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Downtown Signage, Awning, and Façade Improvement Grant – Application Packet

The Hamilton Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) Downtown Signage, Awning, and Façade Improvement Grant Program is designed to enhance the appearance and economic vitality of businesses within Hamilton’s historic Downtown District. By supporting visible, high-quality exterior improvements, the program seeks to promote or develop new or expanded business enterprises, as permitted under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 505, thereby stimulating additional commercial activity in the City of Hamilton.

For the purposes of this program, the Downtown District is defined as commercially zoned properties within two (2) blocks of the Hamilton County Courthouse. Projects outside this area will not be considered unless the HEDC Board of Directors votes to extend eligibility on a case-by-case basis.

This program is funded and administered by the HEDC Board of Directors, who may amend, suspend, or discontinue it at any time. All grant awards are discretionary, and all funding decisions of the HEDC Board of Directors are final.

The HEDC has determined that this program supports new and expanded business development by:

- Improving the aesthetics and visual appeal of the City of Hamilton
- Increasing customer traffic to existing businesses through enhanced signage, awnings, and façades
- Encouraging additional private investment in downtown buildings by business and property owners

The HEDC has allocated \$15,000 for FY 2025–2026 for this program. All grants are awarded on a competitive, first-come, first-served basis until funds are depleted.

Scope and Eligibility

The HEDC has allocated \$15,000 for the FY 2025–2026 Downtown Signage, Awning, and Façade Improvement Grant Program. These grants are competitive and will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until all allocated funds are depleted. Applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month to be placed on the following HEDC Board of Directors meeting agenda. Applicants whose requests are denied may submit a revised application after thirty (30) days if the changes address the reasons for the original denial.

This program is limited to commercially zoned properties located within two (2) blocks of the Hamilton County Courthouse. The HEDC Board may, at its discretion, extend eligibility to properties outside this boundary if doing so directly supports downtown revitalization. Projects must be strictly commercial in nature and intended to promote or develop new or expanded business enterprises as permitted under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 505 (Type B Economic Development Corporations). New building construction, residential improvements, or unrelated capital assets are not eligible for funding. If a property is zoned for both commercial and residential use, only the portion serving an active business enterprise may receive assistance.

Tenants are eligible to apply, provided they submit written authorization from the property owner approving the proposed improvements. Each application must include two competitive contractor bids (at least one from a 76531 business) and a photo or sketch of the current and proposed signage, awning, or façade. Applications missing any required documentation will not be considered complete and will not be placed on the Board's agenda.

No work may begin before the project has been formally approved by the HEDC Board of Directors in an open meeting. Projects must be completed within 180 days of approval, or the Board may terminate the grant award. All grants are issued on a reimbursement basis. Reimbursement will be provided only after the work has been completed in full compliance with the approved plans, the applicant has submitted proof of contractor payment, and the HEDC has verified satisfactory completion of the project.

To help distribute limited funds fairly, no single business or property may receive more than \$7,500 in total grant reimbursements during a single fiscal year, and each business or property is limited to one approved project per fiscal year. Multiple applications from the same business or property will not be considered until the following fiscal year. Applicants who received an award from this program within the past three (3) years may also be deemed ineligible for new funding.

Design Standards

All improvements funded through this program must be consistent with the historic character and visual integrity of Hamilton's Downtown District. The HEDC requires that all projects align with design principles promoted by Main Street America and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These principles help protect the architectural heritage of the district while supporting a vibrant and cohesive business environment.

Preservation and Compatibility

Applicants must prioritize retaining and repairing historic architectural features whenever possible, rather than covering or removing them. New work should be compatible in scale, design, materials, and color with both the building and the surrounding downtown context. Materials should be durable, high-quality, and appropriate to the building's original era of construction.

Façade and Structural Features

Façade projects should respect original design elements such as cornices, window openings, transoms, masonry detailing, and storefront configurations. The removal of historic or architecturally significant features is not permitted. Non-original coverings or materials that obscure historic details may be removed only if the work reveals or restores original features.

Signage and Awnings

Signage should be scaled to the pedestrian environment, designed to complement the building's architecture, and installed so as not to obscure or damage architectural details. Use of a minimum of three colors is encouraged, and black-and-white signage must include an accent color. Awnings should align with window openings, complement the proportions of the façade, and use materials and colors consistent with the historic district.

