

**DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF MERCEDES
SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION**

A. INTRODUCTION

The Development Corporation of Mercedes has established Signage Improvement Program, which will provide technical and financial assistance to property owners or business tenants seeking to improve exterior signage on commercial buildings. The program is designed to impact properties in need of improving the presentation of a business. The program is not designed to subsidize corrections to building code violations that prolong the life of a commercial property. The Signage Improvement Program will provide up to \$4,500 for the funding of well-designed signage improvements which will coordinate all the important features of the storefront into a more attractive image. DCM staff will be available to provide assistance to applicants through the conceptual stage at no cost to the applicants. Applicants, however, will be responsible for hiring licensed architects and contractors to refine this conceptual design depending on the scope of work.

B. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply to the terms used in this Policy:

Applicant: the Property owner or business occupant signing the Application for a Facade and Signage Improvement Grant.

Construction Costs: the cost of permits, fees, construction materials, and installation labor. All other associated costs are deemed excluded, including, but not exclusively, the following costs: design, construction document preparation, bidding, sweat equity and construction financing.

DCM: Development Corporation of Mercedes

Eligible Enhancements: the improvements identified as eligible in Section C herein.

Facade: the portion of the building parallel to the primary right-of-way as determined by City.

MDD: the Municipal Downtown District

Notice to Proceed: a written notice from DCM staff authorizing the Applicant to begin construction as approved by the DCM Board of Directors

Property: the physical lot and/or building to which improvements are being made.

Staff: the DCM Executive Director or their designee(s)

C. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following criteria must be met for participation in Signage Improvement Program:

1. Applicants must be commercial property owners or commercial tenants located in the City of Mercedes;
2. Nonconforming signage on property, if applicable, must be permanently removed as part of the improvement;
3. Applicants must be up to date on all municipal taxes prior to participation in the program;
4. Applicants must not have any City liens filed against any property owned by Applicant, including but not limited to, weed liens, demolition liens, board-up/open structure liens and paying liens;
5. Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements;
6. All eligible business must have a business license issued from the City of Mercedes
7. Understanding that the overall objective of the Signage Improvement Program is to improve the exterior, visibility and presentation of a property; the DCM Board has the discretion to decline an application while suggesting enhancements that would enable future acceptance.
8. Ineligible businesses: government offices, residences, home businesses, and adult oriented businesses.
9. Applicants must become members of the Mercedes Area Chamber of Commerce.

D. DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

Improvements to be funded by the program must be compatible with the character and architecture of the individual building as well as meet City standards with regards to latest construction and design trends. Buildings with significant architectural qualities are strongly encouraged to restore and maintain these features. Improvements for buildings not having such architectural features should still be carefully considered and be seen as an opportunity to substantially enhance the appearance of the buildings and their streetscapes.

1. Eligible Signage Improvements:

- a. Visually appealing and appropriate City-approved signage, including monument signage, pole signage, electronic message boards and other signage as specified in the City's codes;
- b. Lighting which is visually appealing and appropriately illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of a building

2. Prior Improvements

Any permits, alterations, or improvements pertaining or relating to the FSIP application made prior to receiving a “Notice to Proceed” are not eligible for reimbursement.

4. Alterations

Applicant must agree not to change or alter the improved Signage without prior written approval from the DCM for three (3) years from the date of grant payment.

E. PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

1. Financial Assistance

Funding offered is a grant in which the Signage Improvement Grant reimburses Applicant one-hundred percent (100%) of total project costs, up to a \$4,500 maximum for signage improvements. The Signage Improvement Grant will only provide reimbursement after Applicant has paid their architect, contractor and vendor(s) in full and after the project is determined to have been completed in accordance with the contract between the DCM and Applicant.

2. Application and Information

If you wish to participate in the Signage Improvement Grant, please contact the Development Corporation of Mercedes, (956) 565-2230 office or e-mail zmascorro@mercedesedc.com.

F. PROCEDURES

All prospective applicants must follow the procedures in the order outlined below.

1. Applicant meets with DCM staff for initial project discussions and files an application.
2. Applicant meets with Staff to discuss program and design alternatives.
3. Applicant must provide final design drawings and submits them to Staff for review and approval.
4. Proposed project will be presented to the Director for review and then be presented to the DCM Board for final review/approval.
5. Staff sends applicant a “Notice to Proceed” and fully executed Signage Improvement Program Agreement. Any work completed prior to receiving the “Notice to Proceed” will not be reimbursed.
6. Applicant has thirty (30) days from the date the Notice to Proceed is sent to begin implementation of approved improvements. Applicant must provide Staff with copies of all building permits and certifications received from improvement project.
7. Contractor constructs project improvements as specified in the final design. Any changes to the approved plan must be approved by Staff.

8. Applicant notifies Staff once project is completed.

9. Staff certifies the improvements comply with the final drawings and specifications.

The DCM reserves the right to make adjustments regarding conditions and parameters outlined in these guidelines.

G. TERMINATION

The DCM has the right to terminate any agreement under the Signage Improvement Grant if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines or if the project has been started prior to an executed Signage Improvement Program Agreement with the DCM and the receipt of a Notice to Proceed.

DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF MERCEDES
Signage Improvement Program Application

Please return completed application with necessary attachments and signature to Development Corporation of Mercedes, 320 S. Ohio, Mercedes, Texas. If you have any application questions, please contact the DCM staff at 956.565.2230.

Applicant Name	Date
Business Name	
Mailing Address	
Contact Phone	
Email Address	
Building Owner (if different than applicant)	
Historical/Current Building Name	
Project Site/Address	

Details of Planned Improvements relating Grant Request (attach additional information if necessary)

TOTAL COST OF PROPOSED PROJECT \$ _____

TOTAL GRANT REQUEST \$ _____

Attach with final design drawings and photographs of building's exterior Facade.

Applicant Signature ***Date***