

MISSOULA REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

This narrative outlines the Façade Improvement Program (FIP) and the criteria the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) uses for evaluating applications for FIP assistance in all of the City of Missoula's Urban Renewal Districts (URDs) which have been found to have adequate funding capacity for the program. The availability of the FIP in any of Missoula's URDs will be indicated on the [MRA web page](#). Upon initial contact, MRA staff will relate any special conditions and priorities for each district. Review this information carefully before finalizing your façade renovation plans or submitting an Application form.

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 four 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. FIP projects will reflect Missoula Design Excellence Guidelines.

Basic Rules for All MRA Programs:

1. **MRA BOARD APPROVAL BEFORE CONSTRUCTION:** Failure to receive approval of a completed Application before construction begins WILL affect the Applicant's eligibility for Façade Improvement Program assistance. Upon request and submission to MRA staff of adequate information about the project, the MRA Board of Commissioners may formally waive this rule.
2. **MRA STAFF ASSIGNED TO APPLICATION:** All Applications must be assigned to an MRA staff person prior to being submitted. It is essential that the applicant communicate with the assigned staff person during the application process. FIP Applications submitted to the general MRA email or without prior communication and full knowledge of the MRA staff will not proceed through the process.
3. **APPLICATION SUBMITTAL DEADLINE:** Applications and all information requested by MRA staff that are received after the submittal deadline will not be placed on the agenda for consideration by the MRA Board of Commissioners. The submittal deadline is 14 days prior to the MRA Board meeting considering the project.
4. **MRA BOARD DECISIONS ARE FINAL:** The MRA Board of Commissioners will not reconsider Applications or projects experiencing cost overruns after FIP assistance is approved. All cost and design information within the Application must be thorough and complete prior to submittal. Significant change in design after an Application is approved must be accepted by the MRA Board. Design changes might not be accepted so it is important that design is fully thought out at the time an Application is submitted.

Note: MRA and the City of Missoula encourage the use of local contractors and labor, especially contractors which that utilize formal apprentices. The program for the City’s projects can be viewed at: <https://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/2669/Apprenticeship-Program>

MRA Background Information:

The City of Missoula established the Missoula Redevelopment Agency in 1978 to manage urban renewal districts in the City pursuant to their individual urban renewal plans and to administer the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in accordance with state urban renewal laws and annual City budget. The City has created seven Urban Renewal Districts (URDs): URD I in 1978, URD II in 1991, URD III in 2000, Front Street URD in 2007, Riverfront Triangle URD in 2008, North Reserve–Scott Street URD in 2014, and the Hellgate URD in 2014. URD I (“Downtown URD”) expired in 2005. The five-member governing Board of Commissioners (MRA Board) that oversees MRA’s activities is appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council.

Each of Missoula’s Urban Renewal Plans 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. To facilitate accomplishing those goals, the MRA Board adopted guidelines for the Façade Improvement Program in Urban Renewal District III in 2009. It was later expanded to any district which has adequate funding capacity and has budgeted for the program.

The intent of the FIP is to improve the urban core and encourage redevelopment through the use of tax increment financing (TIF) funds as specified by Montana Urban Renewal Law 7-15-42 and 43, MCA. The basis for creating the FIP is clear in State Statute. Examples of specific applicable sections of the Law are as follows:

- 7-15-4206 MCA – 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 MCA – Rehabilitation – carrying out plans for a program of voluntary or compulsory repair and rehabilitation of buildings or other improvements;
- 7-15-4233 MCA – 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 MCA – Costs that may be paid by Tax Increment Financing (TIF) – costs incurred in connection with the redevelopment activities allowed under 7-15-4233;

Program Guidelines

The FIP assistance is in the form of grants that are available to commercial, mixed-use and multi-family (four or more units) properties within a designated URD. It is intended to help make substantial changes to an existing building pursuant to FIP eligibility and design criteria. The FIP is not available for publicly owned properties, 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 program criteria, will be presented to the MRA Board for

consideration. Each project is considered unique so the MRA Board's approval is on a case-by-case basis.

