



Facade and Signage Improvement Program (FSIP)

Guidelines and Application

Revised: August 2024

A free program for City of Azle business property owners or tenants seeking to renovate or restore their exterior signage, awnings, lighting, or commercial building façade.

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A. INTRODUCTION

The City of Azle has established the Facade and Signage Improvement Program (FSIP), which will provide technical and financial assistance to property owners or business tenants seeking to renovate or restore their exterior signage, lighting or commercial building facades. The FSIP is designed to impact properties in need of revitalization, resulting in the improved exterior, visibility and presentation of a business. The FSIP is not designed to subsidize corrections to building code violations that prolong the life of a commercial property.

There are two (2) kinds of grants that may be applied for: General Project Grant and a Signage Project Grant. Both grants may be applied for any number of times until the aggregated maximum amount is reached on the same property in a calendar year.

GENERAL PROJECT GRANT

The FSIP will provide a fifty percent (50%) General Project matching grant of up to \$10,000 for the funding of well-designed improvements which will coordinate all the important features of the storefront into a more attractive image while creating, if necessary, an accessible entrance for the public. This may include the restoration of architectural details, better windows and doors, and well-proportioned signage and lighting.

SIGNAGE PROJECT GRANT

An additional fifty percent (50%) Signage Project matching grant up to \$5,000 may be available for improvement of existing signage or construction of new City-approved signage.

City staff will be available to provide assistance to applicants through the conceptual stage at no cost to the applicants. Applicants, however, will be responsible for hiring licensed architects and contractors to refine this conceptual design depending on the scope of work.

B. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply to the terms used in this Policy:

Applicant: the Property owner or business occupant signing the Application for a Facade and Signage Improvement Grant.

Aggregate Amount: the total accumulated dollar amount during a calendar year.

Construction Costs: the cost of permits, fees, construction materials, and installation labor. All other associated costs are deemed excluded, including, but not exclusively,

the following costs: design, construction document preparation, bidding, sweat equity and construction financing.

DRC: the City's Development Review Committee.

Eligible Enhancements: the improvements identified as eligible in Section C herein.

Facade: the portion of the building visible from the primary right-of-way as determined by City.

MDD: the Municipal Development District (Tarrant County side of Azle)

Notice to Proceed: a written notice from City Staff authorizing the Applicant to begin construction as approved by the City.

Property: the physical lot and/or building to which improvements are being made.

Staff: the City Manager or their designee(s).

Sweat Equity: the cost or value of a party's contribution to a project in the form of labor

C. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following criteria must be met for participation in FSIP:

1. Applicants must be commercial property owners or commercial tenants located in the City of Azle;
2. Tenants must have written approval from property owners to participate in program;
3. Nonconforming signage on property, if applicable, must be permanently removed as part of the improvement;
4. Applicants must be up to date on all municipal taxes prior to participation in the program;
5. Applicants must not have any City liens filed against any property owned by Applicant, including but not limited to, weed liens, demolition liens, board-up/open structure liens and paying liens;
6. Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements;
7. Understanding that the overall objective of the FSIP is to improve the exterior, visibility and presentation of a property; the City has the discretion to decline an application while suggesting enhancements that would enable future acceptance.
8. Ineligible businesses: non-profits, government offices, residences, home businesses, and sexually-oriented businesses.

D. DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

Improvements to be funded by the program must be compatible with the character and architecture of the individual building as well as meet City standards with regards to latest construction and design trends. Buildings with significant architectural qualities are strongly encouraged to restore and maintain these features. Improvements for buildings not having such architectural features should still be carefully considered and be seen as an opportunity to substantially enhance the appearance of the buildings and their streetscapes.

1. Eligible Facade/Signage Improvements:

- a. Restoration of details in historically contributing or significant buildings, and removal of elements which cover architectural details;
- b. Window replacement and window framing visible from the street which is appropriately scaled to the building;
- c. Visually appealing and appropriate City-approved signage, including monument signage, pole signage, electronic message boards and other signage as specified in the City's codes;
- d. Lighting which is visually appealing and appropriately illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of a building Facade;
- e. Awnings or canopies which can be both functional and visually appealing;
- f. Edging, curbing, irrigation installation and repair, approved trees, landscaping beds (not including planting material) or other landscaping features where appropriate;
- g. Cleaning, repainting (including mural installation) or residing of building;
- h. Asphalt overlay of parking lots visible from street;
- i. New storefront construction, appropriately scaled within an existing building;
- j. Removal of architectural barriers to public accessibility.
- k. Replacement or repair of the portions of the roof that are visible from an adjacent public street.
- l. Replacement or repair of existing gutters and/or downspouts.
- m. Installation of new sidewalks and/or the replacement or repair of existing sidewalks.
- n. Outdoor dining/seating, including benches/porch swings and shade structures
- o. Taxes

2. Ineligible Improvements/Expenses:

- a. exterior improvements located on the sides or rear of buildings;
- b. interior improvements;
- c. playground or recreational equipment;
- d. structural changes;
- e. burglar bars;

- f. security/alarm system;
- g. "sweat equity" (See definition in Section B);
- h. new commercial construction;
- i. gazebos;
- j. trellises;
- k. window boxes;
- l. permitting fees;
- m. architectural, survey or other professional fees;
- n. asbestos testing, removal, abatement, or remediation; or
- o. improvements for which insurance monies are received
- p. outline lighting;
- q. parking lot striping only

3. *Prior Improvements*

Any permits, alterations, or improvements pertaining or relating to the FSIP application made prior to application submission or receiving a "Notice to Proceed" are not eligible for reimbursement.

