Business Improvement & Growth
(BIG) Grant Program Guidelines

FIGOL
HARRELSON
FIGOL HARRELSON
2004
A.B.ROGERS
TURNING VEHICLES
TO
STATE LAW
VODKA STREET
San Marcos
LEFT TURN
YIELD
ON GREEN

Why BIG?

The City of San Marcos Comprehensive Plan, Vision San Marcos: A River Runs Through Us, places strong emphasis on economic development, with the goal of creating an enhanced and diverse local economic environment that is prosperous, efficient and provides improved opportunities for residents.

To achieve this goal, the City has established the Business Improvement & Growth (BIG) Grant Program to provide technical and financial assistance to property owners or business tenants seeking to renovate or restore exterior façades, signage, lighting and life-safety systems for commercial buildings.

The BIG Grant Program is designed to impact properties in need of revitalization, resulting in improved exterior visibility and presentation of a property, as well as enhanced occupant safety. The BIG Grant Program is not designed to subsidize corrections to building code violations that prolong the life of a commercial property. The BIG Grant Program strives to increase sales and/or revenue for the property owner or tenant.

How does the BIG Program work?

The City will provide a fifty percent matching grant to reimburse up to $20,000 of well-designed property improvements. An additional fifty percent matching grant to reimburse up to $5,000 for construction of monument-type signage or the removal and replacement of non-conforming signs. The applicant's match may be in the form of other financial aid (grant or loan) received from other agencies or financial institutions, but may not be "in-kind."

The BIG Grant Program will only reimburse applicants after the project is determined to have been completed in accordance with the contract and the applicant has paid his/her architect, contractor and vendor(s) in full.

Improvements funded by the program must be compatible with the character and architecture of the individual property, and must meet current City standards with regard to occupant safety. Historical or architecturally significant features shall be restored and maintained. Improvements to properties without such features should be seen as an opportunity to substantially enhance the appearance of the properties and adjacent streetscapes. Properties should be oriented to the pedestrian and provide visual interest both day and night. Effort should be made to promote accessibility and to create a property identity unique to San Marcos or the respective neighborhood.

Initial consultation with City staff is necessary in order to help avoid misunderstanding as to the eligibility of proposals. City staff may provide guidance regarding improvements specific to individual storefronts. The applicant may hire his/her own licensed design professional(s) to work on the project from start to completion, or request that City staff assist first with the conceptual design of the project. If the latter option is chosen, the applicant may be required to hire his/her own licensed design professional(s), if necessary, to carry forth the conceptual design to completion of construction.
City staff will monitor the progress of the project to ensure compliance with the "Scope of Services" outlined in the contract between the City and applicant. Depending on the overall size and scope of a project, City staff may entertain additional and/or alternative incentives that would require City Council approval.

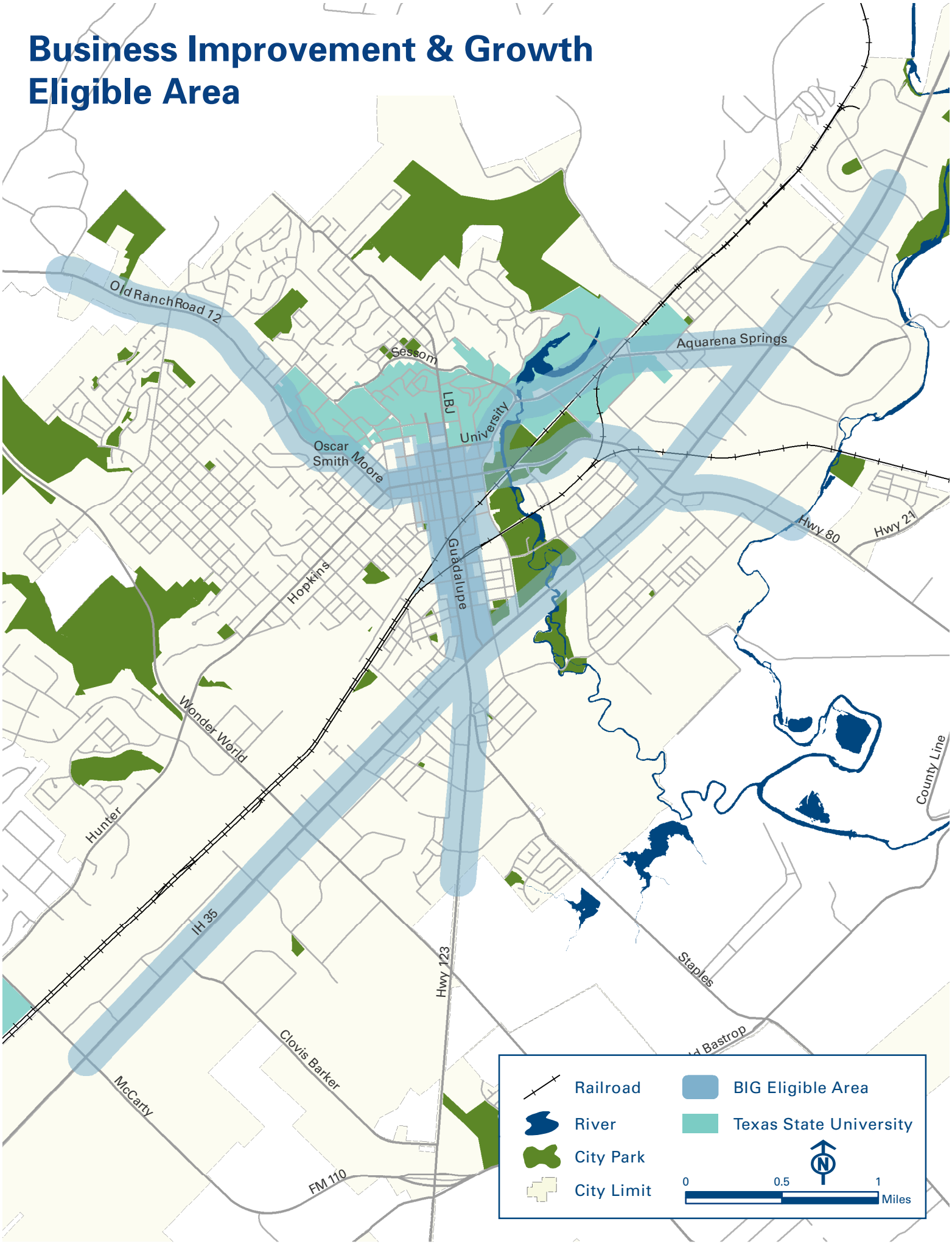
What improvements are eligible for the BIG grant program?

