

## **DDA Policy Statement – Use of Renovation Funds to Encourage Retail Development in the Core Business District**

**WHEREAS**, the DDA has created a Facade Grant Program; and

**WHEREAS**, one of the purposes of the Rochester DDA is to improve and promote the retail and commercial environment within its boundaries; and

**WHEREAS**, recommendations contained in the National Main Street Center's Resource Team Report and Training Manual, the Market Assessment and Development Plan, the DDA Master Development Plan, and the DDA Development Plan and Tax Increment Financing Plan stress the importance of first floor retail and commercial activities as vital to the revitalization of the downtown district; and

**WHEREAS**, facade restoration and building improvements will promote business and trade in downtown Rochester; and

**WHEREAS**, the core retail and commercial district within the DDA is the area east of the west alley and west of the east alley of Main Street from University Drive south to the bridge at South Hill; and

**WHEREAS**, the DDA has created certain guidelines to be used to determine eligibility for funding from the Facade Grant Program.

**NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that in the core retail and commercial district of the DDA:

1. That applications for funding which otherwise follow the design guidelines established by the DDA, should be given priority for a project that is or will be used on the street level for retail activity.
2. That the DDA may decline a request for funding for a building restoration or improvement where the street level of the building is or will be used solely for a service or office use and does not directly relate to an improvement to be used to conduct retail trade on the street level of the building.

Adopted 4/16/87 by the DDA, Revised 5/17/00.

## **DDA FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

In 1985, the City of Rochester Downtown Development Authority established the Facade Improvement Program (FIP) to encourage appropriate improvements to the exterior of downtown commercial buildings and sites.

The DDA finds that the creation and maintenance of an attractive downtown is a public purpose, which can be achieved in part through improvements to building facades. Downtown Rochester is pivotal to the economic health of the greater Rochester community because its condition, whether perceived or actual, plays a large part in the impression people have of the area. Downtown Rochester is the focal point of the community, and any neglect will create an image of a deteriorating economic base. As a result, potential businesses may be discouraged from locating in downtown Rochester, and existing property owners may defer maintenance and reinvestment in the real estate.

The intent of the FIP is to strengthen the economic viability of downtown Rochester by providing financial incentives for improving the exterior appearance of its buildings. The FIP provides an opportunity to preserve the architectural heritage of downtown Rochester and enhance the unique atmosphere that downtown Rochester provides to the greater Rochester community. It is important to the aesthetic enhancement of a downtown that building design treatments be compatible with each other. The DDA believes the best approach is through the preservation of a building's original architectural features.

The dominant emphasis of the program is the preservation of downtown Rochester's architectural heritage. This preservation-based philosophy is a key component of the National MainStreet Program that has been the backbone of Rochester's Downtown Revitalization plans since the DDA was formed in 1983.

These guidelines are designed to assist you with your Facade Improvement Program project. After reviewing these guidelines and the FIP packet of information, contact the DDA office at 248-656-0060 and set an appointment to discuss your project.

## DDA Facade Improvement Program Guidelines

**Program Description** - Subject to funding availability and project approval, the DDA may rebate up to 20% of the cost of exterior building facade and site improvements, 10% of certain professional fees, plus a bonus of 5% of the expense of permanent interior and code compliance improvements such as HVAC. Except as otherwise noted in these guidelines, the total rebate for a Standard Facade Improvement Grant may not exceed \$10,000 per project or 20% of the cost of exterior facade improvements, whichever is less.

**Standard Facade Improvement Grant** – This type of grant (rebate) is given for work that is consistent with the Rochester DDA Facade Improvement Program Guidelines and the National Main Street Storefront Guidelines.

**Historic Restoration Project Bonus** – If sufficient funds are available, and based upon a separate vote of approval by the DDA Board, a rebate may be increased by 50% above that awarded for the Standard Facade Improvement Grant. However this restoration of the front facade must be carried out under the strict adherence to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

**Who is Eligible Applicant** – Any owner and or tenant of a building located within the DDA district may apply for FIP funds. Public agencies are also eligible to apply for FIP funds.

**What is an Eligible Building** – Any existing building located within the DDA district, which is owned and used by an eligible applicant, is considered eligible for FIP funds. Newly constructed buildings and additions to existing structures are also eligible subject to funding availability and limitations listed under *Eligible Exterior/Facade Improvements*.

Where a building under one ownership is divided into more than one unit for purposes of commercial tenancy, each separate unit that has an individual storefront facade and an independent ground floor entry shall be eligible to receive FIP funds. These multiple tenant facade projects shall not exceed \$10,000 per unit and \$30,000 for the entire building, subject to funding availability, for a Standard Facade Improvement Grant.

If the owner or principal tenant of a building which has and uses storefront facade frontage of more than sixty (60) feet applies for FIP funding, the DDA, at its discretion, may award additional funds as it determines reasonable, up to but not exceeding a total of \$20,000 for any one project.

**Project Financing Arrangements** – The applicant may secure their financing in any manner they choose – commercial mortgage, signature loan, home equity loan, personal or business line of credit, family loan or personal resources. A business planning a substantial renovation to the building that they own and in which they operate, may wish to consider long-term, low-cost financing available from the U. S. Small Business Administration. You can call their Detroit office for more information at 313.226.6075.

