

Tecumseh Downtown Development Authority Sign Incentive Program

The Tecumseh Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has developed a Sign Incentive Program to improve the quality and appearance of signs throughout the DDA district and promote the use of the Design Guidelines for downtown.

Objectives:

The program seeks to bridge the gap in cost between unattractive signage and highly functional, attractive signs that complement Downtown's historic buildings and create a more attractive Central Business District. The intent of the program is to encourage three dimensional, symbolic, projecting signs that emphasize the pedestrian nature of Downtown Tecumseh. Signage that meets this criteria will receive priority consideration for grant funding. Replacement signs of similar quality and construction, or duplications of existing signs with minimal changes, may not qualify for the incentive.

The Incentive Program provides a grant of up to 50% of the total cost of an approved sign, up to a maximum of \$500 per applicant. The Design Committee of the Tecumseh DDA must approve Sign Incentive awards **before** a sign is installed.

Any business located within the Tecumseh DDA District may apply for an incentive.

Sign incentives are granted at the discretion of the Design Committee. In order to receive a sign incentive, the applicant must submit a sign design that meets the DDA's Design Guidelines (copies available at the DDA Office at 112 S. Ottawa St. in downtown Tecumseh), the City's Sign Ordinance and the program objectives. The Design Committee and the City's Zoning/Building official will review all signs that are seeking an incentive. Proposed improvements to properties located within the Historic District must be reviewed by the Tecumseh Historic Preservation Commission prior to approval of incentive.

Any sign that is nonconforming or legal nonconforming must be brought into conformance with the current sign ordinance and any zoning ordinances that apply.

Because awnings were historically important design elements in traditional storefronts, awning signs will be considered for a Sign Incentives award. To be considered for an award, awning signs must meet the Design Guidelines for downtown.

Window lettering and/or graphics will be considered for a Sign Incentive award when proposed in conjunction with another type of eligible sign; in this case the entire proposed sign project is awarded a Sign Incentive.

Projecting signs that run perpendicular to the storefront will receive priority consideration.

The Sign Incentive Process:

1. Pick up and review the following items available at the DDA Office, 112 South Ottawa Street in Downtown Tecumseh:
 - a. Sign Incentive Program Application
 - b. City of Tecumseh Sign Permit Application
 - c. DDA Design Guidelines
2. A grant application must be completed and submitted to the Tecumseh DDA Office. Applications will be accepted anytime during the calendar year.
3. Complete the applications and submit to the DDA Office.
4. The DDA staff and the City's Development Services Director will review the sign permit application and incentive application for conformance to the City's Sign and Zoning Ordinances. If the applicant has filed an application for the Sign Incentive Program, the City of Tecumseh Sign Permit may not be approved until the Design Committee has reviewed the application and proposed design.
5. Prior to proceeding to the Design Committee, the applicant is encouraged to seek input and approval from the Tecumseh Historic Preservation Commission. This process can be run concurrently with application and review by the Design Committee.
6. Design Committee will review the sign application and proposed design. Applications will be reviewed on the appropriateness and compatibility of the sign design to the Design Guidelines, sign size, sign color, sign placement on the building/site, relationship to adjacent properties and program objectives, as noted above. Estimated timeframe: Four weeks.
7. If the sign design is deemed to substantially meet Design Guidelines and fulfill the program objectives, the Design Committee will issue a "Notice to Proceed" letter, which will include the determined amount of the grant incentive.
8. The project must be completed within three (3) months of receiving written approval of grant award.
9. If the sign design is deemed inappropriate or incompatible with the Design Guidelines and program objectives, the Design Committee will table the application and will provide a letter to the applicant suggesting changes to the design. If the applicant submits a new sign design based upon Design Committee recommendations, the application will be reviewed a second time.

10. The applicant must submit a work order or invoice from their sign company indicating the total cost of the sign before an incentive check may be issued. Once the DDA receives the invoice, grants a sign permit, and conducts a final sign inspection/approval; a check in the amount of the approved incentive will be mailed to the applicant. (It may take up to 30 days for the incentive check to be issued after the final sign inspection.)

Incentive Program Requirements:

1. Applicants leasing their space must provide a notarized letter with permission from the building owner to apply for the incentive. The letter must indicate an awareness of the rules and requirements of the program.
2. Applicants must have all property (real and personal) taxes and utilities obligations to the City paid in full to date.
3. Applicants receiving incentives must have a sign design that conforms with the City of Tecumseh Design Guidelines. A high value will be placed on creative signs, particularly three dimensional, symbolic projecting signs.
4. Sign incentives will not be given to internally lit panel signs or standard corporate franchise signs.
5. Only one incentive will be granted to an applicant each Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30). Priority will be given to applicants who have not yet received an incentive.
6. The Design Committee may deny a sign incentive to any applicant that does not make recommended changes to their sign design after a first review. Every effort will be made to work with applicants so that an incentive can be granted. If the Design Committee denies an application, the applicant can reapply for an incentive during the following enrollment period.
7. Nonconforming signs will be considered for a sign incentive, provided that the applicant agrees to bring the sign into conformity with the City's sign ordinance.
8. The Design Committee will examine total cost of any proposed sign to ensure that the sign incentive is being used appropriately.
9. All incentive checks will be written to and mailed to the applicant. A work order or invoice from a sign company is required to confirm the total cost of the sign.