- Restoration of exterior details in historically contributing or significant buildings, and removal of elements that conceal architectural details, including cleaning, repainting or residing of building;
- New storefront construction, appropriately scaled within an existing building, that is in substantial conformance with all applicable provisions of the San Marcos Land Development Code;
- Awnings or canopies in character with the building and streetscape;
- Lighting that is visually appealing and appropriately illuminates signage, storefront window displays, and recessed areas of a building façade;
- Window replacement and window framing visible from the street and appropriately scaled to the building;
- Signage that is attractively integrated into the architecture of the building, including the window area, awnings or canopies, and entryways, and the removal and replacement of non-conforming signs;
- Installation of monument signage, and the removal and replacement of non-conforming signs;
- Curbing, irrigation, approved trees, landscaping beds (not including planting material) or other landscape features attached to the building where appropriate, not to exceed twenty percent (20%) of the project budget;
- Removal of architectural barriers to public accessibility;
- Installation of fire sprinklers or other life-safety systems in historically or architecturally significant buildings; and
- Other improvements that meet the objectives of the BIG Grant Program.

Who is eligible for the BIG grant program?

- Applicants must be commercial property owners or commercial tenants located in San Marcos within the Downtown SmartCode zoning district or along designated corridors (see BIG Grant Program Eligible Area Map);
- Preference will be given to independent businesses not required by contractual arrangement to maintain standardized décor, architecture, signs or similar features;
- Tenants must have written approval from property owners to participate in the program;
- Any nonconforming signage on the property must be permanently removed as part of the improvement;
- Property owners must be current on all municipal taxes prior to participation in the program;
- Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements;
- Applicants must agree not to change or alter the property improvements without prior written approval from the BIG Review Committee for three (3) years from the date of the rebate check issued under the BIG Grant Program;
- Improvements made prior to written approval by the vBIG Review Committee will not be funded; and
- Understanding that the overall objective of the BIG Grant Program is to improve the exterior visibility and presentation of a property, the City has the discretion to decline an application while suggesting enhancements that would enable future acceptance.

Business Improvement & Growth Eligible Area

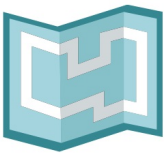


BIG GRANT PROCESS

Getting your project funded

1. Applicant meets with city staff for initial project discussion and files application.

2. Applicant meets with BIG Review Committee to discuss property improvements and design alternatives.



3. If necessary, an architect prepares final designs and submits them to BIG Review Committee.

4. Upon approval, applicant has 60 days to solicit 3 contractor bids. Bids must be itemized.

5. BIG Review Committee will review/approve bids, applicant enters into contract for reimbursement with the city.

6. BIG Review Committee sends applicant a "notice to proceed with improvements." Any improvements completed before notice is sent WILL NOT BE FUNDED.

7. Applicant, contractor(s), and project architect hold a pre-development meeting with applicable city staff.

8. Applicant has 60 days from "notice" to begin improvements. Applicant is responsible for obtaining all required City permits

9. Contractor carries out improvements as specified in the final design. If any design changes are to occur, the BIG Review Committee must be notified.

10. Applicant notifies BIG Review Committee when improvements are complete. Architect and BIG Review Committee certify that project improvements comply with the approved plans.

11. Applicant submits copy of all paid invoices to BIG Review Committee. Architect and contractor(s)submit letters to the BIG Review Committee acknowledging full payment by the applicant.

City Issues Rebate Check

BIG Grant Application

Return Completed Application to

Economic Development Administrator
City of San Marcos
630 E. Hopkins
San Marcos, Texas 78666

512-393-8108
EconDev@sanmarcostx.gov

Applicant's Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Business Organization of Applicant:

☐ Corporation (dba) ☐ Partnership ☐ Sole Proprietorship

Business Name _____

Relationship of Applicant to the property to be renovated:

☐ Owner *Attach copy of latest tax bill and proof of payment*

☐ Tenant *Attach copy of COSM Certificate of Occupancy, and written permission from building owner to participate in BIG Program including expiration date of present lease.*

Address of property to be improved:

_____

Describe the scope of work:

_____

_____

Design professional responsible for your drawings, plans, and permits:

_____

Mailing Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

The undersigned hereby represents and certifies to the best of his/her knowledge and belief that the information contained on this statement and any exhibits or attachments hereto are true and complete and accurately describe the proposed project, and the undersigned agrees to promptly inform the City of San Marcos Economic & Development Coordinator of any changes in the proposed project which may occur.

_____ _____

Signature of Property Owner Date

_____

Print Name

_____ _____

Signature of Commercial Tenant (if Applicant) Date

_____

Print Name

The City of San Marcos reserves the right to terminate any agreement under the BIG Program if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines or if the project has been started prior to an executed agreement with the City of San Marcos.