

Facade Improvement Grant (FIG) Programs

The Baltimore Development Corporation offers a variety of Facade Improvement Grant (FIG) programs to assist businesses and property owners fund building improvements that noticeably improve the look and feel of the surrounding commercial area. Businesses and Commercial Properties located in Baltimore City are eligible for this program.

These programs fall into two categories: Reimbursement Grants and Partially/Fully Funded Grants.

Reimbursement Grants

Applicants for these grants must contract for, complete, and pay for improvements for the entire project. Grant funds will be reimbursed to Applicant following proof of completion and payment. The following reimbursement grants are currently available:

- **City-Wide FIG:** The City-Wide FIG provides up to \$7,500 in matching funds reimbursement to any commercial property in Baltimore City.
- **Corner Property FIG:** The Corner Property FIG provides up to \$15,000 in matching funds reimbursement to a commercial property sited at an intersection. A minimum investment of \$50,000 **and** a first-floor commercial tenant upon completion are required to qualify for this grant.
- **Vacant Building FIG:** The Vacant Building FIG provides up to \$15,000 in matching funds reimbursement to a commercial building that is presently uninhabitable and unable to obtain a legal Use & Occupancy Permit. A minimum investment of \$50,000, a new Use & Occupancy Permit **and** a first-floor commercial tenant upon completion are required to qualify for this grant.
- **Industrial FIG:** The Industrial FIG provides up to \$15,000 in matching funds reimbursement to any industrially zoned business with a total square footage of over 10,000 square feet.
- **Shopping Center FIG:** The Shopping Center FIG provides a grant of up to 10% of total project costs – with a maximum reimbursement of \$50,000 – for shopping centers undergoing comprehensive improvements.

Partially/Fully Funded Grants

Applicants in specific geographic areas are eligible for partially/fully funded grants. The following partially/fully funded grants are currently available:

- **Neighborhood Impact Investment Fund (NIIF) FIG:** The Neighborhood Impact Investment Fund (NIIF) FIG provides up to \$7,500 in matching funds reimbursement to any commercial property located in a NIIF Impact Investment neighborhood. However, the first \$5,000 of this grant can be awarded with no match required (BDC will facilitate direct payments to contractors).

PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING APPLICATION FOR ALL PROGRAMS.

A BDC STAFF PERSON WILL IDENTIFY WHICH PROGRAM IS A MATCH FOR YOUR BUSINESS AND ASSIST YOU THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE GRANT APPLICATION AND ADMINISTRATION PROCESS.

NO EXTERIOR WORK CAN BEGIN UNTIL YOUR APPLICATION HAS RECEIVED WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM BDC.

Façade Improvement Grant Application

Applicant Name: _____ **Women-Owned Business:** Yes No

Business Owner Ethnicity: White Black Asian Hispanic Other: _____

Language Accessibility: BDC is committed to providing meaningful access to our services for all individuals, including those with limited English proficiency language assistance is available. If assistance is desired, please make a selection below.

Spanish Korean Chinese (Simplified) Chinese (Mandarin) Arabic Other _____

Applicant Mailing Address:

Phone: _____ **E-Mail:** _____

Owner: _____ **Tenant:** _____ **If Tenant, Date of Lease Expiration:** _____

Address and business name for which this application applies: _____

Current Employees: Full Time _____ Part Time _____ **Estimated New Jobs:** Full Time _____ Part Time _____

Describe your business and/or property. If vacant, describe plans for future occupancy and attach approved use & occupancy permit and signed Lease:

Describe the proposed improvements (e.g., signage, windows/doors, exterior finishes, awnings, fencing, painting, repairs, etc.), and the materials you plan to use.

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (Print): _____

Owner, if other than applicant: I hereby certify that I am the owner of this building/land on which the proposed FIG project is situated, and that the foregoing applicant, in filing a FIG application for approval by BDC, is acting with my knowledge and consent.