**Design Guidelines** – Projects approved for Facade Improvement Program funds must comply with the DDA’s Design Guidelines and all applicable City of Rochester building codes and ordinances. All projects will need a building permit and most will require site plan approval by the Rochester Planning Commission.

**Funding Priority Policy**-The Rochester DDA has set forth priority rules and guidelines to administer the distribution of limited facade grant funds to **projects that most closely adhere to the true intent of the Facade Improvement Program**. The DDA, wanting to achieve the most impact with a limited amount of available funds, will provide grants for projects based on the priority list below.

Priorities (*subject to funding availability*)

1. Historic Restoration Project (*Carried out under adherence to the U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standard for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.*)
2. Standard Facade Improvement on a Historic Building (*To be done consistent with DDA Facade Improvement Guidelines and the National MainStreet Storefront Guidelines.*)
3. Standard Facade Improvement on a Non Historic Building (*To be done consistent with DDA Facade Improvement Guidelines and the National MainStreet Storefront Guidelines.*)
4. New Construction and Additions to any Existing Building. (*To be done consistent with DDA Facade Improvement Guidelines and the National MainStreet Storefront Guidelines.*)

**Note:** In the DDA district's core retail area (*east of the west alley and west of the east alley paralleling Main Street from University to the Clinton River Bridge*), the DDA wishes to encourage the expansion of retail uses in downtown Rochester. Because of this desire to encourage street level retail use of buildings in this area they may decline a request for FIP funding when the street level of the building to be renovated will be used for service, office or other non-retail uses.

**Eligible Exterior/Facade Improvements** – 20% rebate.

Materials and wages for improvements to the front, rear and side facades of eligible buildings: Facades of additions to existing building and the exterior portion of newly constructed buildings, subject to funding availability:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carpentry</li><li>• Masonry Cleaning</li><li>• Building Removal/Demolition</li><li>• Storefront Construction</li><li>• Window Repair/Replacement</li><li>• Awnings</li><li>• Doors/Entryways</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lighting</li><li>• Signs</li><li>• Painting</li><li>• Roof repair (when completed in conjunction with a significant renovation project and when the roof is distinctive element of the facade and is visible from the street)</li></ul>
--	---

**Eligible Site Improvements** – 20 % rebate.

Incident to and when completed in conjunction with extensive exterior facade improvements, the DDA Board may add up to 20% of the cost of materials and wages for:

- Landscaping, sidewalk construction/replacement, lighting, parking lot development, and other pedestrian amenities on private property.
- Improvements to the public right of way as required by the City of Rochester such as sidewalk replacement, curbs, unless such improvements are part of a Special Assessment District.
- Public infrastructure improvements as required by the City of Rochester to meet code requirements for interior building improvements. For example, water lines installed for sprinkler systems or storm sewers.
- Site amenities as recommended by the Downtown Alley Master Plan and other applicable DDA and City of Rochester plans.

**Eligible Professional Service Fees** – 10% rebate.  
Fees for architecture, design and engineering services.

**Eligible Interior Renovation Expenses** – 5% rebate.  
This rebate is only for the renovation of existing structures and does not apply to new buildings.

- Improvements required by City of Rochester health and safety codes such as handicap access and bathrooms, sprinklers.
- Permanent real estate improvements such as HVAC, plumbing, electrical and other items taxed as real estate.
- Flooring if in conjunction with items above.
- Ceilings, emergency lighting, carpentry and or wall construction if in conjunction with items above.
- Demolition if in conjunction with items above.
- Code work to an existing building necessitated by the construction of a building addition.

**Ineligible Expenses-**

Any expense not specifically stated under eligible expenses such as but not limited to the following items:

- Expenses incurred prior to the DDA's receipt, review and approval of a FIP application.
- Property acquisitions.
- Mortgage, land contract refinancing or loan fees.
- City of Rochester site plan, building & sign permit fees.
- Construction of new buildings or additions except for the facade portion.
- Appraiser, attorney, interior designer fees.
- Wages paid to the applicant or relatives in record line of consanguinity unless licensed to perform such work.
- Interior furnishings, trade fixtures, display cases, counters, any reusable or removable item or other items taxed as personal property.
- Site improvements done in conjunction with a City of Rochester Special Assessment District.
- Any portion or expenses for which applicant pays a contractor in merchandise or trade for service.

### **Project Timetable**

1. Once approved, the applicant has 6 months to receive a commitment for project financing if they indicated on the application that a private financial institution would be involved. If no commitment has been secured by the end of this 6-month period, the DDA commitment expires. The applicant may reapply if financing is secured at a later date; however, this is **subject to available funding at the time of reapplication.**
2. Once approved and with a financing commitment in place, the financial commitment of the DDA shall be for one year. If the project is not completed within this 12-month period, the applicant must resubmit an application to receive grant funds. At the time of reapplication the DDA Board will evaluate the status of the project and at its discretion, will approve or deny the funding commitment. This reapplication is **subject to available funding at the time of the resubmission.**

