

URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICTS FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Background Information

In 2009, the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) Board adopted guidelines for the Façade Improvement Program (FIP) in Urban Renewal District III. The basis for that program, as outlined below, is applicable to any Urban Renewal District (URD); however, at the time of adoption of the FIP, URD III had the greatest need and was the only district with adequate resources to support the program. In January, 2016, the MRA Board approved extending the FIP to any district with adequate funding capacity as long as funds within the district were budgeted for that specific use. The availability of the FIP in any of Missoula's URDs will be indicated on the MRA web page under the Programs link, Façade Improvement Program.

The basis for the FIP is found in State Statute, specifically 7-15-4201 – 7-15-4294. Specific applicable sections of the law are as follows:

- 7-15-4206 – Blight – the substantial physical dilapidation, deterioration, age obsolescence, or defective construction, material, and arrangement of building or improvements, whether residential or nonresidential;
- 7-15-4206 – Rehabilitation – carrying out plans for a program of voluntary or compulsory repair and rehabilitation of buildings or other improvements;
- 7-15-4233 – Powers which may be exercised by an urban renewal agency – to improve, clear, or prepare for redevelopment any real or personal property in an urban renewal area;
- 7-15-4288 – Costs that may be paid by Tax Increment Financing (TIF) – costs incurred in connection with the redevelopment activities allowed under 7-15-4233;

The Urban Renewal Plans for Missoula's URDs generally call for the creation of sustainable residential and commercial redevelopment, both new and repurposed, that mitigates visual blight, is aesthetically pleasing, embodies sound urban design principals and promotes the use of sustainable and leading environmental practices in construction methods, materials and design.

The intent of the FIP is to improve the urban core and encourage redevelopment through the use of tax increment financing (TIF) as specified by Montana Urban Renewal Law 7-15-42 and 43, M.C.A. The MRA, in accordance with provisions in state law and under the authority given it through City Council approval of ordinances creating the Missoula URDs, has created a facade improvement program to address certain conditions within those districts.

Façade Improvement Program Objectives

The primary objective of the Façade Improvement Program is to encourage private investment through the voluntary repair and rehabilitation of commercial, mixed-use and multi-family property (minimum of 4 units) in Missoula's URDs in a way that advances the aesthetic environment and enhances the pedestrian experience. Additional objectives include enhanced energy efficiency, expansion of the property tax base, stimulation of business and economic development and retention and expansion of employment in the URDs.

Guidelines

The program consists of grants to any commercial, mixed use and multi-family (four or more units) property within a designated URD whose projects meet the eligibility and design criteria. This program is not available for publically owned properties or for single-family residential properties or multi-family properties consisting of less than four units. All applications will be reviewed by MRA staff, and if deemed to meet the criteria set forth, will be presented to the MRA Board for consideration. Grants for any individual project may not exceed 25% or \$50,000 (whichever is less) of the total project cost of the approved project; thereby, ensuring significant private investment in any given project. Total project cost is defined as the total investment in the renovation of the building and is not limited to investment in the façade. If it is the finding of the MRA Board that an amount exceeding \$50,000 is merited due the size of the project, the magnitude of its impact on the built environment, public benefit, and/or tax generation, the MRA Board may, at its sole discretion approve additional funds for the project in the form of an interest free loan to be repaid over a period of ten years. Grants or loan combinations shall not exceed 25% of the total project cost. Interest free loans are only available in URDs with adequate financial capacity as determined by the MRA Board.

Minimum Submittal Requirements

The FIP is intended to provide the additional funding that might be needed to bring a façade up to the standards identified in this program, commonly referred to as "but for" funding. Applicants must provide the MRA with a graphic representation of the improvements that can be made to the façade of the building without FIP assistance along with what improvements are possible with a grant from the Program. The enhanced improvements must meet the goals of the FIP as outlined herein. Submittal requirements must meet the following requirements at a minimum:

- A graphic representation of the building improvements that are feasible without assistance from the FIP;
- A graphic representation of the building improvements that are proposed with assistance from the FIP;
- Building façade graphics must include proposed wall signage with the understanding that the cost of signage is not an eligible FIP expense;
- Plans must show all proposed ground mounted signs, exterior lighting and

landscaping.

Eligible Improvements

Rehabilitation is limited to building facades visible from the street. Improvements shall be scaled to the pedestrian and provide visual interest on the street both day and night. Efforts should be made to facilitate access into the building and to create a building façade which conveys permanence and improves the aesthetics of the URD. Improvements shall incorporate green building techniques and energy efficiency measures where feasible. Non-conforming improvements, per municipal zoning, building codes or any adopted design standards, shall not be considered.

The following elements may be eligible for tax increment assistance through the FIP if, at a minimum, the design criteria is adhered to and if approved by the MRA Board. Other criteria may be applied by the MRA staff and Board depending upon the specifics of the application and the Board's determination of the priorities for redevelopment within the district.

- Restoration, renovation or re-siding of building facades.
- Painting and masonry cleaning.
- Window display areas which are appropriately scaled and which facilitate pedestrian viewing.
- Window replacement and window framing visible from the street which is appropriately scaled to the building.
- Awnings or canopies that can be both functional and visually appealing.
- Exterior lighting that is visually appealing and appropriately illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of the building facade and improves safety.
- Exterior electrical connections.
- Street grade building entrances which enhance pedestrian activity along the street and improve access for disabled citizens.
- Landscaping on private property and within the property facing the street which exceeds the landscaping needed to meet code requirements. Any landscaping on private property receiving assistance through this program must include an adequate irrigation system, a maintenance plan and must have a landscape plan which has been approved by the MRA staff and is approved by the MRA Board, at its sole discretion.

Design Criteria

The guidelines identified below shall be considered during the application and approval process. MRA will review the design for compatibility and appropriateness based upon the project's architectural design and site plan in the context of adjacent structures, the immediate neighborhood and the vision for the URD. **Approval of any project for funding under this program shall be at the sole discretion of the MRA Board of Commissioners.**

- All facade improvements must consist of permanent materials such as stone, brick, or heavy gauge metal. Materials with a limited life span such as EFIS (synthetic stucco) and wood siding will generally not be eligible.
- Improvements should increase energy efficiency of the building whenever possible.
- Use of awnings or similar design features should be included where appropriate to maximize energy efficiency.
- The use of recycled, renewable and otherwise green materials is encouraged.
- Improvements shall enhance the pedestrian environment through the use of design elements that divide up the façade into pedestrian scale components.
- Architectural elements, such as overhangs, trellises, projections, awnings, texture and colors are encouraged to create shadow patterns that contribute to the building's character.
- Windows and doors should include visually prominent framing and accent elements.
- Improvements shall improve the aesthetics of the District.

Ineligible Participants and Activities

This program is not available for publically owned properties or for properties primarily in residential use with the exception of multi-family units consisting of four or more units. The following work is ineligible under this program.

- Façade improvements which primarily consist of design elements and colors resulting in a building which essentially becomes a corporate logo.
- Buildings with monolithic facades facing any street will not be considered for assistance unless the façade is modified per the design criteria above.
- Interior rehabilitation.
- Abrasive cleaning of exterior brick surfaces.
- Roof and re-roofing unless the roof is a prominent façade element which is visible from the street or sidewalk.
- Structural foundations.
- Non-permanent fixtures.
- Security bars.
- New construction or additions.
- Building and ground mounted signs; although, placement and design of signage will be considered as part of the evaluation of any FIP application.
- Site improvements including sidewalks, curb, and gutter, and planters.
- Any work initiated prior to necessary program approvals.