIP grant funds, and need for design services and/or Design Services Grant.

B. Design Services. If the applicant elects to proceed, the applicant must hire an architect and/or landscape architect to develop a conceptual drawing, color scheme and signage; and, present the project concept plan to the SFDC DRC.

C. Design Services Fee. Applicants may be eligible to receive a Design Services Fee reimbursement to develop required conceptual renderings for building/site improvements and/or for building expansion.

- Maximum design services reimbursement is \$3,500 which must be used solely for conceptual design and illustration services. Any additional design fees, to include construction plans, are not covered.
- A signed agreement between SFDC and the project architect/landscape architect is required, prior to commencement of work, to be eligible for reimbursement.
- Reimbursement for design services is released in two (2) payments of up to \$1,750 each. The first payment is provides reimbursement of expenses

attributed to the initial concept plan work, and the second payment is released upon approval of the final design by the DRC.

- Step 2.** DRC Review. Applicant contacts SFDC to schedule DRC review.
- Step 3.** Application Submission. The Applicant submits application with required attachments to SFDC no later than three (3) weeks prior to the DRC meeting date. Upon receipt of application with attachments, the SFDC shall notify OCR in writing of proposed project at least two (2) weeks prior to DRC meeting date.
- Step 4.** DRC Review. Applicant and/or agent presents proposed project to the DRC (attendance required), as follows:
- 1st Meeting.* Work session - DRC reviews application with respect to FIP *Grant Guidelines*, and provides comments and/or requests revisions or additional information (if needed).
- 2nd Meeting.* DRC reviews revisions. (Note: Revisions must appear on drawings presented to the DRC).
- Step 5.** DRC Approval/Denial Recommendation. DRC will review and recommend approval or denial of the application to OCR based on the degree and quality of the proposed improvements, and how the improvements address the *Grant Guidelines*, and *Design Guidelines*.
- Applicant and OCR will be notified within seven (7) days of recommendation to approve or deny project for program participation. (**Note: Do not initiate construction until final OCR approval is received and a contract signed.**) (See *Grant Guidelines* Step 7, *Request for Grant Payment*).
 - If recommended for approval/denial, the DRC will state, in writing, the reasons for approval/denial based on FIP Grant Guidelines, and Design Guidelines.
- Step 6.** OCR FIP Project Denial/Approval. OCR will review and approve or deny the application based on the degree and quality of the proposed improvements, and how the improvements address the FIP *Grant Guidelines*, and *Design Guidelines*.
- A. **If Approved.**
- a. If approved; and, prior to initiating construction of the project, the applicant must enter into a contract with OCR and provide an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form W-9, Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification (<http://www.irs.gov/>). The contract and W-9 will be provided by OCR.
 - b. Signed contract and W-9 must be returned to OCR within ten (10) - working days. Upon receipt of the original signature (duplicates cannot be accepted) contract and W-9 form, OCR will encumber the funds necessary for the FIP grant.
- B. **If Denied.** If denied, the OCR will notify SFDC and the applicant, in writing, the reasons for denial within 7-days.
- Step 7.** **Request for Grant Payment.** Participants may request reimbursement for eligible expenses upon successful completion of the approved FIP project. The approved Grant (reimbursement) will be paid after all work is completed, reviewed, and approved by SFDC and OCR for consistency with the executed FIP agreement, and review of invoice-payment receipts submitted by the participant to the OCR. The project must be completed within one-year of contract date, or as amended, in writing, by mutual agreement between OCR and participant.

Any improvements completed or initiated prior to contract ratification, and/or any changes made to the project after OCR grant approval, which have not been approved by SFDC DRC and OCR, will not be eligible for funding and may disqualify entire project for grant funding.

To request reimbursement for eligible expenses, the Participant must:

1. Schedule Project Inspection. Contact SFDC to coordinate project inspection with OCR to inspect project and certify completion according to approved plans.
2. Request Reimbursement.
 - a. Contact OCR to receive a copy of the Microsoft Excel based *The Richmond Highway Façade Improvement Program - Project Reimbursement Workbook* (“Project Reimbursement Workbook”); a hard-copy can also be provided.
 - b. Using the Project Reimbursement Workbook, enter itemized invoice and payment information to total project cost; or, until you have established receipts that equal or exceed match grant.
 - c. Attach legible invoice(s) and payment receipt(s) in order presented on Project Reimbursement Workbook.
 - d. Submit itemized invoice-payment receipts to OCR to verify eligible expenses, and accuracy.

Step 8. Grant Payment. SFDC will review and forward *Project Reimbursement Workbook* with itemized invoice-payment receipts to OCR. Upon review and approval, OCR will release the funds payable to the applicant (as identified on the W-9).

VI. APPLICATION AND REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS.

- A. Application. Go to www.sfdc.org to view and print a copy of the *Façade Improvement Program Application*, or to request a copy of the application contact SFDC.
- B. FIP Application Requirements. Each application for a FIP Grant must include the following information, and be submitted to SFDC no later than three (3) weeks prior to scheduled DRC review date. The applicant must also bring a copy of the application material to the DRC review.
 1. Photographs clearly showing existing conditions of the building to be improved,
 2. Written summary of proposed work,
 3. Design drawings and elevations that adequately and comprehensively show the proposed project including details of cornices, window, decorative elements, signs, etc.
 4. If project includes pedestrian, sign, parking, landscape, and/or lighting improvements, a plan identifying location of improvements must be submitted,
 5. Exact samples of paint, colors and materials,
 6. If the applicant is not the owner, the property owner’s written approval, and post improvement three-year rental agreement.

VIII. FEDERAL, STATE AND COUNTY PERMITS. Approval of a FIP grant does not waive the need to comply with any Federal, State and County regulations and requirements. The Applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary zoning, permit and other approvals.

IX. PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA. The DRC and OCR will review and evaluate applications based on the degree and quality of the proposed improvements, and how the improvements address the *Grant Guidelines*, *Design Guidelines*, and the following *Project Evaluation Criteria*:

1. Prevention/replacement of deteriorating conditions (e.g., age and condition of building);
2. Visual Prominence – The visual prominence of the building/improvement and its location and the potential positive impact on the attractiveness of the Richmond Highway corridor;
3. Potential Positive Impact – The potential positive impact of the improvement on the attractiveness of the individual site and building;
4. Aesthetic quality of the design proposal;
5. Adherence to Design Guidelines; and,
6. Comprehensiveness of the project.

X. DESIGN REVIEW The DRC works cooperatively with applicants and recommends approval or denial of program participation to the OCR.

- A. DRC Members.** The six (6) member committee consists of two (2) community volunteers who are either business or property owners, at least one of whom is a design professional or has a design background; two (2) SFDC Board Members appointed by the Lee and Mount Vernon District Supervisors; and two (2) Fairfax County staff; as follows:
- 2 Community Volunteer who are business or property owners
 - 2 SFDC Board Members
 - 1 Fairfax County OCR Staff
 - 1 Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) staff
- B. DRC Quorum.** A minimum of four (4) DRC members must be present to make recommendations of approval/denial.