



# Madison Heights Southend Downtown Development Authority

## SIGN GRANT PROGRAM

### GUIDELINES

The City of Madison Heights Southend Downtown Development Authority Sign Grant Program is intended to encourage a high standard of business signage to complement the architectural character of the DDA area.

**Program Description:** Subject to funding availability, the DDA may approve and provide reimbursement of fifty percent (50%) of the cost to design, construct and install a sign, and one hundred percent (100%) of the cost to remove a non-conforming or dilapidated sign, up to a maximum grant of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00).

**Who is Eligible?** Only existing businesses, which own or occupy a building located within the DDA District are eligible to receive sign grant funds. For purposes of the Sign Grant Program, a business is considered an existing business if it has been in continuous operation from a building located within the DDA District for not less than twelve (12) months. A business which is not an existing business under the Sign Grant Program may apply for a Sign Grant and be approved for a sign grant; however, no sign grant funds shall be disbursed to the applicant until the business has completed twelve (12) months of continuous operation from a building located in the DDA District. A business may not receive more than two grants in any ten (10) year period (one for a ground sign and one for a wall sign). In the case of a shopping center, one (1) ground sign for the center shall be eligible, along with one (1) wall sign for each eligible individual business, within the same ten (10) year limitation.

**Design Guidelines:** All sign designs, construction, installation and demolition must conform to the City of Madison Heights Sign Ordinance, the building code and the DDA Sign Design Guidelines. **Signs funded under this program may not exceed ninety percent (90%) of the sign area otherwise permitted under the sign ordinance for the sign. Additionally, ground signs shall be monument type signs a maximum of six (6) feet in height.**

**Applications:** Applications will be accepted on a quarterly basis. At the beginning of each quarter, the applications from the previous quarter will be reviewed and considered for grant approval.

**Approval Criteria:** Approval of applications shall be based on the funds available with the highest priority given to applications in Category 1, then in descending order with applications in Category 4 having the lowest priority. Within each category, applications will be considered on a first come – first serve basis. The DDA Board uses discretion in awarding these sign grants, and has the right not to approve any application. In addition, new signage approved through this program must be properly maintained at all times.

Category 1. **Non-Conforming Sign Removal.** The removal of any non-conforming sign or any pole sign over six feet in height.

- Category 2. **Dilapidated or Non-Conforming Sign Removal and Replacement.** The removal and replacement of non-conforming, worn out, rusted, broken and poorly maintained signs.
- Category 3. **Other signs.** New signs or conforming signs whose owners wish to upgrade the appearance and/or style of the sign.
- Category 4. **Previous Recipients.** Businesses who have already received a sign grant in the preceding ten (10) years.

## Procedure

1. Contact the Madison Heights Southend DDA by calling the Community Development Department at 248-583-0831, to receive a Sign Grant Application **before** applying for a permit, any work is done, or any signs are installed.
2. Complete the Sign Grant application and attach all required information and items.
3. Submit your Sign Grant Application with all required items to the Community Development Department. Applications, submitted with all required items, will be reviewed by the Economic Development Coordinator. The Economic Development Coordinator may grant approval of the application if, in her opinion, there are no issues requiring consideration by the DDA Board and the total grant amount is \$1,000 or less. Grant requests in excess of \$1,000 shall require review and approval by the DDA Board.
4. A completed sign grant application must be submitted for approval and considered by the Economic Development Coordinator (and DDA Board for grants in excess of \$1,000) before the proposed sign is constructed or installed. The DDA will not approve a sign grant for a sign that has been constructed and installed prior to consideration by the DDA.
5. Based on funding availability, individuals submitting designs that are approved by the DDA will receive a Sign Grant Funding Commitment Letter from the DDA. **(You or your sign contractor must also complete and submit a Sign Permit Application before any sign can be installed).**
6. Following receipt of the Sign Grant Funding Commitment letter, arrange for sign construction and installation in accordance with the approved sign design. **(NOTE: The DDA must authorize any changes from the approved design in advance, in writing, or the DDA may withdraw its funding commitment).**
7. Upon completion of installation, notify the DDA that the sign has been installed and provide the proof that the sign has been paid for in full with a paid invoice. This proof would serve as your request for payment. Verification that the contractor has been paid in full will be done before reimbursement to the applicant will be disbursed.
8. The DDA will disburse Sign Grant funds directly to the applicant following an inspection to verify that the sign is consistent with the approved Sign Grant application plans, and verification that the Community Development Department has approved the construction in full compliance with the permit.
9. Approved sign grant funds are available to the applicant for six (6) months after grant approval. If no request for payment has been received following this period, the applicant forfeits any claim to the grant and may not reapply for a period of ten (10) years.