### **Other Program Guidelines**

1. Construction work and disbursement of the FIP rebate may be phased over a period of time.
2.
  - a. Within a five year period, a property owner may not apply for FIP funds more than twice for the same store unit.
  - b. Within a five-year period, a business tenant may not apply for FIP funds more than twice for the same store unit.
  - c. The total amount rebated to property owner and or business tenant for the same store unit during a 5-year period may not exceed \$15,000.00.
  - d. Whenever the property ownership changes, the new owner is eligible for FIP funds. A new 5-year timetable and \$15,000 maximum would apply to the new owner without concern for the application of guidelines 2a and 2c provided all other FIP guidelines are adhered to.
  - e. Whenever the business tenant changes, a new tenant becomes eligible for FIP funds. A new 5-year timetable \$15,000 maximum would apply to the new tenant without concern for the application of guidelines 2b and 2c provided all other FIP guidelines are followed.
3. At the DDA's discretion, an exception to any FIP guideline may be granted due to special conditions or situations.
4. All FIP projects are subject to audit by the City of Rochester.

**Application, Approval and Payment Procedures**

1. Contact the Rochester Downtown Development Authority office for Facade Improvement Program information, application and design guidelines.
2. Review the proposed facade improvement design with the DDA Director.
3. Submit a completed application, design plans, and cost estimates to the DDA office. The DDA accepts applications throughout the year. The DDA Board reviews and acts on FIP applications at the regular DDA Meeting held the third Wednesday of each month. To be placed on the DDA Agenda for review the deadline for a submission of FIP application containing all required information is the first Friday of each month.
4. After being submitted the application is reviewed by the DDA Director who may consult the DDA Executive Committee. After being reviewed a written recommendation for approval, modification or rejection is prepared for consideration by the DDA Board.
5. The DDA Board acts upon the application for FIP funding. After DDA Board approval, applicants receive a letter committing funds or advising them of the project's status, including any conditions for receipt of funding.
6. After Planning Commission approval, final engineering approval and issuance of a building permit, a pre-construction meeting is held with the DDA Director to finalize all project details.
7. **The DDA Director may refer a change in construction plans to the Executive Committee or back to the full DDA Board and must authorize any modifications to the approved application and facade design in writing. Modifications may have to be reconsidered by the Planning Commission.**
8. **During construction, any changes to the approved facade plan including but not limited to exterior changes in materials, window, doors, cornices, etc. must be authorized in advance by the DDA in writing or the funding commitment may be rescinded.**
9. Upon completion of construction the applicant prepares a project financial report and provides the DDA with proof that approved renovation expenses are paid (canceled checks, paid invoices, contractor's sworn statements, sub-contractor's waiver of lien, etc). *Note: The use of merchandise or trade for service as payment is lieu of cash for a DDA approved renovation project is specifically prohibited.*
10. The DDA Director prepares a final project report, which summarizes actual project expenses and payments for work completed, for review by the DDA Board. If all conditions for payment are satisfied the DDA Board authorizes disbursement of FIP funds.
11. Facade Improvement Program funds are usually disbursed to the applicant and or lender within 30 days of DDA Board approval of completed work.

**Any questions regarding the Facade Improvement Program guidelines should be directed to the DDA office at 248-656-0060.**

## **FACADE GRANT PRIORITY POLICY**

### **Intent of Priority Policy:**

The purpose of the Rochester Downtown Development Authority Facade Grant priority policy is to set forth rules and guidelines for distribution of limited grant funds to projects that most closely meet the true intent of the Facade Improvement Program. With reduced funds now available in the overall DDA budget, it is necessary to provide funds for those projects providing the most positive impact in downtown Rochester.

### **Intent of the Facade Improvement Program (FIP):**

The intent of the FIP is to strengthen the economic viability of downtown Rochester by providing financial incentives for improving the exterior appearance of its buildings. The FIP provides an opportunity to building owners and or tenants to preserve the architectural heritage of downtown Rochester and enhance the unique atmosphere that downtown Rochester provides to the greater Rochester community. It is important to the aesthetic enhancement of downtown Rochester that building design treatments be compatible with each other. The DDA believes that the best approach is through the preservation and restoration of a building's original architectural features.

The dominant emphasis is the preservation of downtown Rochester's architectural heritage and preserving the original architectural features of each building. This preservation-based philosophy is a key component of the National MainStreet Program, which has been the backbone of Rochester's Downtown Revitalization plans since the DDA was formed in 1983.

### **Rules:**

1. All grants are subject to the DDA Facade Programs Guidelines and National MainStreet Storefront Guidelines.
2. All grants are subject to funding availability, and are based upon a separate vote approval by the DDA Board of Directors.

3. Standard Facade Improvements Grants (rebates) are given for work that is consistent with the DDA Facade Improvement Program Guidelines and the National MainStreet Storefront Guidelines.
4. Historic restoration project bonus grants are given when restoration of the front facade is carried out under strict adherence to the U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standard for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.
5. If the applicant has not received a firm commitment for project financing within six months of DDA approval, the DDA commitment expires. However, the applicant may reapply.
6. The financial commitment of the DDA shall be for one year, and the applicant must reapply to be eligible for funding if the project is not completed within 12 months from the date the DDA commitment. Funds may be placed in reserve by the DDA upon approval for such an additional period of time as the board deems.

