



Downtown Building Rehabilitation & Improvement Grant Program

Updated May 2025

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Overview

The City of Monroe values the commercial buildings in the Downtown area and has created the Downtown Building Rehabilitation and Improvement Grant (BRIG) to offer an incentive that stimulates investment and encourages property and business owners to make improvements to their building(s) and/or business operations. This reimbursement grant assists with the significant improvement and rehabilitation of properties in the Downtown Business District. Improvement of these buildings preserves Downtown's unique attributes and promotes economic growth by attracting and retaining residents and businesses, creating jobs, and reducing the deterioration of properties in the Downtown District.

The BRIG program provides matching grants (50/50) that encourage improvements and/or upgrades to the interiors and exteriors of buildings in the Downtown Business District to make them more attractive for new, existing, and expanding businesses and residences.

Grant applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. Awards are based on the availability of funds and meeting the programs requirements. Work done prior to approval of an application is not eligible for reimbursement.

Eligible Properties

Commercial buildings located within the Downtown Business District of Monroe are eligible. Private dwellings are not eligible unless they originally functioned as commercial buildings and were later converted.

Only one application per property per year is eligible. Separate addresses within a single building may qualify if there is more than one tenant. The applicant may be either the owner or a tenant of the building. Tenant/s will need to have written permission from the owner.

Downtown Business District Description

- The Downtown Business District begins at the CSX Railroad right-of-way and Charlotte Avenue to Lancaster Avenue
- Goes from Lancaster Avenue to Morrow Avenue, Morrow Avenue to Church Street, Church Street to Windsor Street, Windsor Street to Franklin Street, Franklin Street to Jefferson Street, Jefferson Street to Church Street, Church Street to the CSX Railroad right-of-way
- The Downtown Business District ends at the CSX Railroad right-of-way to Charlotte Avenue, where the description began



The Grant

This is a 50/50 matching reimbursement grant. Approved applicants are eligible for 50% of the eligible costs up to a maximum amount of 10% of the tax value after improvements. Payments will be made upon the completion of the project, review of receipts by a designated member of City staff, and the final approval of City Council.

Example: An applicant submits documentation for \$222,000 in eligible improvements (\$111,000, 50/50) with a tax value after improvements of \$880,000. The applicant would qualify for 10% of the new assessed value (per the Union County Tax Assessor's Office), or \$88,000 in reimbursement.

Requirements

- The applicant must obtain approval from the Downtown Manager prior to beginning work. Work completed prior to approval will not be eligible for any reimbursement.
- All rehabilitation work must comply with City zoning and building code requirements, historic district requirements (if applicable), and established standards within the designated area.
- All work must meet the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Supplementary Requirements for Development in the Central Business District [City of Monroe Code of Ordinances Title XV, Chapter

156.054]. Those standards will be used as guidelines for awarding project reimbursements.

- The applicant must show proof of ownership or a leasing contract if the property is leased.
- A certificate of occupancy is required upon completion of the project.
- All approved work must be completed within one year of the application approval. If a project will require additional time, the applicant will need to make that request in writing before the one-year time limit expires.

Eligible Projects

Grant awardees are eligible to apply for a new eligible project one year after a prior award is executed.

Applications can include one or more eligible projects. Other projects not listed will be considered unless ineligible. Eligible projects include:

- Structural repairs, including masonry repair and restoration
- Roofing repair and/or replacement
- Plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and similar elements
- Construction for accessibility, fire code, etc.
- Painting
- Flooring
- Building façade, or building side which faces a public right-of-way, including removal of false fronts, cleaning of brick, and/or historic reconstruction
- Window or front door repair and/or replacement, or repair of original material that adheres to the Secretary of the Interior's standards for Historic Rehabilitation and EPA Guidelines
- Installation of new pedestrian amenities such as City-approved outdoor seating, awnings, and lighting
- Railing and ironwork repair
- Cornice repair and/or replacement
- Exterior step repair and/or replacement
- Equipment repair and/or replacement
- Energy efficiency upgrades
- Improving restroom facilities

- Improving or re-installing stairways
- Upfit, replacement, or new installation of an elevator

Ineligible Projects

The following projects are ineligible for consideration:

- Building and land acquisition
- New building construction
- Interior design services
- Architectural design services
- Demolition expenses
- Fire, flood, or water damage repairs
- Furnishings, equipment, or personal property not part of the building construction, repair, or replacement
- Legal, zoning, or building permit fees
- Routine maintenance work
- Parking lot repair and/or resurfacing
- Pest extermination
- Work on an active code compliance citation
- Work begun prior to application submittal meeting or done without required permits

Application Procedures

1. Submit the grant application with all required forms and documents to the Downtown Office. Review the application checklist:

Application Checklist	
Completed application	
Summary outlining the full extent of work	
A minimum of two quotes from licensed, bonded, and insured contractor(s) covering full extent of work	

Site plans, elevation plans, drawings	
Photos of existing conditions	
Certificate of Appropriateness if the property is within the Local Historic District	
Copies of all required permit application(s)	
Property owner's written permission if tenant is applying	

2. The Downtown Manager will schedule an application review meeting with an applicant within two weeks of receipt of application.
3. Staff will present the application and documents to the Downtown Advisory Board. Upon their recommendation, staff will request a call for a public hearing.
4. The award recommendation will then be presented to City Council at their next regularly scheduled meeting. If approved, funds will be encumbered and held until the project is completed and a new assessed value is provided by the Union County Tax Assessor's office.

