

Downtown Mobile Alliance Signage Improvement Grant Program



Program Administered by:

Downtown Mobile Alliance, Inc.

261 Dauphin Street

Mobile, AL 36602

www.downtownmobile.org

(251) 434-8498

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Downtown Mobile Signage Improvement Grant Program

Downtown Mobile Alliance

SECTION I DESCRIPTION OF PURPOSE AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Signage Improvement Grant -Program (the "SIG Program") is to provide grants to Downtown Mobile retailers for signage and sign-related lighting improvements to storefronts. It is intended that such improvements will enhance the Downtown Mobile business environment through better education of customers and visitors and enhanced aesthetic values to the streetscape. All applicants and proposed projects must meet the terms, conditions and other requirements set forth herein to be eligible for a SIG Program grant. The SIG Program is being administered by the Downtown Mobile Alliance (the "DMA") and all questions relating to the SIG Program should be directed to Fred Rendfrey at (251)434.8498 or via email at fred@downtownmobile.org.

The DMA is looking for projects that will have a *significant aesthetic impact* on the Downtown Mobile retail environment. DMA reserves the right to reject any application in its sole discretion. DMA also reserves the right to provide funding at a lesser amount than that requested.

B. Program Boundaries

SIG Program grants are available to retail businesses located (i) on Dauphin Street from Water Street on the east to Cedar Street on the west, and (ii) on Royal Street from Government Street on the south to St. Louis Street on the north (the "Program Boundaries").

C. Time Frame

SIG Program applications will be taken on a first-come-first-served basis from January 1, 2010 until funding is depleted or the elimination of the program by the DMA Board of Directors.

D. Eligibility Requirements

- Applicants for SIG Program grants must be the recorded owner(s) of the property or a tenant, subject to DMA review and approval of the tenant's lease and any required consent of the property owner.
- Only retail businesses operating within the Program Boundaries, occupying ground-floor space, and having an active street presence are eligible for SIG Program grants.
- SIG applicant must provide at least two (2) bids for all eligible improvements estimated to cost \$1000 and over unless a waiver is granted by staff.

- The DMA’s SIG award may award up to 85% of the total project costs with a maximum grant award of \$8,000. Applicants are required to contribute at least 15% of total costs from personal or business funds.

Examples:

Proposed Sign Cost	\$8,000	Proposed Sign Cost	\$12,000
15% Applicant match	\$1,200	15% Applicant match	\$ 4,000
DMA, SIG	\$6,800	DMA, SIG	\$ 8,000

- Both for-profit and non-profit retail businesses are eligible.

E. Preferred Retail Categories

Preference will be given to those businesses that provide under-served products to the growing Downtown Mobile residential, office, and visitor population and are listed in the City of Mobile’s “New Plan for Old Mobile.”

Accordingly, the following types of retail businesses will be given preference for participation in the SIG Program:

- **Apparel**
Men’s, Women’s, and Children’s: Casual, Business, and Formalwear
- **Accessories**
Men’s, Women’s, and Children’s: Shoes, Hats, Belts, Gloves, Scarves, Handbags/Hosiery, Jewelry, Luggage, and Leather goods
- **Home Furnishing and Home Accessories**
Furniture, Home Accessories, Art, Antiques, Garden Shop (outdoor furnishings and plantings),and Hardware
- **Specialty Retail and Gift Stores**
Books, Periodicals, Music, Cards/Stationery, Candles, Frames, Table Top - Fine & Casual,and Toys
- **Electronics**
Personal Electronics, Computer Equipment, Telephones, Office Supplies, and Equipment
- **Health and Personal Care**
Salons, Spas, Athletic Equipment and Apparel
- **Used Merchandise Stores**
Vintage Clothing and Accessories

G. Additional Factors

In addition to the quality and uniqueness of the sign, SIG Program grants will be awarded based on the following factors:

- **Architectural Significance** - buildings in historic districts or that have been deemed individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Signage Quality** - quality and design of the sign.

H. Eligible Improvements

Eligible improvements include: prepping and painting, exterior lighting, signage restoration/rehabilitation, signage replacement, architectural/design fees, building permits/planning fees, other signage and related façade improvements deemed consistent with the intent of the SIG Program as determined by the DMA staff and/or Incentives Committee.

I. Maximum Grant Amount

The maximum grant under the SIG Program is \$8,000.

J. Release of Funds

Subject to the terms and conditions contained herein, SIG Program grants will be paid by the DMA to the applicant upon the: (i) completion of the approved project in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted to the DMA; (ii) issuance of any required approvals by the City of Mobile in connection with the project; and (iii) submittal of proof of payment of all expenses included as part of the SIG.

K. Fees

Each applicant shall pay a \$100 non-refundable application fee to the DMA due upon submission of the SIG Program application.

L. Disclaimer

Neither the DMA, nor its affiliates, shall be responsible for business consulting, planning, design, or construction of improvements to property that is owned or leased by the applicant. No warranties or guarantees are expressed or implied by the description of, application for, or participation in the SIG Program. The applicant is advised to consult with licensed architects, engineers, or building contractors before proceeding with final plans or construction.