4. *Alterations*

Applicant must agree not to change or alter the improved Facade without prior written approval from the City for four (4) years from the date of grant payment.

E. PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

1. *Financial Assistance*

Funding offered is a matching grant in which the FSIP reimburses Applicant fifty percent (50%) of total project costs, up to a \$10,000 maximum match for Facade improvements and an additional fifty percent (50%) match, up to \$5,000 for new City-approved signage*. Architectural design fees may not be included in the total cost of eligible improvements.

Applicant's match may be in the form of other financial aid (grant or loan) received from other agencies and/or banks, but may not be "in-kind." The FSIP will only provide reimbursement after Applicant has paid their architect, contractor and vendor(s) in full and after the project is determined to have been completed in accordance with the contract between the City and Applicant.

2. *Application and Information*

If you wish to participate in the FSIP, please contact the City of Azle Economic Development Department, (817) 444-7076 office or e-mail econdev@cityofazle.org.

F. APPLICATION PROCESS

All prospective applicants must follow the application process in the order outlined below.

1. Applicant meets with Economic Development Director for initial project discussions and files an application.
2. Applicant meets with Staff to discuss building program and design alternatives.
3. Applicant's architect prepares final design drawings and submits them to Staff for review and approval.
4. Applicant must submit two (2) competitive bids on the proposed work and clearly identify which bid will be utilized. If there is an extreme difference between bids, the applicant will be required to provide a narrative as to why they chose the more expensive bid or why the other bid is so low.
5. Proposed project will be presented to the DRC for review followed by review by the City Manager. The proposed project will then be presented to the Azle City Council for final review/approval.
6. Staff sends applicant a "Notice to Proceed" and fully executed Facade and Signage Improvement Program Agreement. **Any portion of work initiated or completed prior to submitting an application or receiving the "Notice to Proceed" will not be reimbursed.**
7. Applicant has sixty (60) days from the date the Notice to Proceed is sent to begin implementation of approved improvements. Applicant must provide Staff with copies of all building permits and certifications received from improvement project.
8. Contractor constructs project improvements as specified in the final design. Any changes to the approved plan must be approved by Staff.
9. Applicant notifies Staff once project is completed.
10. Staff certifies the improvements comply with the final drawings and specifications.
11. Applicant must submit copies of all paid invoices and receipts with verification of funds disbursement (copy of check, bank statement withdrawal, credit card statement, etc.) to the Economic Development Director, who then submits request for reimbursement check.
12. If the application is denied, the Applicant will not be allowed to reapply to the Program for 120 days from the original application date.
13. Any approved applicants may apply for additional grants any number of times until the aggregated maximum amount of \$10,000 for General Projects and \$5,000 for Signage Projects is reached on the same property in a calendar year.
14. Approved projects must be completed within six (6) months of approval and turn in all receipts for approval and reimbursement. If the applicant is unable to complete the work within this timeframe, applicant must make a written request for an extension. Extensions will be limited to two (2) – sixty (60) day periods.

The City reserves the right to make adjustments regarding conditions and parameters outlined in these guidelines.

G. TERMINATION

The City of Azle has the right to terminate any agreement under the FSIP if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines or if the project has been started prior to an executed Facade and Improvement Program Agreement with the City of Azle and the receipt of a Notice to Proceed.

Facade and Signage Improvement Program Application

Please return completed application with necessary attachments and signature to City of Azle Economic Development Office, 505 W Main Street, Azle TX 76020 or mail to PO Box 1378 Azle, TX 76098. If you have any application questions, please contact the Economic Development Director at 817-444-7076.

Applicant Name	Date
Business Name	
Mailing Address	
Contact Phone	
Email Address	
Building Owner (if different than applicant)	
Project Site/ Address	County

Type of Work: (check all that apply)

Facade/Building Rehab Roofing Landscaping
Parking & Driveways Awnings Pedestrian Amenities
Signage Outdoor Seating/Patio

Details of Planned Improvements relating Grant Request (attach additional information if necessary)

How will this project benefit the community?

General Project Expenditures	Total Estimated Costs	50% Grant Requested
Façade/Building Rehab		
Roofing		
Landscaping		
Parking/Driveways		
Awnings		
Pedestrian Amenities		
Outdoor Seating/Patio		
Total		

Total General Project grant request may not exceed 50% of TOTAL COST up to \$10,000

Signage Project Expenditures	Total Estimated Costs	50% Grant Requested
Signage		
Total		

Total Signage Project grant request may not exceed 50% of TOTAL COST up to \$5,000

Request Total	
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** Attach with final design drawings and photographs of building's exterior Façade.*

Applicant Signature

Date

Property Owner Signature

Date

Application Checklist

- Completed application with details of planned improvements
- Copies of bids
- Photographs of existing building conditions

Return completed application with necessary attachments and signature to:

City of Azle - Economic Development Office
505 W Main Street
Azle, TX 76020

Mailing Address:
PO Box 1378
Azle, TX 76098

If you have any application questions, please contact the Economic Development Director at 817-444-7076