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**MEMO**

**SUBJECT: DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT GRANT PROPOSAL**

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**Item:** Discussion/Action Item

**Department:** DDA

**Presented By:** Maggie Dimov, Economic Development Director/DDA

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The purpose of this memorandum is to propose changes to the Stone Mountain DDA Facade Grant Program and evaluate the uses of the streetscape improvement funds. The Downtown Development Authority may support qualified economic development projects with funds for certain physical improvements to eligible buildings within the district. These funds are granted only in consideration of major capital investments by private enterprises that may otherwise be cost-prohibitive due to the age, condition, or unique characteristics of the building, or any other conditions that might prevent a business from occupying space. The proposed program seeks to increase economic activity in Downtown Stone Mountain by incentivizing the creation of safe and attractive spaces that house viable businesses.

**Façade Grant**

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) created the Facade Improvement Grant Program to assist business and property owners with improvements to storefronts in the business district.

Fifty percent (50%) of the total cost of projects approved for grants will be funded one dollar for each dollar spent by the grantee, up to a maximum grant of \$5,000.00. The cost of projects exceeding \$5,000.00 are eligible for grants, but the additional cost will be the responsibility of the grantee. Projects are awarded on a first come, first served basis.

The program is administered by the DDA and currently has \$100,000.00 allocated to the fund. Final grant amounts are determined by the DDA Board after recommendation by the DDA Director.

**Proposal:**

Staff proposes to update/convert the Facade Improvement Grant Program into a Downtown Enhancement Grant.

The funds could be used for exterior improvements, both structural and superficial, including but not limited to:

- Appropriate signage
- Awnings
- Exterior painting and Façade improvements
- Door, and storefront or back entry feature restorations and changes
- Landscaping
- Window replacement, coverings and tinting
- Murals
- Patio shading, patio additions or expansions
- Outdoor seating
- Exterior lighting, including string lighting.
- Exterior planters
- Additional projects may be considered with proper justification.

Not Eligible Project Examples:

- General maintenance other than painting
- Roofs
- Personal property equipment
- Vinyl siding
- Indoor renovations
- Security systems
- Nonpermanent fixtures
- Billboards
- Equipment rentals
- Fees and permits.

**1. The following rules would apply to all grant funds:**

- a. The business is physically located within the downtown development area of the City of Stone Mountain.
- b. The business possesses a valid business license issued by and that was in good standing with the City of Stone Mountain as of August 1, 2024; Applicants must not be delinquent on payments of any City of Stone Mountain taxes, fees, or fines or have any active city code enforcement violations at the time of the application.
- c. Priority will be given to renovations designed to increase pedestrian activity and economic vitality.
- d. Proposed work must follow all applicable local zoning, life safety, and building codes.

- e. Requests for funds must be made via forms provided by the DDA at least two weeks prior to the next regularly scheduled DDA Board meeting, where applicants must present the project in person. Building tenants must have the property owner's permission to apply.
- f. Work may not begin until designs are approved by the DDA Board and the requirements for all applicable local permits are met.
- g. The DDA requires a dollar-for-dollar match, and will typically cap the DDA funding to \$10,000.00, however, exceptions may be granted to increase project funding above the set cap for reasons deemed compelling by the DDA.
- h. Funds from the DDA will be provided only after all work is verified to conform with the approved project plans and after a review of project invoices.
- i. \*Projects are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. Funding levels for the program are determined by the DDA Board on an annual basis. Once funding is exhausted, applicants must wait until the next fiscal year to apply, unless the DDA Board elects to allocate additional funds to the program.
- j. The grant request is subject to denial if all applicable procedures are not followed.
- k. Grant is void if approved work has not begun within six months of approval by the DDA, unless an extension is requested.
- l. Construction, installation, and maintenance of the project is solely the responsibility of the applicant.
- m. The DDA Board may, at its sole discretion, deny the funding of any application or project.
- n. Upon reasonable request by the DDA, update the application and document submissions, including certification of completion of the proposed project work, paid receipts, and lien waivers.
- o. Upon advanced notice by the DDA, provide the DDA access to conduct a site visit of the project during the grant term.

**2. Minimum qualifying application and document submissions that businesses must satisfy as a prerequisite to obtain a grant from the DDA:**

- a. Name of the business, including name of legal entity and trade name, if any.
- b. Contact information about business owners and addresses of business.
- c. A brief statement of project work and need, including, but not limited to copies of drawings, plans, specifications; identification of all contractors or vendors; timelines of commencement and completion; and outline of all required permits or other approvals.
- d. Grant amount requested and intended use of grant funds.
- e. If applicable, date and proof of incorporation with the State of Georgia (e.g., copy of Articles of Incorporation or screen shot of filing status Georgia Secretary of State website at [ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch](http://ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch)).
- f. Date of issuance and proof of current business license issued by the City of Stone Mountain.
- g. Proof of location and length of operation of the business within the downtown development area of the City of Stone Mountain if different from current business license issued by the City of Stone Mountain (e.g., copy of lease agreement or utility bill).
- h. Statement as to ownership or lease rights in the physical location of business, including whether the business is in good standing and compliance with any mortgage or rent obligations as of August 1, 2024.
- i. Consent of landlord and/or property owner of the physical location of business, if applicable.

Staff welcome the DDA's feedback regarding the proposed changes and will look forward to discussing these at the next meeting.

Sincerely,

Maggie Dimov  
Economic Development Director