



## Façade Grant Guidelines & Application FY2025-2026

### Introduction

The Helena Business Improvement District (BID) Façade Grant is designed to promote the improvement of commercial and multi-use properties in the BID district by helping property owners upgrade, rehabilitate, and preserve the facades of eligible structures. The program provides matching grant funds up to \$5,000 or one half of project cost, whichever is less.

All grant applications must be received by January 31, 2026. Priority will be given to grant proposals for improvements that are unique to downtown Helena. Please follow the instructions carefully to ensure your application is complete and considered.

### Objectives

Façade grants are provided to owners or tenants to improve the appearance, quality, growth, and vitality of the downtown. Façade improvement funds are intended to:

- Encourage new projects and leverage private investment in downtown Helena.
- Preserve, enhance, and restore the historical and architectural significance of buildings in downtown Helena.
- Promote a positive business climate in downtown Helena that encourages the revitalization of buildings and supports business improvement; and
- Increase visual impact and curb appeal.

### Guidelines for Improvements

- Does your building have a façade easement? Find out by referencing the document, “Façade Easements” on our website, [visitthegulch.com](http://visitthegulch.com) ([here](#)).
- If so, façade changes must go before the Heritage Tourism Council for a recommendation to the Helena City Commission.
- Is your building in the historic district and does it contribute to the historic character of the district? Find out by referencing the document, “Helena Historic District Building Status” on our website ([here](#)).
- If so, and if your project requires demolition of any building components, façade changes must go before the Heritage Tourism Council for a recommendation to the Helena City Commission.
- Design Guidelines for Improvements in the Downtown Helena Historic District can be found on our website ([here](#)), reference document, “Design Guidelines for Improvements in Downtown Helena Historic District” or by contacting Helena/Lewis and Clark Co. Heritage Preservation office.

### **Eligible Improvements Grants**

- Murals
- Awnings – repair or installation
- Rehabilitation or compatible reconstruction of storefronts
- Removal of metal siding and exterior slipcovers (surfaces), exterior cleaning, and painting
- Masonry repair and repainting
- Repair and replacement of architectural details or materials

### **Ineligible Improvements Grants**

- Improvements made prior to grant approval
- Interior rehabilitation unless it is essential to rehabilitate the building's façade
- Interior decoration
- Refinancing of existing debt
- Inventory and equipment
- Payment for applicant's labor (but building materials/supplies are eligible)
- General business operations expenses (payroll, taxes, utilities, etc.)
- Business signs or lettering on awnings

### **Building Design Requirements**

- Exterior renovations shall, to the extent practical, preserve and promote the significant architectural and historic features of the building.
- All construction work shall comply with applicable local, state, and federal building codes.
- Ideal projects will retain or repair original features, use historic materials, and not harm or remove historic materials.
- Creative new uses for existing building stock are encouraged, as well as modern yet compatible awnings, signage, lighting, and other fixtures.

### **Terms and Conditions**

- Applicants must be in the BID district. BID district boundaries can be found on our website, [www.visitthegulch.com](http://www.visitthegulch.com), ([here](#)).
- Grantees will be required to sign a grant agreement guaranteeing the project will be completed according to the details included in the grant application.
- Grants will be paid in a lump sum reimbursement at the end of the project.
- Awarded grantees will cooperate with any efforts of the HBID to publicize the grant award.
- By applying for a grant, the applicant acknowledges that they have read and understand these guidelines and accept them.
- All decisions of the HBID are final and binding.

### **Award Execution Steps**

1. If a grant is awarded, a written notice of award will be sent to the applicant explaining the terms of the grant. The awardee must agree to provide any additional documentation required by the date required and must sign and return the grant agreement.
2. If a grant is not awarded, a written rejection of award will be emailed and/or mailed in a letter to the applicant. Any applicant who receives a rejection letter is encouraged to reach out to the HBID Executive Director for tips on how to make a more competitive application.

### **Timeline of Application**

1. The deadline to submit FY2025-2026 Façade Grant application is January 31, 2026.
2. The committee review of application will be February 12, 2026 or next planned design committee.
3. The board review of application will be March 10, 2026 or next planned board meeting.
4. Applicants will be informed if their grant is awarded or not awarded a week after the BID Board meeting.