Lighting and Color

Exterior lighting should highlight architectural features without producing glare. Paint colors must be cohesive and historically appropriate, using complementary tones that enhance the building's character and the overall downtown streetscape.

Documentation and Approval

All applications must include photos or sketches showing both existing conditions and proposed improvements. Final designs are subject to approval by the HEDC Board of Directors and may require modifications to ensure compliance with these design standards before grant funds are awarded.

Procurement and Compliance Requirements

All projects funded through this program must comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws, including Texas Local Government Code Chapter 505 (Type B Economic Development Corporations), the Texas Open Meetings Act, and the Texas Public Information Act. The HEDC is committed to ensuring that all grants serve a valid public purpose, promote or develop new or expanded business enterprises, and are awarded through a fair and transparent process.

Public Purpose and Procurement Compliance

All grant-funded expenditures must meet the legal “public purpose” test and comply with the City of Hamilton’s purchasing and procurement policies. Grantees are responsible for obtaining all required permits, licenses, and inspections, and must adhere to all applicable building codes and zoning regulations.

Performance Agreements and Clawback Provisions

Before any funds are disbursed, recipients must enter into a written performance agreement with the HEDC. This agreement will define the approved scope of work, expected outcomes, and the requirement that the improvements directly support business development. It will also include clawback provisions requiring the repayment of funds if the recipient fails to complete the project or violates the terms of the agreement.

Board Approval in Open Meeting

All applications must be formally approved by the HEDC Board of Directors in a posted open meeting prior to any work beginning. Any project started without formal approval will be automatically disqualified from reimbursement.

Records Retention and Public Transparency

All applications, agreements, and payment documentation are public records and must be retained in accordance with the HEDC and City of Hamilton records retention schedules. Applicants should understand that their grant information may be subject to public disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act.

Conflict of Interest

Applicants must comply with all state and local conflict of interest laws. Any potential conflict, including relationships between the applicant and HEDC staff or board members, must be disclosed in writing as part of the application. Undisclosed conflicts may result in disqualification or clawback of awarded funds.

Litigation Disqualification

Applicants are not eligible to receive funding if they, their business, or the property owner are currently involved in litigation or legal action against the City of Hamilton or the

HEDC. If such litigation arises during the application or award process, the grant may be rescinded and any disbursed funds must be repaid.

Grant Regulations

Signage Improvements

The HEDC will reimburse up to 75% of eligible costs for new signage projects, with a maximum reimbursement of \$1,500 per building. Eligible expenses include design, fabrication, installation, and the removal of existing outdated or noncompliant signage.

All new signage must be approved by the HEDC Board of Directors before installation and must comply with the program's adopted Design Standards. Signage should be scaled to the pedestrian environment, incorporate at least three colors (black-and-white signage must include an accent color), and be designed to complement the building's architectural character and the broader historic downtown context. Applicants are required to remove conflicting or obsolete signage as part of their project unless the Board grants a specific exemption.

Awning Improvements

The HEDC will reimburse up to 75% of eligible costs for new awning projects, with a maximum reimbursement of \$5,000 per building. Eligible expenses include the design, fabrication, installation, and removal of existing awnings.

All awning projects must be approved by the HEDC Board of Directors before work begins and must align with the adopted Design Standards. Awnings should be scaled to match existing window or door openings, use durable and historically compatible materials, and contribute to a cohesive appearance along the block. The removal of all existing awnings is required as part of the scope of work.

Façade Improvements

The HEDC will reimburse up to 75% of eligible costs for façade improvements, with a maximum reimbursement of \$5,000 per building. Eligible improvements include, but are not limited to: restoration or repair of architectural features; storefront or display window enhancements; removal of non-original coverings to reveal historic details; painting; structural repairs; exterior improvements that create customer-friendly outdoor space; architectural lighting; and ADA-compliant access upgrades.

Façade projects must be approved by the HEDC Board of Directors prior to construction and must comply with the adopted Design Standards. Funds may not be used for new building construction, residential improvements, vinyl or aluminum siding, removal of historic or architecturally significant features, or decorative items unrelated to business use such as statues, fountains, or planters.