**Priorities (subject to funding availability):**

1. Historic restoration bonus project
2. Standard facade improvement on historic building
3. Standard facade improvement on building
4. Newly constructed buildings and additions to existing structures

## **DDA Design Guidelines for Downtown Commercial Rehabilitation**

### **Introduction**

The appearance of individual buildings, storefronts, signs, alleys, window displays, parking lots and sidewalks establishes the visual character of the downtown and plays a major part in the marketing success of the business district. Presenting an attractive image is simply good business. Improvement and maintenance is not only essential to strengthen the appeal of individual properties, it is also necessary to improve the image of the entire downtown area, an important public purpose.

It must be remembered that one building is part of the street. New designs and alternatives should be compatible with existing buildings. This does not mean limiting that architectural variety or interest of the street, but rather that designs should respect existing buildings and strive for visual harmony with the character of the street.

Downtown Rochester has evolved over decades, one building at a time; it is organic. A building does not necessarily have to be old to be a valued addition to downtown. Good design, which can exist in any period, will only serve to improve the image of the area.

The following guidelines deal mainly with design issues. However, since maintenance of improvements is vital to their lasting effect, these guidelines will also include some recommendations on that subject. The guidelines and their interpretations have been developed to enhance the individual character of each building strengthening the overall image of downtown. They do not, as with some towns, advocate a “theme” approach to improvements: such as “colonial” or “Bavarian”. A long-term, pleasing treatment, that is likely to survive passing fashions, can be gained by examining each building individually and taking advantage of its historic integrity. This does not necessarily mean to reproduce exactly the appearance of the building as it looked at a particular period in time. A building can be improved by using what exists, minimizing the less attractive features and adding simple, and many times inexpensive, elements to emphasize positive features. Removal of inappropriate tacked on “moderations,” simple maintenance, the addition of a well-designed sign or awning and care in the selection of colors and materials can give surprisingly good visual results. Such improvements are good, lasting investment both in terms of cost and customer relations. By coordinating improvements, individual merchants are able to retain their individual identities while strengthening the image of downtown as a whole.

The ultimate responsibility for the application of guidelines and their interpretation rests with the people who stand to receive the most substantial benefits from a revitalized downtown – the individual property owner and merchants.

## **Intent of the Guidelines**

Merchants, property owners and the staff of the DDA have developed the following guidelines. They reflect input from the Rochester community as well. Intended to guide the physical and economic revitalization of the DDA district, the interpretations will serve as a reference to insure a consistency in the quality of design for the downtown area. By following these guidelines, merchants and property owners will qualify for façade grant monies to be used for the improvements and for special tax benefits provided by the federal government. These guidelines and their interpretations do not attempt to provide specific solutions. They are offered as a means by which to effect beneficial change. As new technologies develop and other opportunities for improvements emerge, the interpretations of the guidelines should be periodically tested and reviewed.

The intent is to provide standards by which the DDA can determine whether to commit its funds to help finance improvements to existing buildings or new construction.

## **Use of the Interpretations**

These interpretations offer some basic, common sense advice to merchants, property owners and others involved in improving the downtown. Those wishing to take advantage of the special financial incentives provided by local, state and federal governments should use them.

The interpretations that follow contain a brief discussion of the importance of the elements being examined and a list of specific recommendations and procedures to be avoided. The interpretations are organized as follows:

- Section I - Front
- Section II - Rear Facades
- Section III - Signs
- Sections IV - New Buildings

Proposals presented to the Design Review Committee should also be evaluated by applying the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation where applicable.

## **Rehabilitation for Commercial Façade Grants**

Any downtown merchant or property owner who wishes to take advantage of this special Downtown Development Authority financial incentive must comply with the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Commercial Buildings. The DDA Director must approve in writing building plans prior to any construction.

Loan funds will be dispersed upon completion of the project consistent with the approved plans.

## **Section I. - Front Facades**

The front facades of buildings are one of the most important physical components of downtown – economically, functionally, and aesthetically. Their physical condition plays a substantial role in the well being of any business community. Unfortunately, they all too often project a negative image when they consist of inappropriate siding, peeling paint, out-of-character signs and garish color schemes.

With proper design and maintenance, the building facades in a downtown present property owners and merchants with a rare opportunity. Many of these buildings, dating predominantly from the late 1800's and early 1900's, have a visually interesting and historically important architecture. As a group, these facades have a distinctive ambience that is worth maintaining. Because of the era in which they were designed and built, they have basic warmth that is hard to duplicate today.

Most facades downtown are two stories high, with commercial space located at ground level and offices, storage, or residential space above. Visually, this arrangement divides the facade into two basic parts: the upper facade which is usually a flat masonry wall with regular spaced window openings and applied decoration; and the storefront, or lower facade, which is composed primarily of large display windows and the entry. Unfortunately, the storefronts have usually been changed drastically as they were “modernized.” The end products of such modernization have frequently made the building not to scale and incompatible with the original facade design and materials remaining. Some building facades, on the other hand, have fared better and escaped inappropriate modernization. In this latter case, the original facade should be preserved and repaired with little or no alteration. Where the original facade is covered up, or no longer existent, any improvement should respect the documented historic character of the building as well as its neighboring buildings.

### **Storefronts**

The lower facade of the building, the storefront, has usually been altered in the years since its original construction. The net result of these changes is normally an erosion of its original character.

Every traditional commercial building facade has a well-defined opening. Many of the problems with the storefronts today are that they no longer look like an integral part of the building; rather, they appear pasted on and do not reinforce the character of the entire facade. The traditional storefront usually had a recessed entry for the front door, flanked by display windows at the property line. This configuration accomplished two important things. First, it located the display windows next to the sidewalk in full view of passersby. This allowed potential customers a full view of the merchandise on display and a view of the store's interior. Secondly, it emphasized the door and entryway. The intimacy of the enclosed and sheltered doorway provided a pleasant sense of inviting the customer inside.

**Recommendations:**

1. Storefronts should be designed to fit inside the original openings and not extend beyond it.
2. Storefronts should be designed with the largest possible window area, which is in keeping with the original opening. Emphasis should be placed on the display windows and doors that do not alter the original architectural character of the storefront.
3. Storefronts should respect the integrity of the building as a whole and relate to the building's original character. Storefronts should be compatible with the scale, materials, color and texture of the original building.
4. Where storefronts have been covered up with incompatible material, they should be renovated by removing the covering material. Avoid use of unpainted aluminum, imitation masonry, fake shutter and other incompatible materials in renovating storefronts.
5. Use simple and unobtrusive materials when renovating storefronts. Avoid garish patterns, textures or colors that are not appropriate to the character and functionality of the storefront.
6. Where the original storefront remains, it should be preserved and repaired with as little alteration as possible.
7. If restoration of the original storefront is undertaken, it should be based on accurate duplication of features substantiated by historical, physical or pictorial evidence.
8. Avoid historically incorrect "revival" architecture.
9. Avoid introducing a storefront that significantly alters the original character of the building or the relationship of the building to the street.
10. Avoid the use of mirrored or tinted glass.
11. Avoid bare aluminum window frames. If existing aluminum frames are to be retained, they should be painted.

## Upper Facades

From a distance, the image of the front facade is heavily influenced by its upper-story appearance. Typically, windows in the upper facades are positioned at regular intervals and act to establish a visual rhythm to the exterior design of the building. Their shape, size, placement and decorative trim constitute and contribute to many important aesthetic principles. The window openings, along with the material, color and texture of the wall surface contribute to the overall visual character of the street. (Also See the Section - Walls.)

### Recommendations:

1. Screens, boards and other inappropriate materials covering facades and windows should be removed.
2. If the original window opening has been altered, restore them to their original configuration and detail. Avoid blocking window openings.
3. If possible, save and restore the original windows and frames. Replace missing, rotting or broken sashes, frames, mullion, etc. with similar material. Replacements windows should reflect the original design and material.
4. Where clear aluminum frames have previously replaced the traditional frames, they should be painted.
5. If a new interior ceiling must be dropped below the height of existing window openings, a recessed setback, or similar device, should be used to allow the full window opening be retained without alteration of exterior appearance.
6. If storm windows are used to improve thermal performance, they should resemble the existing window as closely as possible in shape, appearance, and color. Storm windows should be sized to fit the entire window opening.
7. Avoid storm windows that allow moisture to accumulate and damage the window frame.
8. Avoid through-wall or through-window heating/air conditioning units.
9. Avoid mirrored or tinted glass. Replacement glass should be similar to the original.
10. Avoid the use of shutters except where clear evidence indicates their historic presence.
11. Avoid substituting one type of operable sash for another. i.e. Do not replace Double Hung windows with Casement windows, etc.

12. Avoid storing material directly in front of windows. Wash upper story windows regularly and install curtains or other suitable devices to give a “lived-in” appearance if vacant.

## **Doors and Entries**

Doors are one of the primary elements, which create individual character in the exterior appearance of a building. Historically, the storefront entry was more than just a door. Its design and appearance reflected its commercial importance. The storefront door was tall in proportion, built of wood and glass, and looked substantial, yet inviting to the customer.

The typical downtown building often has two additional doors: a second door on the front facade permitting access to the upper floors, and a rear door used both as a service and a customer entry. Compared to the storefront entry, these were traditionally modest in design.

Attractive entrances are essential, and customers or clients should be made to feel welcome as they approach the door.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Original doors should be retained, repaired and refinished. Attractive hardware, such as brass door pulls and plates add visual value to the entrance and should be retained.
2. Where bare aluminum doors are to be retained, they should be painted.
3. Consider using subtle decorations on new and replacement doors. A handsome knob or pull or an attractive molding can make the door special and inviting.
4. Rear doors should reflect the character of the rear façade. Avoid a highly decorated door that would look out of place. If rear doors serve customers as well as delivery, they should incorporate glass panels of an appropriate design.
5. New doors should be compatible with the character of the facade. Avoid fake “historic” doors that are incompatible.
6. Avoid mirrored or tinted glass in doors. Avoid windowless wood or metal doors except for service and residential entries.
7. Avoid storm doors which are inappropriate in size, color, material and texture with the original door or which require replacement of the original door.

## **Walls**

The texture and color of brick and limestone walls are among the most dominant visual features in the downtown area. They are an integral part of the visual character of downtown, and as such, should be restored and enhanced by uncovering, maintaining and preserving them in the appropriate manner.

