



Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

Division of Neighborhood Revitalization

Maryland Facade Improvement Program Guidelines

Last modified May 2025

Program Overview

The Maryland Facade Improvement Program (MFIP) provides funds to local governments and community development organizations for programs to improve the exteriors of commercial properties located within Maryland's Sustainable Communities. The program supports communities seeking to create consistent, attractive designs for their commercial corridors in order to bolster economic vitality and stimulate new private investments. Local facade improvement programs should support the goals identified in the area's [Sustainable Communities](#) Action Plan.

Eligible Applicants

Counties, municipalities and community development organizations are eligible to apply for MFIP funding. Any department or office of a political subdivision may apply for MFIP funding on behalf of its county or municipality.

Final recipients of MFIP funding must be businesses located within the State's designated Sustainable Communities.

Eligible Use of Funds

Following a successful application, the awardee will use MFIP funds to capitalize its own local facade improvement program. Funds must be used for capital improvements to properties occupied by businesses seeking to make the outside appearance of the building it occupies more attractive. Projects should prioritize aesthetic improvements over routine maintenance.

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Jacob R. Day, Secretary
Julia Glanz, Deputy Secretary

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Program funding may be used for capital improvements only. Local programs should prioritize improvements on, or attached to, primary elevations of commercial properties. Such eligible uses of MFIP grants include:

- Signage
- Exterior painting
- Storefront reconstruction
- Siding
- Exterior lighting
- Window and door upgrades
- Public-facing masonry or cornices
- Murals
- Removal of unattractive exterior finishes
- Roofs
- Other uses approved by the Program

The following improvements are **ineligible for MFIP funding**:

- Any improvements banned by local building codes or zoning
- Improvements outside of the State's designated Sustainable Communities
- Interior work
- Electric charging stations
- Solar panels
- Improvements to an individual business that, in aggregate, amount to less than \$1,000 or more than \$50,000 of MFIP funding during a single award cycle
- Changes to completed improvements that received MFIP funding within the last 12 months
- Improvements for businesses or on properties that are otherwise prohibited from receiving State Revitalization Programs funding

Predevelopment and operating expenses (including acquisition, permitting, architectural services, and design services) are ineligible. Expenses incurred prior to award by the local facade improvement program do not qualify.

Local Program Requirements and Best Practices

MFIP awardees will develop and enforce their own program guidelines that comply with the requirements listed above. Applications for programs supported by strong local design guidelines, dedicated staff, and a track record of successful revitalization projects will be most competitive in the MFIP grant review. Local program guidelines must at least include criteria for: (1) rating qualified businesses that apply for grants and (2) awarding grants to qualified businesses.

To maximize revitalization impact, **awardees are encouraged, but not required, to include the following in their program guidelines:**

- Matching fund requirements, if any, according to the needs and capacities of their respective jurisdictions
- Additional ineligible uses for grant funding based on program goals
- Requirements that ensure a broad distribution of grant funding to several businesses rather than concentrating investment in one or two businesses
- Geographic targeting of grants to prioritize vital commercial corridors

Local facade improvement program guidelines **should prioritize projects that:**

- Contribute to the overall harmony and/or attractiveness of the community's-built environment
- Support goals outlined in the area's Sustainable Communities Action Plan
- Conform with any other relevant local plans or guidelines (such as those of a Local Historic District)
- Improve and/or restore historical features
- Include a timeline for completion in less than 120 days from the date of award
- Support businesses that serve important community needs
- Create significant revitalization impact with minimal investment
- Include matching funds from business owners
- Support legacy and minority businesses
- Demonstrate a commitment to excellent design

MFIP funds can be used flexibly so that local programs achieve maximum revitalization impact. DHCD encourages awardees to work with staff at the Division of Neighborhood Revitalization to design programs that successfully induce investment into the program's target area. DHCD provides model program documents that follow best practices of neighborhood revitalization; awardees should modify these documents to suit their unique needs and capacities.

The following improvements **are not preferred**, and applications that prioritize these improvements will not be competitive during DHCD's annual review of MFIP grant applications:

- Banners or vinyl signs
- Fencing
- Landscaping
- Outdoor seating
- Trash containers
- Parking lots and other hardscaping
 - Eligible only if (1) open to customers/the public and (2) complementary to facade improvements on the business's main building)
- Projects for which a majority of the improvements are made to the grounds rather than the building

- Improvements not visible from the property's adjoining corridors
- Improvements to vacant properties not seeking an occupancy permit
- Construction work on any new building or facility, including substantial additions to an existing building

Historic Preservation Compliance

All MFIP projects are subject to the Maryland Historical Trust Act, which requires that DHCD consult with the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) on projects seeking financial assistance and avoid adversely affecting properties that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places or are considered eligible for listing.

In order to avoid adversely impacting historic properties, DHCD applies the Federal Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation on all properties that are over 50 years old. If you have any questions about the historic status of properties, application of the Standards, or the review process, please contact our Preservation Officer, Melissa Archer, at melissa.archer2@maryland.gov.