Owner Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (Print): _____

Program Eligibility and Guidelines

City-Wide FIG Program Eligibility

- The City-Wide FIG program is targeted to existing non-residential properties and businesses city-wide.
- The project should make a **noticeable** contribution to the revitalization of a commercial corridor. Grant funds may not be used to fund deferred maintenance on the property, including repairs or replacement of deteriorating features, unless such work is part of a larger improvement project.
- Projects should prioritize primary street-level improvements with emphasis given to signs, awnings, painting, ground floor windows and doors, lighting, or other decorative elements. Secondary improvements may include masonry work, cornices and upper floor work, but only in combination with ground-floor improvements.
- The FIG program cannot be used for properties that are not in compliance with applicable zoning laws and urban renewal plans, unless the FIG will bring the property into compliance.

Corner Property FIG Program Eligibility

- Properties must be significant, corner commercial buildings sited at the intersection of two streets receiving vehicular traffic. Abutment of alleys or other service corridors do not qualify a building as a Corner Property.
- Demolition of adjacent properties do not “cause” the existence of a Corner Property
- Properties are eligible for reimbursement only when they have received a full building certificate of occupancy AND a first-floor commercial tenant is in place.
- Minimum private investment of \$50,000 (interior and exterior renovation), with at least \$15,000 in exterior improvements is required.
- All other conditions pertaining to the City-Wide FIG program apply.

Vacant Building FIG Program Eligibility

- Properties must in need of a major, full-building overhaul. An uninhabitable building is defined as one that cannot be issued a Use & Occupancy permit in its existing condition.
- Properties are eligible for reimbursement only when they have received a full building certificate of occupancy AND a first-floor commercial tenant is in place.
- Minimum private investment of \$50,000 (interior and exterior renovation), with at least \$15,000 in exterior improvements is required.
- All other conditions pertaining to the City-Wide FIG program apply.

Industrial FIG Program Eligibility

- This grant is intended for the improvement of an entire industrially zoned building. It is not intended to be used for single elements, localized repairs, or other modifications that do not constitute a full-building overhaul.
- Building must be industrially zoned and larger than 10,000 square feet.
- All other conditions pertaining to the City-Wide FIG program apply.

Shopping Center FIG Program Eligibility

- To qualify for this program, shopping centers must meet the minimum investment (\$100,000) **and** make ALL the following improvements:
 - Improved/adequate lighting
 - Well-maintained parking lot
 - New landscaping (trees, bushes, flowers, etc.)
 - Consistent high-quality signage for all shopping center tenants
 - Prepare a signage plan for future tenants
 - Produce a 5-year maintenance plan

NIIF FIG Program Eligibility

- Only the following neighborhoods are categorized as Neighborhood Impact Investment Neighborhoods and are therefore eligible for this program:

- Arlington, Barclay, Barre Circle, Broadway East, Central Park Heights, Coldstream-Homestead-Montebello, Cylburn, Druid Heights, East Baltimore Midway, Franklin Square, Greenmount West, Greenspring, Hollins Market, Johnston Square, Langston Hughes, Levindale, Lucille Park, New Southwest/Mount Clare, Oliver, Park Circle, Penn North, Pigtown, Pimlico Good Neighbors, Poppleton, Reservoir Hill, Union Square, Upton, Woodmere, and Towanda-Grantley
- Neighborhoods categorized as NIIF-Eligible neighborhoods but NOT Impact Investment Neighborhoods are NOT eligible. Check eligibility at www.baltimoreniif.org/eligible-neighborhoods/
- All other conditions pertaining to the City-Wide FIG program apply.

Ineligible Applicants

The FIG program is only available to businesses and commercial property owners. The following projects are NOT eligible for this program:

- Residential Properties
- New Construction (defined as a building erected within the last three years)
- Non-Profit Entities (except those that sell goods or services to the general public)
- Any application on behalf of a property owner whose building is actively listed for sale
- Any property that has received a Façade Improvement Grant in the prior 12-month period
- Any applicant that has received a Façade Improvement Grant but has not maintained the improvements in good repair, as required.
- Any commercial property that does not have a tenant(s) occupying the building

Eligible Improvements

Eligible Improvements

The FIG program is available to businesses and commercial property owners that make **more than one** eligible improvement to the façade of their building. All projects must include a “Primary” improvement, detailed below. Any application that includes an “Ineligible Improvement” will NOT be approved unless that improvement is removed from the scope of work. The final grant amount will be calculated based on the total cost of Eligible Improvements, inclusive of required taxes and fees.

