

Memorandum

Date: November 14, 2008
To: Members of the Main Street Monroe/Downtown Development Authority
From: Andrea Jones, Main Street Manager
Re: 2009 Façade Grant Application

Attached please find a revised version of the 2009 Façade Grant Application. The Façade Grant Committee met and is proposing three changes to the application which are listed below and are highlighted in the application:

- Number 1 under Program Rules would now allow buildings owned by tax exempt organizations to apply for funding. The thought behind this is that improvement to any building, no matter who owns it, provides several overall benefits to downtown;
- Number 7 under Evaluation would specify that taxable properties would take priority over tax-exempt properties; and
- Number 8 under Evaluation would state that receipt of other DDA funding would be taken into consideration when reviewing applications.

The Façade Grant Committee recommends that the MSM/DDA approve the revised application for the 2009 Façade Grant year.

Thank you.

Monroe Downtown Development Authority Façade Improvement Program

Program Summary

The Monroe Downtown Development Authority created the Downtown Façade Improvement Program in the year 2000 to encourage private investment in the downtown building stock and enhance the overall physical appearance of Downtown Monroe. The rebate program is a tool to implement the DDA work program through its Capital Improvements element, Local Business Program project area. Funding for fiscal year 2009 will be at the discretion of the Façade Grant Committee and DDA. The program is designed to reimburse property owners for specific building improvements for a tenth year.

Program Rules

- 1) Building must be within the DDA District (see map attached), ~~and cannot be owned by a tax-exempt organization.~~
- 2) Improvements to be funded through this program **must** be on the façade of the building. Those sides of a building easily visible to the public eye may also be eligible. **No interior improvements will be funded.** (See attached sheet for information on interior loans available).
- 3) The Façade Improvement Program is a **reimbursement** or rebate program. Money will be distributed after project completion, inspection and submittal of final invoice for services. **Should the final payment be lower than the approved lowest bid, the DDA will pay the reimbursement based on the final invoice amount.**
- 4) All proposed improvements must be **approved before work is started.** Work not approved **will not** be reimbursed.
- 5) The applications will be reviewed by the Façade Grant Committee and forwarded (by the Façade Grant Committee) to the Historic District Commission for review.
- 6) Work must comply with all City of Monroe building codes. All applicable City of Monroe building permits must be obtained and all review procedures must be followed. Approval for funding does **NOT** replace site plan review or other Building and/or Planning Department procedures.
- 7) The Façade Grant Committee reserves the right to inspect all completed work before reimbursement.

- 8) Applications must be completed and **submitted by the building owner**.
- 9) The program is for existing commercial buildings only. Buildings may have upper floor residential, but first floor must have a commercial use.
- 10) Participants must be current with the City of Monroe and Monroe County for real or personal property taxes for the building for which the rebate has been requested.
- 11) Once a project is approved for funding, work must be completed and inspected within one year from contract date or money will revert back to the funding pool.
- 12) Pre-application and pre-construction meetings with the Façade Grant Committee or DDA Staff are **strongly encouraged**. Individual design advice is also available.
- 13) Paint and fabric colors shall be chosen from the Downtown Façade Study available for review in the City of Monroe Planning Department.

Qualifying Improvements

Rebate dollars are available for the following **front and rear** (sides of buildings exposed to the public may be eligible for qualifying improvements) façade improvements, with a project rebate up to \$10,000 **for labor and materials only**. **Permit fees and other expenses do not qualify for rebate dollars**. Larger projects may qualify for additional funding including allocating a substantial portion or the entire budget towards a single project. The DDA reserves the right to establish priority projects for funding. These priorities may be based on visibility, capital vs. maintenance improvements or any additional criteria the DDA deems important.

- Removal of slip covers and metal/concrete awnings, rebate up to 100 percent of project cost.
- Installation or replacement of appropriate windows and/or doors, rebate up to 50 percent of project cost.
- Appropriate façade cleaning or painting, rebate up to 50 percent of project cost.
- Masonry Improvements, rebate up to 50 percent of project cost.
- Installation or repair of fabric awnings, rebate up to 50 percent of project cost. **Backlit awnings do not qualify. Only address graphics will be funded. Those awnings with additional graphics are not eligible to be funded.** (A copy of the City of Monroe sign regulations can be viewed at the DDA office, 118 East Front Street or City Hall, 120 East First Street.)

A combination of improvements may be funded.

Project Timeframe

Applications will be reviewed by the DDA Façade Grant Committee and must include all materials stated on the application. Those eligible applications for properties located on the state register of historic sites and the national register of historic places will then be forwarded to the Historic District Commission for comment. Comments regarding each project from the Historic District Commission will be forwarded to each applicant and the DDA Façade Grant Committee. Awarding of the grant will occur after the DDA Board's approval of the sketch plan with narrative, and qualifying bids based on recommendations from the Façade Grant Committee. This process typically takes between six (6) and eight (8) weeks, but may in some circumstances take longer. Applicants will be notified by mail of the DDA's decision.

It is the intent of the Downtown Development Authority to provide the greatest impact possible through this program, as such; the DDA reserves the right to offer greater rebates to large projects in order to offset cost, and to solicit projects where improvement of a particular area is needed. As the total program dollar amount is limited, the Façade Grant Committee also reserves the right to amend an application based upon the reservation of funds for maximum impact.

Design Assistance

The DDA will provide design assistance from a qualified architect, this will also aid in the Site Plan Review process for those winning applications. This year, design assistance will consist of reimbursement of up to three (3) hours of architectural fees not to exceed \$100 per hour. The desire to take advantage of this design assistance **must** be indicated on the application when submitted.

Application

All application materials must be submitted by the deadline to be considered. Only completed applications will be accepted.

Application materials to be submitted include:

- Rebate application, completed and signed;
- An informal sketch of the proposed façade;
- Any proposed paint, awning, etc. samples;
- Pictures of the existing façade and proposed improvement areas;
- Two quotes per project element; and
- A summary of project quotes separated by project element.

Once projects are chosen, a pre-construction conference can be held to discuss project elements.

Deadlines

- All completed applications must be submitted by March 27, 2009 at 4:30 pm (**deadline extensions will not be granted**).
- All work must be completed within one year of contract date.
- Those applications submitted after Façade Grants are awarded may be reviewed if additional funding is available and project will have a large impact in the DDA district.

Evaluation

Funding is limited. Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria. Those applications that make the best case for funding will receive priority. *Only properties that comprise the DDA District are eligible for funding.*

- 1) *Project eligibility*
Is proposed work eligible under the program guidelines?
- 2) *Amount of private investment*
Those projects with a higher private match will receive greater consideration.
- 3) *Location of Improvements*
Those projects that propose improvements to buildings other than the front will be evaluated based upon how greatly it is exposed to the public.
- 4) *Aesthetics*
Projects must enhance the overall aesthetics and be consistent with existing architecture and materials within Downtown Monroe.
- 5) *Previous façade grants received*
Has the address or project received an award in past years for the same or other improvement?
- 6) *Tax Abatement*
The receipt or application for Obsolete Property Tax Abatement will be noted during application review.
- 7) *Tax-Exempt Properties*
Taxable properties will receive higher consideration than tax-exempt properties.
- 8) *Other DDA Funding Programs*
Receipt of other funding from the DDA will be taken into consideration.