

## SIGN GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION

1. Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Business Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Building Address: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Building Owner: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Building Owner's Address: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Building Owner's Phone # \_\_\_\_\_
9. The Following Items Must Be Provided: (check all enclosed items)  
\_\_\_\_ a) Cost Estimate \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ b) Sign Design with all Specifications (Dimensions, Colors, Materials & Location on Building)  
\_\_\_\_ c) Color Photo of the Building Facade

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 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 Rochester sign permit.
- d. I understand that the proposed sign cannot be installed until the DDA 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 Director will cause the DDA to withdraw it's funding commitment.

Signatures:

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

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

Submit the completed application with items a, b, and c to:  
**Rochester DDA, 308 1/2 Main Street, Rochester, MI 48307**

## **ROCHESTER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY SIGN GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

The City of Rochester Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has established the Sign Grant Program to encourage a high standard of business signage intended to complement the architectural character of downtown Rochester and the building on which the sign is displayed.

**Program Description:** Subject to funding availability, the DDA may approve and provide reimbursement of 50% of the cost of design, construction and installation of a sign up to a maximum grant of \$1,000.00. If the Sign Grant Application includes separate and architecturally compatible lighting for sign illumination, the grant may be approved up to a maximum of \$1500.00. The DDA Board shall have no authority to grant less than 50% of such costs.

**Who is Eligible?** Only existing businesses, including non-profits, 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 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.

Within a five (5)-year period, a business owner may not apply for a Sign Grant more than once for the same business at the same location. For businesses that do not qualify as existing businesses, the five (5)-year period start after the twelve (12)-month waiting period for reimbursement.

**Design Guidelines:** All sign designs, construction, and installation must conform to the City of Rochester Sign Regulation Ordinance, Article 22, existing or future planning commission design guidelines, and the DDA Sign Design Guidelines.

### **Procedure**

1. Contact the Rochester DDA to receive a Sign Grant Application Packet ***before*** any work on the sign is started, or any signs are installed.
2. Complete the Sign Grant application with all required information and items.
3. Submit your Sign Grant Application with all required items. Applications submitted with all required items to the DDA office by the second Monday of the month will be considered by the DDA Board at the regular meeting on the third Wednesday of each month.
4. A completed sign grant application must be submitted for approval and considered by the DDA Board ***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 of a Sign Grant Application by the DDA Board.**
5. Subject to funding availability, individuals submitting designs that are approved by the DDA Board will receive a Sign Grant Funding Commitment Letter from the DDA. (The applicant must also complete and submit a Sign Permit Application to the City of Rochester and obtain the permit 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 Board must authorize any change in the approved design before the sign is constructed. In the event the sign is constructed or installed in a manner that does not strictly conform to the approved design, the DDA shall have the right to withdraw its funding commitment. Provided written authorization is requested from the DDA Director before construction of the sign begins, the DDA Director may, but is not required to, approve a change to the approved design. If the DDA Director provides written approval within the time allowed, the DDA shall not thereafter withdraw its funding commitment.
7. Upon completion of installation notify the DDA office that the sign has been installed and provide satisfactory written documentation that the sign has been paid for in full with a paid invoice and cancelled check.
8. The DDA will disburse Sign Grant funds for an existing business to the applicant following a DDA inspection to verify that the sign is consistent with the approved Sign Grant application.
9. For a business that does not meet the definition of an existing business approved sign grant funds will be available to the applicant after twelve (12) months of continuous business operation and following DDA inspection to verify that the sign is consistent with the approved Sign Grant Application.
10. If an approved sign is not installed within 1 year of approval, the original application is void and new application is required for approval.

5/07

## **ROCHESTER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY SIGN GRANT PROGRAM – DESIGN GUIDELINES**

Business signs are one of the most prominent visual elements in a downtown and are an integral part of doing business. Signs provide the individual business with identification and will 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 signs in downtown are that they are excessively large, constructed of inappropriate materials, and/or are located inappropriately on buildings. Large, flashy signs may be appropriate for highway strip development 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.

A number of existing signs in the downtown do not reflect the business district's character and/or are not architecturally compatible with the building on which they are located. 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. Internally lighted, plastic or glass panel box signs are also not appropriate. These signs, or other types of mass-produced national advertising, shift the emphasis away from local, personal service, and ownership.

The DDA believes a 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 be harmonious with and complement the facade on which the sign is placed. In addition, size, location and the design of the sign are important in communicating effectively to the customer. A variety of different sign types may be appropriate in downtown, including: wall signs, hanging signs, window and door signs, signs on awnings, and ground signs.

## **SIGNS ELIGIBLE FOR SIGN GRANT FUNDING**

It is the intent of the DDA to use the Sign Grant Program to encourage high quality signs that complement and enhance the aesthetic character of downtown. The criteria outlined for the following types of signs are minimum standards. When evaluating an application for a sign grant, the DDA will consider the proposed sign's conformity with these guidelines, the extent to which the sign improves the aesthetics of downtown and the building or store front on which it will be located, and availability of funding.