BDC will consider certain improvements to a building, only when accompanied by one or more “Primary Improvements.” Secondary improvements may be necessary to improve the overall quality of a façade project, but are not sufficient to qualify for a façade improvement grant on their own. Secondary improvements must make a noticeable improvement to the overall look and feel of the building.

Eligible Primary Improvements

- Business Signage
 - Building-Mounted signs (including Channel Letter signs)
 - Blade Signs
 - Hand-painted Signs
- Exterior Painting
- Storefront Reconstruction including Windows, Doors, & Carpentry
- Exterior Lighting
- Awnings
- Window and Door Upgrades (that demonstrate clear aesthetic improvement)

Eligible Secondary Improvements

- Masonry & cornice work
- Upper floor building face improvements
- Semi-permanent landscaping features (planter boxes, etc.)

- Murals (see *Murals* section for details)
- Interior mounted door & window security features
- Window decal signage
- Window and Door replacement (with no clear aesthetic improvement)

Signage Only Projects

Business whose only outstanding façade-related need is commercial signage may be eligible for a Façade Improvement Grant with no need to meet the requirement of **more than one** eligible improvement. A signage-only FIG will be considered in the following cases:

- New business occupying an existing space that has, in the assessment of BDC, no additional need for exterior aesthetic improvement because the space already features new or high-quality doors, windows, lighting, painting, and related elements.
- New businesses occupying space in an existing shopping center, where the property owner places specific facade or signage conditions/requirements/restrictions on each business, and the shopping center as a whole is already maintained to the standard required under the *Shopping Center FIG*

Ineligible Improvements

Ineligible Improvements

BDC will NOT approve a Façade Improvement Grant application that includes **any** of the improvements listed below. Projects that include the following elements must remove them for any part of the application to qualify:

- Exterior Roll-Down Security Doors (Must be see-through)
- Electronic Signs
- Lightbox (back-lit) Signs
- Banners or Vinyl Signs
- Non-ornamental Flood Lighting
- Window-mounted LED lights
- Barbed wire

Some projects include expenses that BDC does not consider eligible expenses for the purposes of a Façade Improvement Grant. However, an applicant may proceed with the following improvements at their own cost without jeopardizing the Façade Improvement Grant for other eligible items:

- Deferred maintenance
- Roof work
- Structural repairs
- Landscaping materials (planters, plants, mulch, etc.)
- Security systems and cameras
- Wheelchair ramps or similar improvements required by law
- Outdoor seating areas (*May be eligible for BDC's "Outdoor Spaces" grant*)
- Improvements not permanently affixed to the building
 - Rear or service alley-facing building work

Special Considerations

Architectural/design services are considered a valid expense, but their total must not exceed 15% of total project cost. Only one estimate for architectural/design services will be required.

Murals can provide a unique, attractive addition to a Façade Improvement Grant project. Because of the unique artistic nature of murals, a maximum of 25% of total project cost may be dedicated to this element. Only one estimate for a mural will be required.

Other Terms & Conditions

Aesthetic Considerations

All BDC Façade Improvement Grants programs are **discretionary in nature and awards are not guaranteed**. Applications are considered by an internal review committee and may require significant alterations in order to gain approval.

If a building's surrounding area is pedestrian-friendly, proposed project designs should be in harmony with the character of the area. If the surrounding district is not pedestrian-friendly, proposals should prioritize improvements designed to appeal to pedestrians to begin to transform the area.

The distinguishing original qualities and character of the building shall be preserved; removal of historical or distinctive architectural features may disqualify a project. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced; if replacement is necessary, new materials should match the materials being replaced in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.

Contemporary design for alterations to existing properties is acceptable if such alterations do not destroy significant historical, architectural, and cultural materials of the building and if such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property and adjacent buildings.

Applicants in a Baltimore City Historic District (CHAP)

Applicants will need to receive an **Authorization to Proceed** from CHAP before starting work. It is not necessary to obtain this approval prior to applying, as the project's scope of work may change pending BDC's review and approval of this grant.

A list of Baltimore City Historic (CHAP) Districts can be found [here](#).