### **Distribution of Funds**

Prior to releasing grant funds, HBID requires:

1. **Evidence of Program Expenditures** – Awardees must provide documentation of expenditures, which can include bills, invoices, or receipts for materials.
2. **Inspection** – the Executive Director will inspect the project to verify that it fulfills the grant agreement and document the completed project with photographs.

**Mail or email application to:**

**Helena Business Improvement District  
330 Jackson St.  
Helena, MT 59601  
director@helenabid.com**

# Façade Grant Application

2025-26

First, call or email the HBID Executive Director and express your intent to apply:  
[director@helenabid.com](mailto:director@helenabid.com), 406.447.1535

Done?: Yes ☐ No ☐

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Building Name, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Representative: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Do you own the building? Yes ☐ No ☐

## Tenants only

Building owner name: \_\_\_\_\_

Building owner email/phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have the owner's permission for the project? Yes ☐ No ☐

When does your lease terminate? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you building have a façade easement?\* Yes ☐ No ☐ (check here: [façade easements](#))

Is your building in the historic district, and does it contribute to the historic character of the district?\*\*  
Yes ☐ No ☐ (check here: [Building Historic Status](#))

Describe the project: \_\_\_\_\_

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\*Façade change for buildings with Façade Easements must go through the Heritage Preservation and Tourism Council for a recommendation to the City Commission.

\*\*If your building contributes to the character of the historic district and the project requires demolition of any building components, it must go through the Heritage Preservation and Tourism Council.

### **Project Cost**

Total project cost: \_\_\_\_\_

Building owner contribution: \_\_\_\_\_

Tenant contribution: \_\_\_\_\_

Other funding: \_\_\_\_\_

Requested grant amount: \_\_\_\_\_

May not exceed 1/2 of total project cost or \$5000.

### **Attachments**

Required attachments for this application:

- 1) At least one quote for each portion of the project. Two quotes preferred, not required.
- 2) Photographs of the current façade showing all aspects to be improved.
- 3) Sketches, drawings, or mock-ups of the proposed project, if applicable.

Only if/when awarded a grant:

- 1) Owners: A recorded deed of the property. The deed must show the applicant and grantee on the deed are the same entity/person(s).
- 2) Tenants: Signed letter from the owner supporting the project and including the lease term.
- 3) If your building has a façade easement or is listed as contributing to the historic district, you must present evidence that you have contacted and received approval from the Historic Preservation Officer: [pattardo@lccountymt.gov](mailto:pattardo@lccountymt.gov), 406.447.8357
- 4) A signed Façade Improvement Grant Agreement.



## **Façade Improvement Grant Agreement**

- A. Grantee agrees complete the project as described in the application. This grant may be used only for eligible project components described in the grantee's application and approved by the committee.
- B. Grantee agrees to complete the project by June 30<sup>th</sup> of the ensuing year.
- C. Grantee agrees to preserve and promote the significant architectural and historic features of the building.
- D. Grantee agrees to provide additional information and documents as the HBID may request and allow HBID and its representatives to have reasonable access to the site for the purpose of evaluating the progress and completion of the project.
- E. Grantee agrees to their best knowledge and belief, their project complies with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and codes.
- F. Grantee agrees to maintain the property and improvements.
- G. Grantee agrees to allow the HBID to promote the project including, but not limited to, displaying a HBID logo sign at the site during and after construction, and using photographs and descriptions of the project in HBID promotional materials and social media.
- H. HBID reserves the right to withhold any payments to be made under this grant award if, in the HBID's sole discretion, such action is necessary: (1) because grantee has not fully complied with the terms and conditions of the grant; (2) to protect the purpose and objectives of the grant; or (3) to comply with any law or regulation applicable to grantee, to HBID, or this grant.

On behalf of the grantee, I understand and agree to the foregoing terms and conditions of the HBID grant, and hereby certify my authority to execute this agreement.

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*Business / Organization Name*

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*Applicant's Signature*

*Date*

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*Building Owner's Signature*

*Date*