Many of the original walls, whether masonry or ornamental carrara glass, have been covered up with aluminum, fake rock, plastic or scarred and obscured with large, not to scale signs. The end result of such modernizations is building walls that are out of character with other details of the building and with the downtown as a whole. In addition, these modernizations have tended to homogenize the downtown so that the historic and architectural individuality of the buildings is obscured.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Original building wall material should not be covered with any form of inappropriate siding. Where this has already occurred, the inappropriate siding should be removed and the original wall material restored.
2. Wall surfaces that have not been painted should remain unpainted.
3. Damaged walls should be repaired or replaced with material that duplicates the original as closely as possible. See Secretary of the Interior - Standard on mortar mix.
4. Avoid scarring walls with holes for attaching signs, etc.
5. Avoid removing wall materials and features that are essential parts of the building's character.

## **Building Detail, Decoration and Cornice**

One of the most striking aspects of the traditional building facade is its appealing detail. Many of the buildings downtown offer a blend of architecture and sculpture, craftsmanship and materials that would be difficult and expensive to produce today. Architectural decoration and detail help make downtown special. This is an asset and should be taken advantage of.

Many materials are used in decoration and detailing, for example:

- 1) **Masonry** – Decorative masonry includes both brick and stonework ranging from beautifully detailed cornices and arched window heads to storefront piers.
- 2) **Terra Cotta** – Decorative terra cotta was commonly used from the 1880's to the 1930's, most commonly as a veneer or as masonry unit in combination with brick or stone.

- 3) **Cast Iron and Sheet Metal** – Usually found in buildings constructed before 1900, cast iron and sheet metal were used for cornices, windows surrounds or entire facades.
- 4) **Wood** – Wood details are often subtle, as the moldings around windows, and are important in creating the total facade effect.
- 5) **Decorative Glass**- Beveled, leaded, etched, carrara and spandrel glass are all forms of decorative glass used in the building's downtown.

One of the strongest visual elements on a facade is the continuous molded or projecting cornice. It not only protects the facade from the elements, it also provides a strong visual cap or termination to the vertical composition of the facade. The cornice is often decorated with fine details that give scale to the building. As a major design element, cornices should be retained, repaired or replaced. *It cannot be too strongly emphasized that most downtown buildings need a cornice to be architecturally complete.*

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Deteriorated details, decorations and cornices should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the original material in compositions, design, color and texture. Repair or replacement of missing architectural decorations and details should be based on accurate duplications, substantiated by historical, physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural design.
2. Heavy or numerous coats of paint that obscure architectural decorations and details should be removed before repainting.
3. Sagging details, decorations and cornices should be firmly re-anchored.
4. When replacing or repairing masonry details, decorations or cornices, care should be take to prevent an obvious and unsightly patch. Materials, joints, etc. should match the original as closely as possible in compositions, color and texture.
5. Corbelling should be retained and restored whenever possible.
6. Care should be exercised whenever dealing with terra cotta for replacement. Repair is difficult. Repair cracked or chipped glazed surfaces as closely as possible.
7. Metal and cast iron that has signs of corrosion, tears, holes or missing pieces should be repaired or replaced as closely as possible to the original.
8. Soft, dry or split areas in wood surfaces should be filled, caulked, primed and painted or stained to match the original.

9. Replacement glass should resemble the original as closely as possible.
10. Where the original cornice has been removed or altered, it should be replaced or restored with a duplication of the original. Where this is not possible, a simplified version of the original should be designed.
11. Avoid unnecessary changes in cornice height.
12. Avoid fake ‘historic’ details, decorations and cornices.

### **Painting Schemes and Color Palette**

Painting can be one of the most dramatic and least expensive improvements to a building. Painting at regular interval is also an essential part of maintenance and upkeep. This protects vulnerable wood surfaces from deterioration. Painting is also a practical way to visually tie together individual building facades in the downtown area. Attention should be given not only to selection of appropriate colors but also to the preparation of the surfaces, choice of paint type (oil or latex base) and finish (gloss, semi-gloss or matte).

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Color applied to side and rear walls should avoid harsh shifts from that on front walls. A building should be treated as visually consistent on all sides.
2. When repainting, consider using the original painting scheme and color palette.
3. Color should be used to tie building elements, such as details, decorations, cornices, signs and storefronts, together. This is usually most successful when a maximum of three colors is used.
4. The color palette should be consistent throughout both the upper and lower portions of the building’s front facade.
5. Color palettes and paint schemes on adjoining buildings should be compatible.
6. The color used on the cornice should offset the color of the sky.
7. Normally, the previous paint type (oil or latex base) should be used in repainting. Generally, use oil base for wood and latex base paint for masonry.
8. Avoid the use of bright primary colors and very dark colors that are usually incompatible with the building’s downtown. Bright colors and very dark colors are also highly susceptible to fading.

