



Birch Run Township

Downtown Development Authority

Building Improvement Grant

Introduction:

The Birch Run Township Downtown Development District (DDA) is a business district that is located along Dixie Highway near I-75 exit 136. The district spans beyond Canada Road (the north boundary) and to just beyond Birch Run Road (the south boundary). The district is comprised of commercial, public, and residential properties used for everything from entertainment to agriculture. The district is the main hub for commercial and industrial businesses in the Township.

From the 2017 DDA Master Plan:

Item #9 DDA Master Plan: Building Improvement Grant

The Township DDA facilitate access to building improvements grants for commercial and industrial businesses in the district. These Grants will provide property owners with the opportunity to do façade improvements and other streetscaping that would improve the districts' aesthetics.

The Building Improvement Grant provides partial funding for eligible façade improvements and/or signage (up to \$1500) for commercial, industrial, or mixed-use buildings inside the Birch Run Township DDA limits. This program is open to property owners or business tenants. A maximum reimbursement of \$1,500 per building annually may be paid by the Downtown Development Authority. Annual reimbursement is defined by our fiscal year, April 1st to March 30th.

Before your project starts, the DDA must approve your Grant in order to receive full reimbursement. Any new or proposed change may be subject to approval by the Township of Birch Run and applicant is responsible for obtaining such approval.

Program Descriptions

The programs described herein are contingent upon the availability of budgeted funds and will be awarded on a first come, first serve basis. Once budgeted funds for that fiscal year are expended, no further applications will be accepted. The Township of Birch Run DDA reserves the right to revise or end these programs at any time and in no way guarantees availability of funding for any specific project at any given time.

- A. **Façade Improvement Grant** – The Façade Improvement Grant provides funds for front, side, and rear facades which are visible from a public street or municipal parking lot. The program provides a 50-50 matching grant up to \$1,500 for front and side facades and up to \$750 for rear facades. Large scale projects will require a licensed architect and contractor to refine conceptual designs and to implement Township approved plans.
- B. **Sign Grant** – The Sign Grant provides a 50-50 matching grant (not to exceed \$1,500) for businesses to improve, update, or replace non-conforming signage. Signage that has received a variance will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- C. **Knox Box Grant** – The Knox Box Grant provides a 50-50 matching re-imbursement for applicable Knox Box and/or Knox Box Cap(s) purchases. Award of the Knox Box/Caps Grant to any applicants will also require approval of the Birch Run Township Fire Chief.

All programs reimburse the applicant *after* the project is successfully completed. All improvements must be initiated within sixty (60) days of the award of the grant by the DDA and completed within six (6) months of commitment of funds. If the applicant has not met these requirements, the Birch Run Township DDA will re-evaluate the status of the project. An extension may be considered if substantial progress can be documented. The Birch Run Township DDA, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to cancel the funding commitment if the applicant fails to meet the requirements or makes changes to the project as approved.

Building Improvement Grant Guidelines

Eligible Applicants:

Owners and/or tenants of structures located with the Birch Run Township DDA may apply for the Building Improvement Grant funds.

Eligible Buildings/Applicants:

Any existing or proposed commercial a building located within the Birch Run Township DDA is eligible for Building Improvement Grant Funds. Projects approved for Building Improvement Grant Funds must comply with all applicable Birch Run Township codes and ordinances. Projects may require a building permit and/or a site plan approved by Birch Run Township.

Property (real and personal) taxes, utilities, and other Township accounts must be current in order to be eligible for consideration. Business owners must have a valid Business License in the Township of Birch Run.

Eligible Improvements:

All façade and sign grant-funded improvements must be permanent and fixed in type and/or nature and be visible from a public street or municipal parking lot. All work must be performed by licensed contractors.

The Birch Run Township DDA reserves the right to determine the eligibility of all items in a project's scope of work. Eligible items include, but may not be limited to:

- Repairs to Sign or Replacement of sign.
- Full façade: painting, trim, and or siding.
- Awnings.
- Architectural Elements or Details.
- Hardscape Materials such as pavers, retaining walls, landscape rocks.
- Exterior Lighting.
- ADA Compliant additions or repairs to entrances.

Ineligible Expenses:

Program funds cannot be utilized for uses, including but not limited to, the following:

- Routine Yearly Maintenance
- Repairs covered by Insurance(s)
- Interior improvements
- Property acquisition
- Loan Fees, mortgage/land contract refinance
- Appraiser, attorney, interior decorator, or designer fees
- Township of Birch Run Site Plan, Building, or Sign Permit fees
- Personal property (furnishing, trade fixtures)
- Any expenses paid in goods or services.
- Landscaping except materials for hardscape.
- Payment of taxes

The purpose of the Building Improvement grants are to alter and improve the overall appearance of a building façade, rather than for routine building maintenance.

Modifications after Grant has been Awarded:

Modifications to the plan or approved applications must be referred back to the Birch Run Township DDA. Failure to receive written authorization may cause forfeiture of all or a portion of the Grant Award, in the DDA Board's sole discretion.

Application:

- Contact the Birch Run Township DDA Chairperson for the Grant Program guidelines and application.
- Submit completed application with appropriate attachments to the Birch Run Township Office, attention to the Township Clerk.

- The Birch Run Township DDA Board approves application if applicant follows appropriate recommendations and when funds are available.

For a Façade Improvement Grant, the following attachments must be submitted with the completed application:

- Proof of ownership or copy of executed lease.
- Copy of valid business license
- Copy of Certificate of Property & Liability insurance
- Three cost estimates from licensed contractors (not obligated to accept lowest bid)
- Applicants leasing their space must provide a notarized letter with permission from the property owner indicating an awareness of the rules and requirements of the program.
- Current photographs of the building showing where the work will be done. Digital photos are preferred and may be emailed to clerk@birchruntwp.com
- Specifications needed to understand the scope of the project, including design plans where applicable.

The DDA Chair will review application for completeness. Grant applications requesting funds for physical improvements (both façade improvement and sign grants) may be referred to the Building Inspector and/or Zoning Administrator for review and approval. The DDA Chair will make a recommendation to the DDA on which projects should receive funding.

The Birch Run Township DDA Board will review the application and the recommendation of the DDA Chair and will determine final approval or denial. The DDA Chair will notify applicant by letter of grant status.

Payment Procedure:

- After project completion, applicants receive Building Improvement Grant Program disbursement upon
 - Approval of final Township inspection (if required).
 - Submittal of copies of paid invoices for approved work to DDA Chairperson.
- The DDA Clerk reviews submitted invoice(s) and prepares a check request. The check request is submitted by the DDA Clerk to the DDA Treasurer.
- The DDA Treasurer mails checks to applicant or notifies applicant when check is ready for pick-up.

Adopted: February 22nd, 2023

Revised: