



## Comstock Center Façade Improvement Program

FINAL - DDA Board Approved July 26, 2023

### Background

The Comstock Center Façade Improvement Program (FIP) has been developed by the Comstock Center Downtown Development Authority (CCDDA). The FIP Program was approved by the CCDDA on July 26, 2023.

### Program Purpose

The façade improvement grant program was created to encourage private small business investment and improvements to front building facades by providing financial incentives. Appropriate rehabilitation, repair, and dramatic improvement to private commercial facades in the CCDDA will encourage long-term and sustainable economic development in Comstock and help maintain, strengthen, and capitalize on our community's business resources. By improving the appearance of building facades, the FIP Program helps to improve the economic viability of the downtown.

### Grant Funding

This FIP program is funded by the CCDDA 2023 Budget. Special private grant dollars may also contribute to the program budget.

The number of projects receiving grants in a fiscal year is based on the program budget, with a new funding cycle beginning September 1, 2023. Grants are awarded monthly if funds are available.

**Grants will reimburse 50% of eligible project costs up to a maximum of \$5,000. The maximum grant for new signs is \$1,000.**

### Grant Timing

Applications will be accepted until August 31, 2024. The CCDDA Executive Director and the Economic Development/Marketing/Outreach Committee (EDMO) will review the applications monthly as needed. The EDMO Committee's recommendation for which project(s) should be awarded grants will be given to the CCDDA Board and reviewed at their regularly scheduled meetings on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 5:30pm. At this meeting the board will approve or deny funding for the recommended grants. All applicants who are not present at the meeting will be notified within 7 days as to whether they have been awarded a grant.

### **Program Target Area**

The target area for the FIP Program is the Comstock Center Downtown Development Authority District/Tax Increment Funding Authority District. (See Exhibit A).

### **Eligible Applicants**

1. Owners of private commercial buildings in the Comstock Center DDA/TIF District, used for commercial purposes and conforming to zoning use are eligible to apply for grant funds.
2. Tenants of eligible buildings may request grant funds if they submit a notarized letter of permission from the property owner with their application.
3. Buildings shall be privately owned and paying Comstock real property taxes. Property taxes must be current.

### **Eligible Improvement Projects**

1. Exterior brick, stone or wall surface cleaning using gentlest means possible (no sandblasting).
2. Re-pointing of brick mortar joints.
3. Patching and painting of façade walls.
4. Storefront window and/or door repair or appropriate replacement.
5. Cornice repair or appropriate replacement.
6. Removal of angled projecting roofs from the façade and repair of surface.
7. Other exterior improvements include restoration, removal, and replacement of appropriate materials per the Comstock Township Zoning Ordinance – Comstock Center District including:  
*“Durable building materials, simple configurations and solid craftsmanship are required. Fifty percent of walls visible from public streets, exclusive of wall areas devoted to meeting transparency and ground story activation requirements, shall be constructed of brick, glass, fiber cement siding, metal (beams, lintels, trim elements, and ornamentation only), wood lap, stucco, split-faced block, or stone. Exterior insulation finishing systems (E.I.F.S.) and vinyl or aluminum siding may not constitute more than ten percent of the surface area of any façade’s overall surface area.”*
8. Business signs meeting the Comstock zoning ordinance
9. New and replacement awnings.
10. Outdoor seating decks or platforms adjacent to public sidewalks.

### **Ineligible Projects**

1. Interior improvements, general maintenance, or furnishings.
2. Landscaping.
3. Building additions.
4. No side or rear facades
5. Roof repair.
6. Painting unpainted brick.

### **Ineligible Project Expenses**

1. Financing or refinancing debt, loan origination fees.
2. Property acquisition.
3. Building permit fees or development review fees.
4. Property appraisals.
5. Legal fees or architectural fees.
6. Labor costs paid to owner/applicant or relatives of the owner/applicant.

### **Funding Guidelines**

1. Applications for projects must be approved by the CCDDA Board of Directors prior to commencement of the work for which funds are requested.
2. All rehabilitation projects must meet Comstock Township zoning and building codes.
3. In general, the CCDDA will encourage repair and preservation of existing historic features of facades and encourage appropriate changes to alterations to these facades that have resulted in an incoherent, unattractive or inharmonious appearance. Designs should be compatible with the buildings downtown character and with the adjoining buildings. Proposed CCDDA design guidelines will be created and applied.
4. Any grant for surface cleaning must ensure that best management practices shall be used and environmental permits are obtained if removing lead-based paint or discharging paint materials into the Township's storm sewer. Projects where cleaning methods are used that damage the historic building materials, particularly sandblasting, shall not be awarded grants.
5. Paint and material colors will be reviewed and should either be based on original colors obtained from paint samples on the buildings, historic color samples, or be compatible with adjoining buildings and colors in downtown Comstock Center. Trim colors, which highlight building details are encouraged. Inappropriate colors determined by the CCDDA should be avoided.
6. Projects should not remove, alter, damage, or cover up significant architectural features of the building which are original, or which reflect a major alteration that is itself architecturally significant.
7. Projects may partially or fully restore the historic appearance of the building based on actual evidence, including photographs, written documentation, data on the building or site or other data.

8. Projects funded by grant monies must be completed within one year of the date that the grant application is approved. An extension may be approved at the sole discretion of the CCDDA under significant special circumstances.
9. Any improvements that have been made through the FIP Program must be maintained by the applicant and may not be removed or significantly altered for a period of five (5) years. The applicant shall pay back the CCDDA if the property owner or tenant sells, moves, or closes the business within the 5-year period. Payback amount will be prorated based on the five-year period.
- 10 All applicants must have all property (real and personal) taxes paid to date. No grant funds will be released until 100% of the approved façade work is complete and final inspections of the work show that all program requirements have been met. This grant is awarded on a reimbursement basis with funds released upon provision of adequate proof of payments to contractors' submission of waivers of lien.

### **Step-by-Step Application Process**

1. A completed grant application must be submitted to the CCDDA Executive Director. Since funds for this program are allocated based on funding availability, estimates for the façade work to be performed must be submitted on letterhead from licensed contractors that can perform the work. Two estimates are required, and three estimates are recommended. The exact amount of funding being requested shall be based on the estimate selected and outlined on the application. The CCDDA determines the maximum grant award amount based on the estimates provided. Proof of applicant funding must be provided. If the cost of the project exceeds the initial estimate, the applicant only receives the original grant amount approved.
2. If an applicant is requesting funding for more than one building, the applicant must complete a separate application for each building. Each eligible building will be considered a separate project for the purpose of grant funding.
3. A \$50 application fee made payable to Comstock Township, to cover staff review, and proof of project funding must accompany the completed application form.
4. It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit appropriate building and/or site plans with the application and to have KABA review for building code permit compliance. Response and comments from KABA shall be provided to the CCDDA Executive Director as a part of the application. The Executive Director will forward the application to the Comstock Township Community Development Department and KABA to make sure the work proposed complies with the Township's zoning codes. If it complies, it will be returned to the Executive Director. If the work does not comply, the applicant will be contacted for a meeting with the DDA Executive Director and the Community Development Department to help resolve the zoning and building code issues. A revised application may be required. No grant application will be processed that does not meet Comstock Township Zoning Ordinances and the Michigan Rehabilitation Code. This preliminary review will not replace Township requirements for obtaining zoning approval or building permits.
5. Once a compliant application is returned to CCDDA staff, it will be reviewed by the EDMO Committee at their next grant cycle meeting (the applicant or representative may attend). The Executive Director and EDMO Committee will review the complete application to decide eligibility and prepare a

recommendation for grant awards. The Project Rating and Approval Criteria will be used to help evaluate the application. Recommended applications will then be forwarded to the CCDDA Board of Directors for the final grant decision.

6. Once an application has been approved, the applicant will be notified in writing by the CCDDA Executive Director, and the amount of the grant will be clearly stated in the letter.
7. The EDMO Committee must approve of any changes in the drawings and work specifications, subject to approval by the CCDDA Board. Deviations from an approved plan may disqualify the applicant from the grant program.
8. "Before" and "After" pictures must be taken by the applicant and be submitted to the CCDDA Office upon completion of the project. "Before" pictures must be taken before the commencement of any work.
9. When a façade improvement project is completed and "Before" and "After" pictures are submitted, the project will be examined by the Executive Director, and, if necessary, a licensed architect, builder, or code official hired to serve as grant inspector, to ensure that the work has been completed as specified in the grant application which was approved by the CCDDA Board.
10. Once staff and building inspector have verified completion of the façade improvement project, the applicant must submit paid copies of invoices, receipts, and an itemized statement of the total cost of the project signed by the applicant. All documentation for payment must be provided at one time to the Executive Director for one payout. Receipts must be provided no later than 60 days after completion of project. After receipt and verification of the information, CCDDA will release the grant money to the applicant. The grant is awarded on a reimbursement basis.

### **Project Evaluation and Approval Criteria**

All complete applications meeting the eligibility and guidelines above will be reviewed and evaluated by the EDMO Committee using the Zoning Code, Building Code, and design guidelines (to be prepared, which is based on the goals and priorities of CCDDA).

#### **1. *Design Service or Consultation:***

Does the project have a licensed and insured architect and/or building contractor?

#### **2. *CCDDA Place Plan Vision:***

Does the project meet the following design and land use goals and objectives which are a part of the CCDDA 2018 Place Plan Vision?

##### ***Revitalization:***

- Encourage renovation and revitalization of the front side of the business to enhance the corridor space.
- Maintain the charming historic vernacular architectural style of Comstock Center.
- Add rear shop entrances to provide alternative access to buildings and update or repair building facades.

*Beautification:*

- Provide more lighting along the facade for aesthetic appeal as well as safety-provide outdoor landscaping.
- Add cultural or artistic elements to provide points of interest along the alley corridor.

3. *Project Scope*

Does the project improve multiple aspects of the façade/exterior?

4. *Design Guidelines/Appropriateness*

Does the project:

- Follow Design Guidelines (To be developed by CCDDA)
- Comply with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (if appropriate)?
- Preserve, repair, or enhance significant architectural features of the building which are original, or which reflect a major alteration that is itself architecturally significant Partially or fully restore the historic appearance (if applicable) of the building?
- Is the design compatible with the buildings historic character and with the adjoining buildings?

5. *Need*

- Is the building considered an eyesore?
- Is the façade and/or storefront in danger of being lost or compromised due to deferred maintenance?
  
- Has an inappropriate change in the past left the façade with an undesirable appearance?
- Are windows, bricks, or cornices in danger of falling off the building?
- Is the building in danger of demolition?

6. *Significance*

Is the building:

- Contributing to a National Register historic district or listed individually?
- Individually eligible for listing in the State or National Register of Historic Places?
- More than 50 years old?

**Program Amendments**

The details of the FIP Program may be amended at any time during the fiscal year, subject to the formal approval of the CCDDA Board of Directors. All decisions of CCDDA Board of Directors are final. There is no appeal process in place.

**Indemnification**

The Applicant hereby agrees to defend, indemnify and hold harmless to the fullest extent permitted by law Comstock Township and the CCDDA Board, and all other employees, agents, directors, volunteers, successors in interest and/or representatives from any and all claims, liabilities, damages, personal injuries, requests for reimbursement or other such requests for payment arising out of or in connection with the project referenced in this Agreement. The parties agree that the Applicant’s duty to defend and indemnify is intended to be interpreted in the broadest possible sense, except that the Applicant shall

have no responsibility to defend or indemnify where the CCDDA Board, or its employees, agents, directors, volunteers and/or representatives are found to be solely negligent.

**Contact Information**

For questions or to apply for the FIP Program, contact:

Steve Deisler, Executive Director

Comstock Center Downtown Development Authority

Phone: 269-381-2360 Email: [sdeisler@comstockmi.gov](mailto:sdeisler@comstockmi.gov)



**Comstock Center Façade Improvement (FIP) Program Application**

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Property Owner's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Project Address \_\_\_\_\_

Parcel Number 39-07 \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address (Applicant)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The work to be performed in connection with the FIP Program, for which the Applicant will be reimbursed, is outlined below:

Proposed Improvements (check whichever applies)

- \_\_\_\_ Exterior brick or wall surface cleaning
- \_\_\_\_ Pointing of brick/Mortar joint repair
- \_\_\_\_ Patching and painting of façade walls
- \_\_\_\_ Window and/or door replacement/repair
- \_\_\_\_ Cornice repair and/or replacement
- \_\_\_\_ Sign/Awning
- \_\_\_\_ Outdoor seating platform
- \_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Façade(s) Impacted (check whichever applies)

\_\_\_\_ Front \_\_\_\_ Corner lot

**Total Estimated Cost of Improvement \$** \_\_\_\_\_ (two quotes required)

**Incentive Amount Requested \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**Checklist**

The following information must be submitted with your application to ensure quick processing:

- \_\_\_\_ Project Improvement Plans drawn to scale, if applicable.
- \_\_\_\_ Samples of construction materials to be used in façade improvements.



- \_\_\_ Photograph(s) of existing condition of property.
- \_\_\_ Historic photo of building(s), which can be found in the archives of the Comstock Public Library.
- \_\_\_ Proposed budget and detailed cost estimates (minimum of two quotes must be submitted) for work.
- \_\_\_ Selected contractor's proof of insurance.
- \_\_\_ Written permission by property owner to implement improvements, if applicant is a tenant.
- \_\_\_ Proof of payment of taxes are current (available at Comstock Township Hall).
- \_\_\_ \$50 application fee (check payable to Comstock Township).
- \_\_\_ Proof of project funding (letter from bank or statement).
- \_\_\_ Applicant's proof of insurance.

**The Applicant certifies and agrees to the terms and conditions set forth below:**

1. The Applicant is the owner or tenant of a property in the CCDDA TIF District as outlined in the FIP Program Guidelines.
2. The Applicant is in good standing with Comstock Township in terms of payment of taxes and utilities.
3. The Applicant agrees to be bound by the rules as outlined in the FIP Program Guidelines and should consult the Secretary of Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation (if applicable) when making decisions regarding the aesthetic quality of the façade design.
4. All improvements to be undertaken will be consistent with all applicable zoning and building codes. Further, if review is necessary by the Comstock Township Planning Commission in accordance with the Comstock Township Zoning Ordinance, the review will be conducted before the work on the façade begins. Applicants must pay all relevant fees.
5. Only the work that is outlined on the application will be eligible for reimbursement.
6. The project must be completed within one year of approval of the application. There are no extensions of grant funds. The project is not eligible for reimbursement if the work is not completed during the approved time period.
7. Funds are awarded on a reimbursement basis. Disbursement of funds shall be made only after the entire project is complete and certified by Township representatives and the grant inspector to be in compliance with the approved design. The work must also adhere to any required inspections (e.g. Comstock Township) before funds are disbursed for reimbursement.
8. The applicant must submit copies of invoices, receipts and an itemized statement of the total cost of the project, signed by the applicant. All documentation for payment must be provided at one time to CCDDA for one payout, and the receipts must be provided no later than fifteen (15) months after the application has been approved. Payment will be made to the applicant by CCDDA within 4-6 weeks. Comstock Township will only make checks payable to the Applicant.
9. The amount of the reimbursement must adhere to the Program Guidelines. The specific amount is outlined in the application.
10. The Applicant understands that he/she is responsible for the construction management for entire project.

11. The grant money awarded will be in keeping with the FIP Program Guidelines and shall not exceed the amount as outlined in the application.
12. It is expressly understood and agreed that the Applicant shall be solely responsible for all safety conditions and in compliance with all federal, state, and local safety conditions, safety regulations, building codes, ordinances and other applicable regulations.
13. The applicant shall, at his/her own expense, indemnify, protect, defend and hold harmless Comstock Township and the CCDDA and/or its agent and employees, from all claims, damages, lawsuits, costs, and expenses, for any property damage, personal injury or other loss relating in any way to the FIP Program.
14. The Applicant understands that he/she is responsible for the maintenance of the façade improvements described here for a period of five years from the project completion.