## **Sign Grant Program - Design Guidelines**

Business signs are one of the most prominent visual elements in a downtown area and are an integral part of doing business. Signs provide the individual business with identification, giving information about the products sold and project the image of the business. The main purpose of the business sign, which should be foremost in mind when designing a sign, is to help the customer find the store. Common problems with many downtown signs are their excessive size and inappropriate placement on buildings. These signs produce visual clutter and tend to cancel each other out. As a visual element, each business sign should enhance the image of the entire downtown as well as the individual business. A good business sign should express a simple, clear message. Graphic symbols and icons are generally effective means of clear uncluttered communication. Lettering styles, color of sign and sign materials should harmoniously complement the facade on which the sign is placed. In addition, the size, location and the design of the sign are important in effectively communicating to the customer. A variety of different sign types may be appropriate in the DDA area, including, but not necessarily limited to:

1. Wall Signs
2. Window Signs
3. Signs on Awnings
4. Ground Signs

### **1. Wall Signs**

The location and size of signs on any building should complement the architectural character of that particular structure. A sign should never be so large as to overpower a facade, nor obscure a building's architectural features. Usually, the sign and the building's facade should work together to advertise the business. A sign will best communicate its message if it is compatible with its surroundings in both architectural detail and color.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a. Wall signs should usually be located above the entry to the store in order to relate to the pedestrian. The best areas for signs are those placed on the facade, which contain continuous, flat surfaces void of windows, doors, or architectural details. When a building has a full width lintel strip or signboard as part of its facade, locate the sign directly on it.
- b. The maximum number of permanent signs on the building facade per storefront should be two. When a facade contains more than one sign, they should complement each other in shape, color, size, and lettering style.
- c. The message on signs should be kept simple. Keep wording to a minimum so that it can easily and quickly be read.
- d. Signs should complement the building color scheme.
- e. Signs that are mounted on roofs are prohibited by City Ordinance.
- f. Flashing and moving signs are prohibited by City Ordinance.

### **2. Window Signs**

Window signs can be convenient ways of providing pedestrian-scaled signs downtown. Permanent window and door signs are usually painted on glass or constructed of applied vinyl letters. Gold leaf or neon can also make attractive window and door signs. Quality of workmanship and construction are vital to the success of the sign and its advertised business. A

simple, well-made sign speaks far better of an establishment than an extravagant sign that is overbearing or poorly detailed.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a. Window signs should be applied so that they do not obscure visibility.
- b. Permanent window and door signs should usually not obscure the display area of the business. Such signs should complement other signs on the facade.
- c. By City Ordinance, allowable window signs are limited to twenty-five percent (25%) of the window area and must be on the inside of the window.

### **3. Signs on Awnings**

Signs on awnings can be viable solutions to providing identification for a business. Considering the cost as well as the lifespan of modern fabrics used for awnings, these signs can provide effective and long lasting advertising. Signs attached or incorporated into more permanent types of awning materials can also be effective communicators.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a. Signs on awnings should complement the building's architecture and color scheme.
- b. Signs on awnings should constitute a single area of the awning, not the entire awning.
- c. Signs on awnings should be located on the vertical portion of the awning for maximum visibility.
- d. Only the sign area may be backlit, not the entire awning.