## **Awnings**

Awnings are both visually and functionally appropriate for many commercial storefronts and upper facade windows. As a visual element, an awning can add character and interest to a facade. An awning on the storefront creates a pleasant space in front of the building, providing shade and shelter for customers and a resting place for pedestrians. Awnings on windows also reduce glare and serve as energy savers by controlling the amount of sunlight that penetrates the interior. The use of awnings downtown, with appropriate design, colors and materials, can provide attractive and functional additions to the building facades.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Cloth or canvas awnings were traditional on most buildings downtown. Consider box awnings on the upper facade windows and slanted awnings of the storefronts. When canvas awnings are used on both upper and lower facades, they should be of compatible color, material and design.
2. The color of all awnings should complement the building. When a building contains more than one storefront, each with a different awning color, the colors should be related.
3. If signs are incorporated into an awning, the message should be simple and directed towards identification.
4. Avoid materials, colors and designs that detract from the character of the building.
5. Avoid stock, unpainted awnings, which are inappropriately related to the character of the building.

## **Surface Cleaning and Paint Removal**

Cleaning the exterior facade is one way to bring new life to the appearance of a building. There are also functional reasons for cleaning, particularly masonry surfaces. Dirt on bricks or stone when combined with water will accelerate masonry deterioration. Cleaning should always be done in the least abrasive manner possible. Improper cleaning and paint removal can also result in the acceleration of the deterioration of the exterior material.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Water or steam cleaning is usually the safest method by which to clean buildings. A low-pressure water (500psi) or steam method, when accompanied by manual scrubbing and a mild cleanser, will cause the least damage.

2. Paint may be removed with water-soluble alkali and solvent-based chemicals applied by brush and removed with medium water pressure or steam spray. A certain chemical reaction of paint removal on material surfaces before proceeding.
3. If a brick facade was originally painted, a soft brick was probably used in construction. These surfaces should remain painted.
4. Avoid cleaning or paint removal by blasting with sand, grit, chips, shells, beads or other abrasive substances. Blasting will erode surfaces, remove details and may accelerate the complete deterioration of the surface.
5. Avoid using chemicals that adversely affect the building fabric.
6. Avoid wet cleaning when frost is expected.

## **Section II. - Rear Facades**

The rear facades of buildings are often a neglected and forgotten resource downtown. The rear facades, especially along the alleys, offer to many buildings potential customer as well as service entries. By being able to enter directly from a parking lot, via an attractive entry, the customer is made to feel welcomed. The visibility of the rear facade from the alley DDA increases the need to revitalize these surfaces. Like the storefront, the rear entry requires identification and should be made attractive and inviting. This does not, however, imply an elaborate or expensive undertaking. Rather, since the rears of buildings are usually plain and unadorned, the revitalization can be undertaken in a simple, straightforward manner. In general, the same recommendations apply to the rear as to the front facades.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Original doors or window opening that are now blocked should be reopened to their original dimensions and filled with appropriate doors or windows.
2. Compatible display windows should be provided at ground level.
3. An appropriate sign should be installed to identify the business on or near the entry. Service entries should be clearly marked to avoid confusion.
4. Recommendations established in other parts of the interpretations should be followed.

### **Section III. - Signs**

Business signs are among the most prominent visual elements downtown and are an integral part of doing business. Signs provide the individual business with identification, give 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 in the designing process, is to help the customer find the store.

Common problems with many downtown signs are their excessive size and inappropriate placement on buildings. Large, flashy signs may be appropriate for the highway strip but are out of place in the pedestrian-scaled downtown. 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.

Many existing signs downtown do not respect the business district's character. For example, large vacuum-formed, internally lit signs pay no attention to local tradition, relate poorly to the character of downtown and detract from its inherent quality and image. These signs, or other types of mass-produced national advertising, also shift the emphasis away from local, personal service and ownership.

A good business sign should express a simple, clear message. Graphic symbols are generally effective means of clear uncluttered communication. Lettering styles, color of sign and sign materials should relate harmoniously to the facade on which the sign is placed. In addition, 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 downtown, including, but not, necessarily limited to:

- 1) Signs Applied to Walls
- 2) Small Hanging Signs
- 3) Window and Door Signs
- 4) Signs on Awnings

#### **1. Applied Signs (Flat, Fixed Wall Signs)**

The location and size of signs on any building should relate to 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:**

1. 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 lintel strip or signboard as part of its facade, locate the sign directly on it.

2. The maximum number of permanent signs of 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.
3. The message on the signs should be kept simple. Keep wording to a minimum so that it can easily and quickly be read.
4. Signs should complement the building color scheme.
5. City Ordinance prohibits signs that are mounted on roofs.
6. Flashing and moving signs are prohibited by City Ordinance
7. Avoid nationally distributed signs

## **2. Hanging Signs**

Small-scale pedestrian oriented hanging signs are an effective method of advertising a business. Usually located near the entrance, these signs serve not only to inform the pedestrian of the name of the store and goods sold within, they also locate the entry and provide a rhythmic motion along the sidewalk. A particular type of hanging sign, called an icon sign, depicts a physical object, such as a shoe, and is an effective means of advertising with the minimum amount of lettering.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Hanging signs should be oriented toward the pedestrian and located so that they do not interfere with passage.
2. The size, color and placement of hanging signs should be compatible with the facade upon which they are attached.
3. If illuminated, the lighting of hanging signs should be compatible with the design of the sign and building.
4. Avoid exposed guide wires and cables where possible.
5. Current City Ordinance prohibits signs projecting more than one foot into the public right-of-way.