Note: The approval process will take a minimum of three to four months.

An approval letter will be mailed, emailed, or given by hand to the applicant upon approval. If an application is not approved, the Downtown Office will convey the rejection through email along with the reason for the rejection.

Application Review & Reimbursement Procedures

When the project has been completed in accordance with the approved plan of work and a new tax-assessed value is provided by the Union County Tax Assessor, the applicant will submit the following to the Downtown Manager:

- Copy of Certificate of Occupancy
- Copies of paid invoices for total rehabilitation costs. Invoices must reflect a zero balance and be signed by the contractor on the contracting invoice or letterhead.
- Photos of improvements
- New tax-assessed value by the Union County Tax Assessor. This is provided each January to anyone who has applied for a permit. The new assessed value is determined using the last county reevaluation criteria.
- Any remaining documentation requested by the Downtown Office

The improvements will be inspected and approved by the Downtown Manager or approved City staff members. Once completed, the Accounting Department will issue a check to the applicant. If the site inspection based on the scope of work is not satisfactory, the applicant will be notified and allowed up to 30 working days for the correction of unsatisfactory items.

New Business and Residential Incentive Escalators

Additional escalators to the BRIG grant have been established to encourage companies, businesses, and investors considering relocating or expanding to or within the Central Business District. These escalators are calculated after the BRIG grant reimbursement has been confirmed.

An additional 10% of the total grant award will be added if the company or business is part of one of the approved business clusters (see Clusters table) and creates a minimum of three new jobs.

An additional 10% of the total grant award will be added if an existing company or business will be relocating or establishing its new business in a vacant space on floors above the street level.

An additional 20% of the total grant amount will be added to the award for an applicant who is creating residential units on floors above the street level.

Clusters

Applicants are required to meet performance requirements, which may include, but are not limited to, job creation, level of capital investment, and/or creation of new residential units.

Cluster	Business type
Financial Services and Insurance Second floor locations only Open five days per week or 40 hours per week	Financial investment and related activities
	Credit intermediation and related activities
	Insurance carriers and related activities
Professional Services	Accounting, bookkeeping, and auditing
	Human resources and payroll services

<i>Second floor locations only</i> <i>Open five days per week or 40 hours per week</i>	Architectural, engineering, design, and surveying services Medical, dental, or optical services Law firms and legal services Public relations services Real estate services Recruitment services Graphic design services
<i>Information Technology and Industry</i> <i>Second floor locations only</i> <i>Open five days per week or 40 hours Per week</i>	Software development Media, film, and video production Analytics services Cybersecurity consulting
<i>Retail Stores</i> <i>Street level and upper floor locations</i> <i>Open six days per week or 40 hours per week</i>	Arts and craft supply, antiques, vintage and collectables, children and baby, bath and body, beauty and cosmetics, bike, bookstores, bridal and formal wear, apparel, florist, furniture, hobby sports equipment, home décor, jewelry, kitchenware, music and musical instruments, footwear, printing and stationery, and pharmacies
<i>Restaurants and Food Service</i> <i>Street level and upper floor locations</i> <i>Open six days per week or 40 hours per week</i>	Bakeries, coffee stores, fish market, gourmet food stores, ice cream shops, natural food stores, tea shops, delicatessens, ethnic grocery stores, farmers markets, and butcher shops

Hospitality <i>Street level and upper floor locations</i> <i>Open six days per week or 40 hours per week</i>	Hotels, bed and breakfasts, health and fitness, event spaces, spas, and wellness centers
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Example: An applicant (also the property owner) submits an application to move their existing accounting firm to the second floor of a building in the Central Business District and add three new jobs as part of their plan. The building they have purchased has an existing retail business on the street level and two vacant upper floors in need of significant renovation. Their application fully outlines the extent of their planned work and they have included site plans, drawings, photos of existing conditions, and copies of required permit applications with price quotes from licensed, bonded, and insured contractors. They estimate the work will total \$250,000 in eligible improvements. This will make them eligible for 50% of their final costs up to a maximum amount of 10% of their tax value after improvements or an amount not to exceed \$125,000. Their application is presented at a public hearing and approved by City Council.

After the work is completed, the owner submits all of the required documents along with documentation of the new assessed value after improvements from Union County of \$880,000. Due to the new tax value, the applicant would now only qualify for \$88,000 in reimbursement.

Since the applicant is expanding, adding three new jobs, and relocating on the second and third floors of an existing building, they would qualify for:

- +10% because their business is in one of the approved clusters and is adding an additional three jobs
- +10% because they are renovating and relocating this business to a vacant second and third floor of an existing building

The final reimbursement would be \$104,000.

Insert Application Here