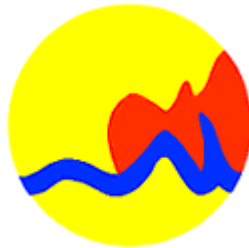


**City of Grand Rapids**  
**Downtown Development Authority**  
**Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program**

**Program Guidelines**

As approved by the Downtown Development Authority  
January 10, 2001



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## **Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program**

Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority

### **A. Background and Purpose:**

Under the provision of the City Charter and the City Code, it is the responsibility of each property owner to properly maintain all adjacent sidewalks and areas. The City requires that the sidewalk be constructed of concrete and be maintained to meet basic safety requirements. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has assisted in funding several public projects, which resulted in the improvement of public right-of-way to design standards that far exceed basic City standards. Examples include the recent Monroe Center project, the Louis Campau Promenade, Lyon Square, several brick street restoration projects and many street lighting projects. Some property owners may wish to improve their property by improving the streetscape adjacent to it. The DDA has concluded that it wished to encourage property owners to upgrade their adjacent sidewalk areas to meet the higher design standards set by the public projects listed above.

The purpose of this Program is to provide a financial incentive for property owners to improve the adjacent sidewalks and other public pedestrian walkways.

Program objectives include:

1. To improve the appearance and usability of sidewalks and pedestrian ways.
2. To improve the safety of downtown by improving walking surfaces that have deteriorated.
3. To improve the safety and general appearance of downtown through the installation and operation of snowmelt systems.
4. To foster the implementation of the City's Downtown Streetscape Plan and the DDA Plan.
5. Generally, to encourage the continued growth and expansion of downtown.

### **B. Assistance to be provided:**

To meet the objectives of the Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) will provide a grant to those property owners eligible for assistance as established by the following program guidelines. The program operates as a matching grant program, with the DDA grant covering a portion of the cost of streetscape improvement project. The property owner must agree to cover the remainder of the project cost.

### **C. Project Eligibility:**

The program offers assistance to the owners of buildings within the DDA Development Area Boundaries as shown on Map 1. Although all public sidewalks and walkways within the

Development Area are eligible for assistance, the extent of the DDA's participation will be limited to its annual appropriations for the program.

**D. Eligible Expenses:**

A property owner is legally responsible for the maintenance of all contiguous sidewalks, including repair, removal and replacement. If a grant is approved by the DDA, the DDA would agree to reimburse a property owner a portion of the expenses involved in improving sidewalks and other features of the streetscape above that required by normal City standards. Grant funds made available through the program may be used for the following purposes, which have been found to be consistent with the purpose of the program and with the law:

1. Removal of existing sidewalks and street furniture.
2. Installation of a new sidewalk, which meets the design criteria as described below.
3. Installation of streetscape improvements, such as decorative pavers, street trees, pedestrian lights, etc. which meets the design criteria as described below.
4. Installation of snowmelt systems.
5. Design and inspection fees.

The following expenses are not eligible:

1. Utility relocation.
2. Relocation of mechanical equipment.
3. Areaway removal, or rebuilding, (The DDA also funds the Areaway Removal Program – map be considered for certain of these expenses.).

In some cases, the reconstruction of light-wells or stairs providing access to the lower level of a building may be eligible.

**E. Available Funding:**

The DDA expects to allocate annually grant funds, to be made available for the Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program. Assistance provided may not exceed:

- 35% of project cost, of
- \$350 per linear foot of areaway filled, or
- \$35,000 pre property, whichever is less.

If the property owner is also a recipient of a grant under the DDA's Areaway Fill Program, the combined grants shall be limited to the amounts shown above, except that the maximum combined amounts pre linear foot of areaway removal shall be \$500 and the maximum combined grants shall be \$50,000 pre property.

## **F. Application Procedure:**

Applicants may wish to discuss their project informally with the staff of the Grand Rapids Planning Department prior to completing a formal application. Applications will be received and reviewed by the program advisory board. The advisory board will meet periodically as necessary to review applications and forward recommendation to the DDA. The DDA has final authority to approve or deny funding of each application. A non-refundable application fee is required with the application.

## **G. Program Advisory Board**

The DDA's Incentives Program advisory Board oversees the administration of the Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program. The advisory board consists of five members appointed by the DDA. The advisory board has the following responsibilities:

1. To develop and publish evaluation criteria to be used to evaluate applications for assistance. The proposed evaluation criteria and subsequent changes to them must be submitted to the DDA for review and approval.
2. To evaluate requests for assistance under the Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program, and forward recommendation to the DDA for final consideration.
3. To report periodically to the DDA and City Commission on the status of projects assisted through the program and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

## **H. Conditions for Financial Assistance:**

The use of public funds made available through the Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program is limited to specific public purposes. Program funds must be available before grant fund commitments can be made. In order to ensure that the program achieves these purposes, applications are required to meet the following minimum conditions:

### **General Conditions (Threshold Criteria):**

1. Project must be located in the public right-of-way or be dedicated for public usage.
2. Project must be located in the DDA Development Area Boundaries.
3. Plans and specification for the project must be prepared by a licensed professional engineer or architect and submitted to the City Engineer for approval prior to construction. Project must be designed to implement streetscape consistent with the City's Downtown Streetscape Plan or an equivalent if approved by the City's Design team.
4. Program funds must be used exclusively for eligible activities described in Section D, above.
5. Assistance request must not exceed:
  - 35% of project cost, of
  - \$350 per linear foot of areaway filled, or
  - \$35,000 pre property, whichever is less.

**Administrative conditions:**

1. The chain of title must show the property owner's legitimate ownership interest in the property. All outstanding mortgage loans, land contracts, deeds, etc. must be recorded with the Kent County Register of Deeds.
2. Financial assistance will not be permitted if taxes, special assessment, liens or other debts remain unpaid at the time of closing.
3. The Planning Department must review and approve all development to determine their consistency with design standards set fourth in the Streetscape Plan or current administrative guidelines.
4. All work must be carried out in compliance with applicable building codes and the standards of the City Engineer.
5. An agreement in a form prepared by the DDA must be executed between the application and the DDA. Any offer of assistance will only be effective upon execution of the agreement by both the applicant and by the DDA.

**Distribution of funds:** If an application is approved by the DDA, funds will be distributed in increments similar to construction draws. The application should out-line the schedule for when "draws" of money would be needed based on the proposed budget of a project.

Initial seed money may be distributed based on acceptable collateral, matching funds, or other security from the applicant. Subsequent requests by the applicant for funding will be based on progress made and the release of waiver of any liens associated with work done to date. The applicant would be responsible to show adequate progress and matching equities prior to approval of draw requests.