### **4. Ground Signs**

The location and size of any free standing ground sign should complement the architectural character of the building which houses the business it is advertising. The sign and the building's facade should work together. A sign will best communicate its message if it is compatible with its surroundings in color and design.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a. All ground signs must conform to the City Sign Ordinance.
- b. The size and placement of ground signs must be compatible with the size of the lot.
- c. The message on ground signs should be kept simple. Keep wording to a minimum (business name, address number and product only) so it can be easily and quickly read.
- d. Flashing and moving signs are prohibited by City Ordinance.

### **5. Sign Color, Material and Lettering Styles**

The color, material, and lettering style used in signs should contribute to, and be compatible with, the overall character and color of the facade. If well designed, the color, material and lettering styles of signs add interest and variety while, at the same time, communicate a clear message to the pedestrians and customers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a. Signs should use colors, materials and lettering styles that complement the building. In general, limit each sign to a maximum of three colors, two materials and one lettering style.
- b. Where original sign colors, materials, lettering style and placement on the building can be documented use the original as a guide in the design of new signs.
- c. A wooden sign with raised letters, metal signs, painted signs, neon, or gold leafing are all appropriate in certain instances downtown.
- d. New signs should have the lettering as well as overall sign dimensions scaled to its location.
- e. Nationally distributed heat-formed signs are usually inappropriate. If they are used, their color, lettering style and lighting should complement the building.
- f. There are many letter styles available. As a rule, sign lettering should complement the architectural style of the building and type of business. It should be easy to read.

### **6. Illumination of Signs**

Illumination of signs is necessary for advertising at night. Properly done, illuminated signs can greatly enhance a business after dark and assist in attracting customers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a. Exposed lights which produce glare are not permitted.
- b. Avoid exposed electrical fixtures and conduit or wire. If this is not possible, design these elements to be a part of the sign or paint them to match the background.
- c. The background and sides of illuminated signs should be opaque and/or matching in color to either the front of the sign or the color of the building. This will ensure that only the lettering and logo are illuminated.
- d. Any backlit area of an awning is considered signage. Only the actual sign area should be backlit.



# Madison Heights Southend Downtown Development Authority

## SIGN GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION

1. Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Business Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Building Address: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Building Owner: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Building Owner's Address: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Building Owner's Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Zoning: \_\_\_\_\_
9. The Following Items Must Be Provided: (check all enclosed items)
  - ☐ a) Contractor's Cost Estimate \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ b) Sign Design with all Specifications (Total Size, Dimensions, Colors, Materials & Location on Building)
  - ☐ c) Color Photo of the Building Facade or Existing Ground Sign
  - ☐ d) Brief Description and History of Business
10. Sign Type:    Category 1 ☐    Category 2 ☐    Category 3 ☐    Category 4 ☐  
                                 (Non-Conforming    (Dilapidated/Non-Conforming    (Other/New)    (Previous Recipient)  
                                 Removal)    Removal & Replacement)
11. Total Grant Amount Requested: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Total Investment by Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

The Undersigned Applicant Affirms and Understands That:

- a. The information submitted herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.
- b. I have read and understand the DDA Sign Grant Program Guidelines and the DDA Business Sign(s) Design Guidelines and agree to abide by these conditions.
- c. I understand that receipt of a Sign Grant Funding Commitment Letter from the DDA does not constitute application or approval for a City of Madison Heights sign permit.
- d. I understand that the proposed sign cannot be installed until the DDA Board and/or staff reviews and acts upon this Sign Grant Program application.
- e. I understand that any changes made to the approved Sign without the approval of the DDA will be cause for the DDA to withdraw it's funding commitment.
- f. I understand that once the new signage is installed, it must be properly maintained at all times.

Applicant Signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Submit the completed application with items 9 (a), (b), (c), and (d) to:

**Madison Heights Southend DDA, 300 W. Thirteen Mile Rd., Madison Heights, MI 48071**

Please call 248-583-0831 if you have any questions.