- Grants for any individual project may not exceed 25% of the total project cost of the approved project, or \$50,000, whichever amount is less; thereby ensuring significant private investment in any given project.
- The total project cost is defined as the total investment in the renovation of the building and is not limited to investment in the façade. Interior renovation, new machinery and equipment to be used onsite, and interior utility upgrades (electrical, gas, communication, etc.) may be included in the total project cost.
- In the event the MRA Board finds that an amount exceeding \$50,000 is merited due to the size of the project, the magnitude of its impact on the built environment, extraordinary public benefit, and/or substantial new tax generation, it may, at its sole discretion, approve additional funds for the project through an interest-free loan to be repaid over a period of up to 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.

Eligible Improvements

Program assistance is limited to building facades visible from a public street. Improvements must 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 for people of all abilities and create a building façade which conveys permanence and improves the overall aesthetics of the URD. Improvements shall incorporate green building techniques and energy efficiency measures where feasible. Improvements considered non-conforming or inappropriate under municipal zoning, building codes, or the Design Excellence Standards shall not be considered.

The following elements may be eligible for assistance through the FIP if, at a minimum, the design criteria is adhered to and if they are 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 redevelopment priorities within the particular district in which the project is located.

- Substantial restoration, renovation or re-siding of building facades.
- Painting, masonry cleaning, brick repointing.
- Appropriately scaled window display areas which facilitate pedestrian viewing.
- Window replacement and window framing appropriately scaled to the building and visible from the street.
- Awnings or canopies that can be both functional and visually appealing.
- Permanently affixed trellises and pergolas to enhance portions of the façade.
- Exterior lighting affixed to the building that is visually appealing, improves safety, and

appropriately illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of the building facade.

- Relocating or replacing exterior electrical connections that distract from the façade's attractiveness.
- Street grade building entrances which enhance pedestrian activity along the street and improve access for people with physical impairments..
- Attached decks to be used for outside business activities.
- Increased energy efficiency resulting from upgrade of materials in eligible façade activities.
- In the event landscaping or street trees cannot be provided within the right-of-way, landscaping on private property and within the property facing the street which exceeds the landscaping needed to meet code requirements may be eligible. 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 preapproved by the MRA staff before it is approved by the MRA Board.

Ineligible Participants and Activities

This program is not available for publicly owned properties or for properties primarily in residential use with the exception of multi-family units consisting of four or more units. The following are examples of work that 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 herein.
- Any interior rehabilitation or utility changes.
- Abrasive cleaning of exterior brick surfaces.
- Roof and re-roofing unless the roof is a significant and prominent façade element which is visible from the street or sidewalk. An example of eligible roof work is removal of a mansard roof and replacement with an alternate acceptable to MRA.
- Structural foundations.
- Non-permanent fixtures.
- Security bars.
- New construction or additions, except entrances to facilitate handicapped access.
- Building and ground mounted signs; although, placement and design of signage will be considered as part of the evaluation of any FIP Application.
- Private site improvements including sidewalks, curb and gutter, and planters.
- Any work initiated prior to approval of the Application.

FIP Submittal Requirements

The FIP is intended to provide the additional funding that might be needed to substantially improve a building's façade to meet the standards identified in this program, commonly referred to as "but for" funding. FIP applicants must use the MRA general Application. In addition to the material required in the Application, FIP applicants must also provide:

- A picture or pictures of the current façade.
- 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. The enhanced improvements must meet the goals and criteria of 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.

Design Criteria

In addition to direction given by the Design Excellence Guidelines, the following criteria will be specifically 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 funding for any project 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. Wood siding or other materials with a limited life span such as EFIS (synthetic stucco) will generally not be eligible, but could be approved based on an accompanying written assessment of the permanence of the proposed product.
- Improvements should increase energy efficiency of the building whenever possible.
- Where possible, primary entrances should be relocated to face the adjacent street.
- 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 URD and the immediate neighborhood.