### **1. Wall Signs**

The location, size and color(s) of signs on any building must 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. The sign and the building's facade must 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.

#### **CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL:**

1. Wall signs must be located above or near the entry to the store in order to relate to the pedestrian. The best areas for signs are those placed on the façade; in locations of continuous, flat surfaces void of windows, doors, or architectural details. When a building has either a lintel strip or signboard as part of its facade, the sign must be placed directly on it.
2. The maximum number of permanent signs on the building facade per storefront should be two. When a facade contains more than one sign, they must complement each other in shape, color, size, and lettering style.
3. The message on signs must be kept simple. Keep wording to a minimum so that the sign can be read easily and quickly.
4. Signs must complement the building color scheme.
5. Wood and simulated wood carved or sandblasted signs and signs comprised of individual metal, wood, or other natural material lettering are highly preferred. Lighting for wall signs must be directed onto the sign using lighting fixtures that are separate from the sign and architecturally compatible with the building and the sign.
6. Artistically designed neon signs may be approved for a sign grant provided that color, design and daytime appearance are architecturally compatible with the building.
7. Plastic channel letter signs with or without internal lighting may be approved in certain locations where appropriate, but are not preferred.

## **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.

### **CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL:**

1. Hanging signs must be oriented toward the pedestrian and located so that they do not interfere with passage.
2. The size, color and placement of hanging signs must be compatible with the facade upon which they are attached.
3. Wood and simulated wood carved or sandblasted signs, signs comprised of individual metal, wood, or other natural material lettering, painted wood signs and engraved, etched or embossed metal signs are highly preferred.
4. If illuminated, the lighting for hanging signs must be architecturally compatible with the design of the sign and building.
5. Avoid exposed guide wires and cables.
6. 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. 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.

### **CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL:**

1. Permanent window and door signs must occupy no more than 2 square feet of the window and no more than 4 square feet of the door. Such signs must complement other signs on the façade. (Refer to City Sign Ordinance – ARTICLE 22-12).
2. By City Ordinance, allowable colors for window signs are black, white, gold, or a combination of not more than two (2) of these colors. (ARTICLE 22-13)

#### **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 - ARTICLE 22-10)

##### **CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL:**

1. Signs on awnings must complement the building's architecture and color scheme.
2. Signs on awnings must 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.

#### **5. 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.

##### **CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL:**

1. All ground signs must conform to the City Sign Ordinance - ARTICLE 22.
2. The size and placement of ground signs must be compatible with the size of the lot.
3. Ground signs are more appropriate in the office zoned areas where building setback is more likely to accommodate a ground sign and conform to the 10 foot sign setback required by the Sign Ordinance.
4. Wood and simulated wood carved or sandblasted signs and signs comprised of individual metal, wood or other natural material lettering mounted on stone or decorative masonry materials are highly preferred.
5. The message on ground signs must be kept simple. Keep wording to a minimum (e.g. business name, address number) so it can be easily and quickly read.

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

The color, material and lettering style used in signs must 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 pedestrians and customers.

### **CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL:**

1. Signs must 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.
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. **Wooden signs** with carved or raised letters, metal signs, painted signs, neon or gold-leafing are all appropriate in certain instances downtown.
4. New signs must have the lettering as well as overall sign dimensions scaled to its location.
5. There are many letter styles available. Sign lettering must complement the architectural style of the building and type of business and should be easy to read.

## **7. 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.

### **CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL:**

1. Lighting fixtures used to illuminate signs must be architecturally compatible with the building and the sign.
2. Exposed lights which produce glare are not permitted.
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 not eligible for funding.
5. The background and sides of an illuminated sign must 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.
6. The DDA has a separate grant program for building façade lighting which will pay up to \$6,000 for installation of lighting to illuminate the façade of the building. Applicants for sign grants are encouraged to consider installation of façade lighting when installing a new sign. Information on the Lighting Grant Program is available from the DDA Office.

7. The DDA understands that new or different sign designs and materials not anticipated or discussed in these guidelines may be available or may become available in the future. The DDA may approve a sign grant for a sign of a type, design and/or material not contemplated by these guidelines based on the following:
  1. The sign complements and enhances the character of downtown.
  2. The sign complements and enhances the architecture of the building on which it will be placed.
  3. The sign's color(s) and letter style are compatible with the downtown and the building on which it will be placed, as well as with other signs already located on the building.

**SIGNS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR SIGN GRANT FUNDING:**

1. Signs mounted on roofs (also prohibited by City Ordinance).
2. Flashing and moving signs (also prohibited by City Ordinance).
3. Box signs with plastic sign panels with or without internal lighting.
4. Vacuum formed plastic signs.
5. Signs that separately list services and/or products of the business.
6. Any other type of sign that is not compatible and harmonious with the downtown or the building on which it is proposed to be installed.
7. Any sign that does not fit City Ordinance would not be considered for approval.