Application Process

All applications for the Hamilton Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) Downtown Signage, Awning, and Façade Improvement Grant Program must be complete and submitted by 4:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month to be considered at the following HEDC Board of Directors meeting. Incomplete or late applications will not be placed on the Board agenda.

Applicants whose requests are denied may submit a revised application after thirty (30) days, provided the revised proposal addresses the reasons for the original denial. Each business or property is limited to one approved project per fiscal year, and no applicant may receive more than \$7,500 in total grant reimbursements during a single fiscal year.

Required Documentation

A complete application must include:

- A fully completed and signed application form
- A detailed project description
- Two competitive contractor bids (with at least one from a 76531 business)
- A current photo of the existing conditions
- A sketch, rendering, or mock-up of the proposed improvements
- Written authorization from the property owner (if the applicant is a tenant)

Review and Approval

Applications will be reviewed by HEDC staff for completeness, then presented to the HEDC Board of Directors for formal consideration in a posted open meeting. No work may begin until the project has been formally approved by the Board. Projects must be completed within 180 days of approval, or the Board may revoke the award.

Reimbursement and Close-Out

This is a reimbursement-only program. After the project is completed, the applicant must submit:

- Proof of payment to all contractors and suppliers
- Photos showing the completed improvements
- Any required permits or inspection sign-offs

HEDC staff will verify the work and submit documentation for reimbursement processing. Reimbursement will only be issued if the work matches the approved scope

and complies with all program guidelines, design standards, and permitting requirements.

Application Form & Acknowledgments

Submit completed applications to:
Hamilton Economic Development Corporation
200 E Main Street | Hamilton, TX 76531
(254) 386-8116 opt. 9 | edc@hamiltontx.com

Application Form

Date: _____

Type of Grant (circle one): Signage / Awning / Façade

Business Name: _____

Business Address: _____

Primary Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Property Owner (if different): _____

Project Description:

Economic Impact Information

(Required to demonstrate compliance with Texas Local Government Code Chapter 505)

Please answer the following questions to help the HEDC evaluate how your project will promote or develop new or expanded business enterprises in Hamilton.

1. Business Growth Potential

How will this project help you attract new customers, increase sales, or expand your business operations?

2. Job Creation or Retention

Will this project help create new jobs or retain existing jobs at your business?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe the number and type of jobs:

3. Investment and Private Funding

What is your estimated total private investment in this project (your 25% match or more)?

\$ _____

4. Business Visibility and District Vitality

How will your project enhance the appearance, visibility, or marketability of your building or business within the downtown district?

5. Other Economic Benefits

List any other ways this project will contribute to economic growth or increased business activity in Hamilton.

Bid Information

Bid #	Contractor / Vendor Name	Quote Amount
1	_____	\$ _____
2	_____	\$ _____

(At least one bid must be from a 76531 business)

Attachments Checklist

- ☐ Two competitive contractor bids (at least one from a 76531 business)
- ☐ Photo of current conditions
- ☐ Sketch or rendering of proposed improvements
- ☐ Written property owner authorization (if tenant applicant)

Property Owner Authorization

(Required if the applicant is not the property owner)

I, _____, am the legal owner of the property located at
_____, Hamilton, TX. I grant permission to
_____ to complete the improvements described in this
application.

Signature (Owner) _____ Date _____

Applicant Acknowledgment and Certifications

By signing below, I certify and acknowledge the following:

- **Program Compliance**

I have read and agree to comply with all requirements of the Hamilton Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) Downtown Signage, Awning, and Façade Improvement Grant Program.

- **Reimbursement Only**

I understand this is a reimbursement-only program and that no work may begin until the HEDC Board of Directors has formally approved the project.

- **Legal & Regulatory Compliance**

I will comply with all applicable building codes, zoning ordinances, and permitting requirements.

- **Workforce Compliance**

I will not knowingly employ undocumented workers, as required by Texas Government Code § 2264.051. I understand that violation may result in repayment of any grant funds received.

- **Litigation Status**

Neither I, my business, nor the property owner are currently involved in litigation or legal action against the City of Hamilton or the HEDC. I understand that if such litigation arises during the application or award process, the grant may be rescinded.

- **Performance Agreement Requirement**

I understand that if my application is approved, I will be required to enter into a Grant Performance Agreement with the HEDC before funds are disbursed.

Signature (Applicant)

Date