Applicant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner's Signature

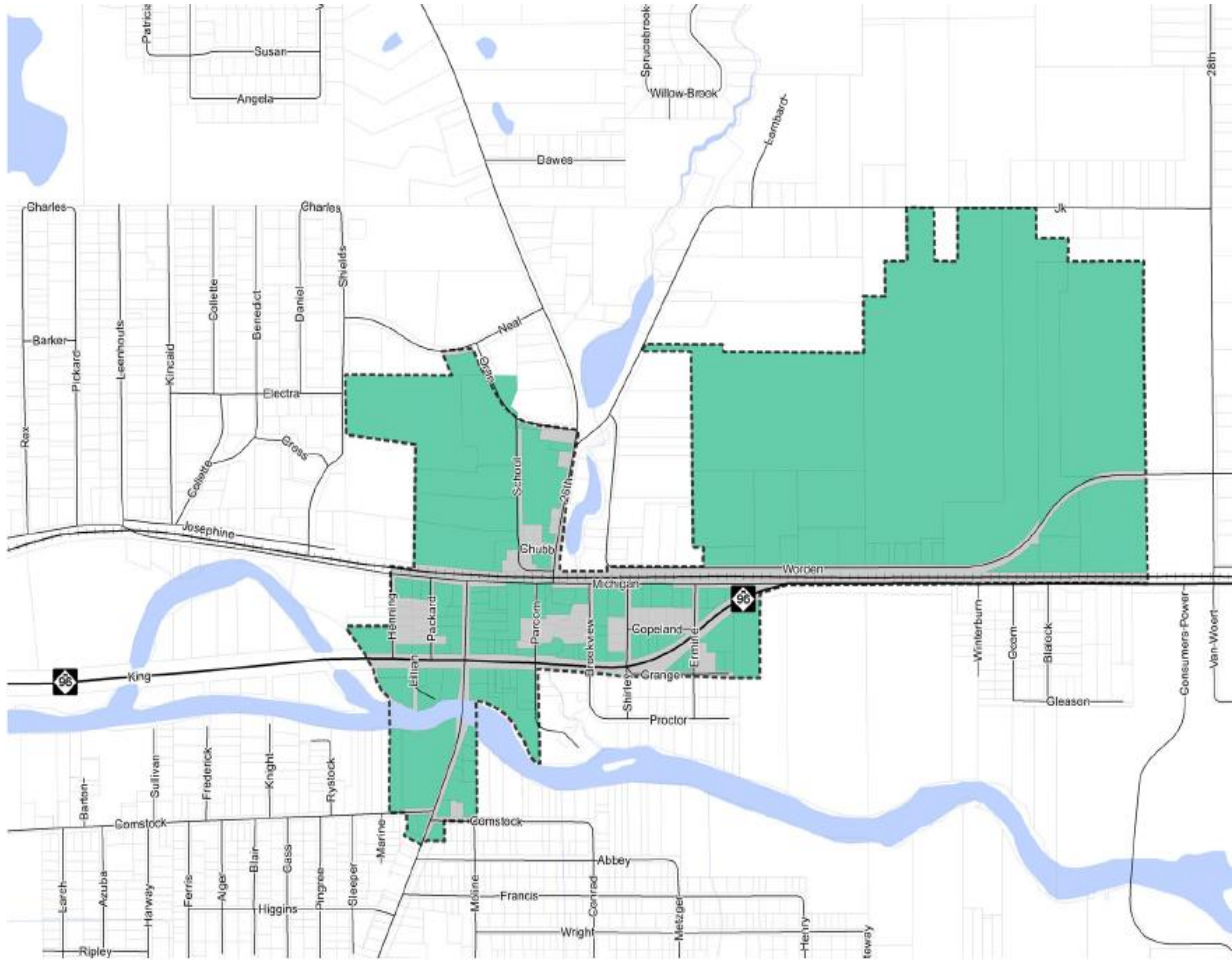
\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Complete and return to:**

Steve Deisler, Executive Director  
Comstock Center Downtown Development Authority  
5858 King Highway, Kalamazoo, MI 49048  
*OR*  
P.O. Box 449 Comstock MI 49041  
*OR*  
Email: [sdeisler@comstockmi.gov](mailto:sdeisler@comstockmi.gov)

EXHIBIT A



Map 2

Charter Township of Comstock  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN and TAX INCREMENT FINANCE PLAN BOUNDARY