



A Main Street Iowa District

BUSINESS SIGNAGE & AWNING GRANT PROGRAM

SUMMARY

Uptown Marion Main Street is sponsoring a Business Signage & Awning Grant Program, which is intended to stimulate improvements to the exterior of commercial building in the Uptown Marion District.

Who is eligible: Owners and/or tenants of existing commercial buildings within the Uptown Marion District. Tenant applicants are required to submit written evidence of building owner's approval of the application (if applicable). Maximum grant amount: \$1,000, requiring a 1:1 match (at least 50 percent of the cost of the project must be paid for by the owner). One grant will be awarded per business. Grant monies will be distributed to awarded recipients on a reimbursement basis.

DETAILS

I. Program Statement

UPTOWN MARION MAIN STREET WANTS TO ASSIST YOU IN IMPROVING YOUR PROPERTY OR BUSINESS.

The Uptown Marion program is affiliated with Main Street Iowa and a member of the nationally successful Main Street America Program. Uptown Marion Main Street's mission is to drive continued revitalization, growth, and preservation of historic character through appropriate design, promotion, and economic strategies that improve our community. The ultimate success of the Uptown Marion District; however, is dependent upon the private sector commitment. Merchants, building owners, residents, professionals and investors can all benefit by improving the condition of their buildings and therefore the general condition of the District.

II. Purpose of Grant Program

The purpose of the Business Signage & Awning Grant Program is to stimulate signage and awning improvements which stress the historical significance and uniqueness of Uptown structures. **Specifically, it is designed to encourage the use of custom designed exterior signage and awnings that fit within [Uptown Marion Design Guidelines](#) and [Main Street Iowa Design Guidelines](#).**

The program is intended to stimulate improvements to Uptown commercial buildings by providing an innovative financing mechanism. This program represents an opportunity for Uptown Marion Main Street to provide a financial incentive to successfully implement signage and awning improvements that will result in a more attractive District, and therefore a stronger community as a whole.

III. Grant Use

1. Grants provided by this program are to be used for adding or replacing signage and/or awnings for existing commercial buildings within the [Uptown Marion District](#). New businesses must have a lease or purchase agreement to be eligible. **Funding is limited; please contact Uptown Marion Main Street prior to beginning any work to make sure funds are available.**

2. All grant applications will be reviewed by Uptown Marion’s Design Committee, in accordance with the [Uptown Marion Design Guidelines](#) and [Main Street Iowa Design Guidelines](#). Grant amount and distribution will be determined by the Uptown Marion Advisory Board. Applicants who deviate from the approved application may be disqualified from this grant program.

3. **All work done shall comply with City code, particularly regarding vertical encroachment over public right-of-way and commercial signage (section 176.31). THIS IS A GRANT REQUIREMENT.** Contact the City Planning and Development Department, 319-743-6320. Sign and encroachment permits can be found on the [City’s website here](#).

4. Successful applicants will use materials that complement the historic elements of the building.

5. In accordance with sustainable practices, removed materials should be recycled wherever possible.

6. FUNDS PROVIDED BY THIS PROGRAM SHALL NOT BE USED FOR MATERIALS PURCHASED OR WORK BEGUN PRIOR TO GRANT APPROVAL. DOING SO WILL DISQUALIFY THE APPLICATION.

7. Eligible expenses are:

- Design
- Production
- Fabrication
- Installation
- Permit fees

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Debris disposal
- Grant recipient labor

IV. Design Requirements

1. Sign and awnings should follow Uptown Marion Design Guidelines, including:

- Constructed of durable material
- Crafted professionally by licensed sign contractor (see City’s sign contractor license form)
- Mounted at least eight feet above the sidewalk as measured from the bottom edge of the sign
- Not to exceed three feet from the wall from where the sign is attached (C-2 District only)

2. Custom designed neon signage is eligible. Neon signage may not be a standard “off the shelf” design. Internal sign lighting is strongly discouraged (however, external “gooseneck” style lighting is allowed and is an eligible grant expense).

3. Signs **cannot** include:

- Reader-boards or electronic messaging systems
- Vinyl banners or other signage on a flexible substrate

V. Grant Policy

In accordance with the City of Marion's non-discrimination policy, no applicant will be denied funding due to race, sex, age, or religion.

VI. Program Implementation

1. Application process:

- a) Review these guidelines and complete the Application below. Uptown Marion Main Street can provide photo examples of the kinds of signage and awning eligible for the grant.
- b) Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Uptown Marion Main Street to receive free sign design and placement consultation through Main Street Iowa.
- c) Please return completed application, along with copies of the following: 1) project design, 2) project estimates, 3) a vertical encroachment, 4) a sign and / or building permit application along with proof of payment (see III.3 above). Please note a sign permit is required for any type of proposed signage and a building permit is required for any awning. You will need both a sign and building permit if your awning incorporates a sign or you are installing a monument sign.
- d) The Uptown Marion's Design Committee will decide whether to approve the application. If approved, you will receive a grant award letter. If not approved, the Uptown Marion's Design Committee will explain by letter to the applicant the reasons for rejection and what, if any, steps can be taken to receive approval.
- e) Individuals with approved applications will be notified and will sign an agreement with Uptown Marion Main Street.
- f) Upon completion of the project and inspection by Uptown Marion's Design Committee, grant monies will be distributed on a reimbursement basis. Copies of all applicable invoices and proof of payment must be submitted before reimbursement.

2. Post-Application Procedure

- a) The Uptown Marion Director will monitor the progress of the project.
- b) Changes in approved work specifications must be approved by the Uptown Marion program. The Uptown Marion Director may approve or reject such changes; however, the Director may defer such action to the Uptown Marion's Design Committee.
- c) Approved changes in work verifications will be attached to the original applications, dated, and signed by the Uptown Marion Director.
- d) The applicant and the Uptown Marion Director will conduct a final inspection before the final payment will be made to the applicant.
- e) **Deviation from an approved plan may disqualify the applicant from this grant program.**

VII. Program Amendments

The details of the Uptown Marion Main Street Grant Program may be amended subject to the formal approval of a majority of the Uptown Marion Advisory Board.

UPTOWN MARION BUSINESS SIGNAGE & AWNING GRANT PROGRAM

Application Form

Name of Applicant: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Name of Business: _____

Business Address: _____

Does the applicant own the building? Yes _____ No _____

If not, please attach a letter from the owner expressing approval of the project.

How long has the business been open or when is it anticipated to open? _____

Who will be designing the sign (if applicable): _____

Who will be producing the sign and / or awning? _____

Estimated Project Cost (**attach estimates**): _____

Proposed project start date: _____

Proposed completion date: _____

The undersigned applicant affirms that:

- a) The information submitted herein is true and accurate to the best of my (our) knowledge.
- b) I (we) have read and understand the conditions of the Uptown Marion Business Signage Grant Program and agree to abide by its conditions and guidelines.

Signature of Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Attachments:

- A letter from the owner expressing approval of the project (if applicable)
- Copy of the project (signing and /or awning) design
- Project Estimates
- Vertical encroachment and sign and / or building permit application