Applicants in Baltimore City Main Street District

Properties located in Belair-Edison, Federal Hill, Fells Point, Hamilton-Lauraville, Highlandtown, Pennsylvania Avenue, Pigtown, and Waverly *may* need to submit this application to the local Main Streets Design Review Committee. A BDC staff person will determine whether this is required and advise accordingly.

A list of Baltimore City Main Street districts can be found [here](#).

Change in Project Proposal

BDC must approve all changes to an approved scope of work **prior** to those changes being undertaken. Changes that reduce the project scope and cost will reduce the grant amount. Changes that expand the scope of work may increase the grant amount, subject to BDC's review and approval of the expanded scope. If changes to the scope of work are performed without BDC approval, BDC reserves the right to terminate the grant in its entirety.

Estimates

Each aspect of the project must have **two separate quotes** from licensed contractors that are in good standing with the State of Maryland and not affiliated with Applicant. The final grant reimbursement amount will be based on the lowest bids for each component of the project.

For example: if a project were to include Painting, Signage and new windows, applicants must procure:

- Two (2) estimates from two general contractors capable of handling all of the work

OR

- Two (2) estimates for Painting; two (2) estimates for signage, and two (2) estimates for windows

It is not required that the applicant find a single company that is capable of performing all aspects of the job.

Applicants that are licensed contractors are allowed to bid on and perform the work, but **two** quotes from licensed contractors that are not affiliated with the Applicant will still be required.

All Contractors, Sign Fabricators, or capable construction tradesperson must also hold the proper construction licensure per their businesses and or trade for their bid to be considered.

Custom/Specialty Elements

Due to their unique nature, custom/specialty construction elements for which it is difficult/impossible to procure two estimates will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Approved elements will require only one estimate and a maximum of 25% of total project cost may be dedicated to this element.

Extension Requests

BDC must receive all extension requests in writing (e-mail is acceptable). Approval of extension requests will be e-mailed.

Maintenance of Improvements

As part of the grant acceptance process, the applicant agrees to maintain all improvements made per the approved plans in their finished state for a period of five years.

Permitting and Code Requirements

Contractors must secure required building permits and minor privilege permits (if necessary), and complete the project in accordance with all applicable codes, ordinances, and standard engineering practices. Contractors must be properly registered, licensed, insured, and pass a debarment check as required by law.

State of Good Standing

Applicants/businesses that are not in good legal standing with Federal, State or local authorities are not eligible to apply. A BDC staff person can assist with determining the legal standing of your business at the time of application.

Vacant Properties

Only properties that are occupied with commercial tenants are eligible for these programs. Owners of vacant property may apply for this program, with the understanding that no reimbursement will be issued by BDC until a signed lease for the property is submitted and the property is occupied.

Timeframe

DO NOT BEGIN WORK PRIOR TO APPROVAL. Construction must be completed within 120 days of award letter, unless otherwise approved in writing. **ANY WORK DONE PRIOR TO RECEIVING GRANT APPROVAL WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR REIMBURSEMENT.**

Use & Occupancy Permit Requirement

If you do not have a use/occupancy permit at the time of application, you must present one prior to reimbursement. No Façade Improvement Grant project will be reimbursed without a Use & Occupancy permit for the improved commercial space.

Reimbursement

To qualify for reimbursement, grantees must complete a Reimbursement Request Form, which will be provided by BDC staff at the conclusion of the project; provide two (2) photos of the completed work; and provide copies of ALL payments to contractors (cancelled checks, invoices marked "paid" etc.) adding up to the total approved project amount.

If the final project cost is lower than project costs provided to BDC at the time of application and approval, BDC will reduce the grant amount in order to maintain the required matching ratio.

All reimbursement materials must be received by BDC within 90 days of the FIG expiration date.

Application Submission Checklist (For Applicant Use)

- All Fields of Application Complete (including signature of applicant and, if applicable, landlord)
- W-9 of Applicant
- Two Pictures of Property in its current state
- Conceptual Drawings, Renderings, or Plans of Proposed Work
- Two (2) Contractor estimates for any/all work to be performed

Please e-mail completed application package to info@baltimoredevelopment.com

Applications can also be mailed directly to:

**Baltimore Development Corporation
36 S Charles St., Suite 2100
Baltimore, MD 21201-3015**