M. Application Process

- **Pre-Submittal Conference** – A meeting with an assigned staff member of the DMA must be held prior to submission of a SIG Program application. The purpose of the meeting is to acquaint all parties with the scope of the project and any related issues. This meeting also serves to familiarize the applicant with the review process and SIG Program policies.
- **Submittal of Application** – Applicant should complete the “Signage Improvement Grant Application” based on the SIG Program Requirements described herein. Applications must be submitted and approved **prior** to the start of construction for which funding is requested. Grants will not be awarded to projects that are under construction or completed. Nine (9) copies of the application, together with all required documentation, should be delivered to:

The Downtown Mobile Alliance
261 Dauphin Street
Mobile, AL 36602
Attention: Fred Rendfrey

- Design Review Process – All applicants pursuing incentives must have their projects reviewed by the DMA staff and Incentives Committee. The DMA review process will hold the project to a higher standard than that of the Architectural Review Board (“ARB”). The DMA review process will assess the project for design quality and for architectural, historical, and contextual compatibility to ensure that the DMA’s funds are being invested in a quality project that produces lasting benefits for the community.
- Incentives Committee Review and Approval –The applicant’s project will be reviewed by the Incentives Committee, in whose sole discretion the decision rests. The grant for the project will be approved or denied at this meeting. The applicant or his/her appointed representative must be present at the meeting. An appropriate representative could be any of the project principles or professionals contracted on the project.
- Grant Award – Begin construction. If during the process, changes to the approved sign proposal need to be made, the changes **must be reviewed and approved** by the DMA. Any changes not approved in writing could jeopardize the grant award.

N. See the Application Requirements in the attached SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION form.

SECTION II

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

General Policies and Procedures

- All projects that are awarded a Signage Improvement Grant must be reviewed by the Downtown Mobile Alliance's staff and Incentives Committee for compatibility with the existing neighborhood context, urban design, architectural detail, and for aesthetic value. The DMA will hold the project to a higher standard than that of the Architectural Review Board.
- Completed applications must be received at the Downtown Mobile Alliance office at least two weeks prior to the calling of an Incentive Committee meeting. Incomplete applications will not be presented to the Committee for review. Applications must be submitted and approved prior to the start of construction. At an Incentive Committee meeting, applicants will be invited to make brief remarks regarding their project, at which time the Committee may ask questions of staff and the applicants before making a decision.
- The Committee will deliberate on the merits of each application and, if in their opinion the project qualifies, may award the grant in full or in a partial amount.
- Once a project is awarded a SIG Program grant, the applicant has three (3) months to begin construction work on the project. If construction work does not begin within the 3-month period, the applicant will be notified that the grant will lapse, and the funds will be returned to the fund pool.
- The successful applicant has six (6) months to complete the project. If at the end of the 6-month period, the approved project is not complete, the applicant will be notified that the grant has lapsed, and the funds will be returned to the fund pool.
- If an approved grant does lapse and is returned to the fund pool, the applicant may re-apply on a first-come-first-served basis. The standard grant application process in use at that time must be followed for a resubmitted application.
- The SIG Program grant funds are not paid to the applicant until the approved work has been completed, inspected for compatibility with the approved application, and proof of payment for all submitted expenses has been reviewed by the DMA staff.
- Applicants are notified in writing of the approval or denial of their grant request. Applicants whose projects are approved are notified of the grant award date and the beginning of the six-month construction compliance period for the project.

b. What is the name of business?

c. What is the street address? Attach a legal description of the property.

d. What is the approximate square footage of space where the sign will go?

e. If you (the applicant) are not the property owner, name the property owner at the time of application submittal.

f. Provide all other information needed to further explain the project.

2. Provide a detailed description of the proposed uses of the SIG Program grant funds, and a preliminary design for the signage and any related improvements.

3. Applications must include the following materials, if applicable, for consideration. Please provide materials that can be reproduced for distribution to the DMA Board of Directors.

- a. Current photo of the buildings exterior (including all sides)
- b. Scale- Rendering of proposed improvements from a design professional
- c. Architectural plans, including dimensions/measurements if necessary
- d. Color and materials samples
- e. Sign plans
- f. Awning design (if necessary)
- g. Historical significance designation

4. Provide copies of vendor bids/estimates or other documentation of cost estimates for all proposed Signage work. Also include the estimated days or months needed for completion of the project.

- a. What is the Cost of the Exterior prep and paint, if any? \$ _____
- b. What is the Cost of the Exterior lighting related to the sign, if any? \$ _____
- c. What is the Cost of the Signage restoration/rehabilitation/construction, if any \$ _____
- d. What are the Architectural/design fees, if any? \$ _____
- e. What are the Building permit/planning fees \$ _____
- f. Describe Other proposed improvements (specify)

What is the Total Estimated Cost? \$ _____

What is the Estimated Date of Completion? _____

5. a. What is the name, address, email address and telephone number(s) of the applying entity or individual?

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone Numbers: _____

6. b. Provide the name(s) of the applicant's representatives and their addresses and telephone numbers if different from above.

7. Provide a financial statement and/or tax return for applicant for the most recently completed year.

8. Please disclose whether any applicant or any other person involved with the project is currently engaged in any civil or criminal proceeding.

9. Applicant must provide evidence of payment of all property taxes, local improvement charges and assessments, and other amounts with respect to the subject property.

By signing and dating this application you are affirming the following:

This application is made in order to induce the Downtown Mobile Alliance (the "DMA") to make a grant to the applicant under the DMA's SIG Program. The applicant hereby represents that all statements contained herein and in any documents submitted to the DMA are true and correct. All information materially significant to the DMA in its consideration of the application has been submitted to the DMA. The applicant acknowledges that it has reviewed the policies, terms and conditions of the SIG Program and agrees to comply with those policies, terms and conditions. The applicant specifically agrees to pay all reasonable costs, legal fees and expenses incurred by the DMA whether or not the incentive is granted or project completed.

This document may be signed by the applicant or the applicant's representatives.

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____