## **3. Window and Door Signs**

Window and door 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:**

1. Window and door signs should be applied so that they do not obscure visibility.
2. Permanent window and door signs should usually not obscure the display area of the business. Such signs should complement other signs on the facade. (Refer to City Sign Ordinance–pg. 76, 78, and 79)
3. By City Ordinance, allowable colors for window signs are black, white, gold, or a combination of not more than two (2) of these colors.
4. Avoid the use of nationally distributed signs that are incompatible with the character of the building.

**4. Signs on Awnings**

Signs on awnings can be viable solutions to providing identification for a business. Considering the cost as well as the life span 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. (Refer to City Sign Ordinance-Signs on Awnings pg. 76)

**Recommendations:**

1. Signs on awnings should complement the building's architecture and color scheme.
2. Signs on awnings should constitute a single area of the awning, not the entire awning.
3. Signs on awnings should be located on the vertical portion of the awning for maximum visibility.

**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 facades downtown. 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:**

1. Signs should use colors, materials and lettering styles that relate to and complement the building. In general, limit each sign to a maximum of three colors, two materials and one lettering style.
2. 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.

3. A wooden sign with raised letters, metal signs, painted signs, neon or gold leafing are all appropriate in certain instances downtown.
4. New signs should have the lettering as well as overall sign dimensions scaled to its location.
5. Nationally distributed heat-formed signs are usually inappropriate. If they are used, their color, lettering style and lighting should complement the building.
6. Metal box signs with plastic panels are not eligible for a DDA Sign Grant.
7. There are many letter styles available. As a general rule, sign lettering should relate to the architectural style of the building and type of business. It should be easy to read.

### **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:**

1. The light source for signs should be designed as part of the sign or hidden from view.
2. Exposed lights, which produce glare, are not recommended.
3. 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.
4. Internally lighted, plastic and glass panel box signs are discouraged.
5. The background and sides of illuminated sign 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.

### **Section IV. – New Buildings**

Construction of new buildings on vacant lots downtown should be encouraged. New buildings and second floor additions should strive for excellence in design whether the project is a small, individual, infill construction within the existing downtown blocks, or larger, independently sited projects. Located within the context of an existing architectural setting, the design of new buildings and landscaping should respond positively to the physical character of the downtown. Since a good new design that responds positively to its surroundings can be done in a number of ways, it is not possible to develop specific interpretation that will apply in all cases. Every site has its own design opportunities. However, as a guide, the recommendations below should be followed.

**Recommendations:**

1. A new building's façade should not pretend to be historic by adding pseudo-Colonial, Victorian, Tudor or other period details in an attempt to blend with the existing environment. This "applied style" approach will only detract from the character of the downtown by compromising what is truly historic.
2. Most buildings downtown share a general similarity in height that should be respected by new buildings. Extreme differences in building heights will have a detrimental visual effect on the appearance of surrounding property.
3. A new building should reflect the existing rhythm, proportion, scale and massing of the buildings in the area and their relationship to the site.
4. New buildings should respect the established setbacks and the spacing between buildings.
5. The form of the roof and cornice treatment of new buildings should respect the established context.
6. The rhythm, scale and proportion of openings in new buildings and their relationship to the wall surface in which they are located should respect the existing buildings.
7. A new building's façade should be composed of materials, textures and colors that complement adjacent facades.
8. New building details and decorations should relate to the details and decorations of the existing surrounding buildings.

## FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM APPLICATION

1. Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Business Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Building Address: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Building Owner: \_\_\_\_\_  
Owner Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Owner Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Projected Cost: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Provide cost breakdowns by major categories such as architectural fees, engineering fees, signs, awning, painting, repair, carpentry, electrical, etc., as an attachment to this application.
9. Proposed Project Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Estimated Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_
11. How will the project be financed? If a private financial institution will be involved, please specify which bank and identify the loan office and telephone number:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. The project will involve the building's: Facade \_\_\_\_\_, Exterior Side \_\_\_\_\_, Exterior Rear Wall \_\_\_\_\_, Roof \_\_\_\_\_.
12. Please submit three (3) copies of the project design.
13. Please submit one (1) photograph of the existing facade(s).

Facade Improvement Program Application  
Page 2.

The undersigned applicant affirms that:

- A. The information submitted herein is true and accurate to the best of my (our) knowledge.
- B. I (we) have read and understand the conditions of the Rochester DDA Facade Improvement Programs and agree to abide by its conditions and guidelines.
- C. I (we) understand that if this application is approved any changes, alterations or modifications to the approved facade design must be authorized in writing by the DDA Director, Executive Committee or full DDA Board. If unauthorized changes are made I (we) understand that the DDA may withdraw its funding commitment.
- D. I (we) understand that if this project is not completed within the scope of the timetable (12 months), the DDA can withdraw its funding commitment. I (we) understand that I (we) can reapply, however, the application will be subject to funding availability at the time of reapplication.

Signature of Applicant(s):

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

Date Application Received: \_\_\_\_\_

DDA Board Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Funding Commitment Letter Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

DDA Director/Design Committee Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Projected Construction Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Final Inspection Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Amendments:

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes/Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DDA Board Final Approval for Payment Date \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Approved for Payment: \$ \_\_\_\_\_