

Michigan Street Outdoor Space Activation Program

OVERVIEW

The Program is intended to enhance the pedestrian usage of the sidewalks, create a sense of neighborhood continuity by providing an interesting, lively and active presence at street level. An active presence means prioritizing interactive uses—community spaces, courtyards, entries, or seating—in the prime space where the building meets the street edge, between the building and street edge, or between buildings to ensure a lively interaction between the building and public realm. Outdoor activation encourages a more interesting, interactive, and safe streetscape.

The financial assistance program described below is intended to reimburse eligible business owners for outdoor space activation.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Enhance the pedestrian usage of the sidewalks, create a sense of neighborhood continuity by providing an interesting, lively and active presence at street level.

VISION

Make Michigan Street a destination within Grand Rapids that is celebrated for its vibrant diversity, culture, history, and charm.

MISSION

Promote Michigan Street's unique identity and help businesses thrive.

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FUNDING

The Michigan Street Outdoor Space Activation Program will provide matching funds up to **\$10,000** for activation/beautification of outdoor spaces of commercial properties. Grants require a minimum 50% match from the applicant for all eligible expenses. Funding is provided on a competitive basis. This program is funded through the Michigan Street Corridor Improvement Authority with opportunities in the future for third party support.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to participate in the program, the property must be located within Michigan Street Corridor Improvement Authority boundaries (see the attached map). The property must contain an active commercial business, be undergoing renovations for the opening of a business, or adjacent to an active business within one hundred and twenty (120) days from the date of award approval. The outdoor space must be visible and accessible to the public from the right of way. Businesses leasing space can apply with written permission from the property owner. All applicants and properties must be in good standing with respect to all local, State and Federal taxes. Applicants in litigation with the City of Grand Rapids will not be considered.

Michigan Street will reimburse the applicant directly for no

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more than 50% of total project costs and no more than the amount stated in the original agreement. A single payment will be made upon completion of the project, subject to site review and the submission of proper receipts and copies of paid invoices.

GOALS

1. Increase the amount of outdoor patio/seating in Michigan Street
2. Increase landscape features and hardscape designs
3. Activate alleyways and other “third places”
4. Create more outdoor spaces that meet Universal design standards and increase accessibility.

EXAMPLE PROJECTS

1. Semi-permanent outdoor dining or vending
2. Parklet
3. Privately-held alley activation for public use
4. Urban Ecology

Items Eligible for Reimbursement

1. Design services (plans, layout, renderings, etc.)
2. Permit fees
3. Landscaping (planters, containers, plant material)
4. Lighting
5. Labor (installation)

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6. Barricades, platforms, ramps
7. Permanent shade structures
8. Paint preparation related to implementation of the outdoor space activation
9. Signage specific to outdoor space activation

Other: The goals of this program are listed above. Implementation of the program is open to creativity and interpretation and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Items Eligible to count toward match

1. All of the items listed above
2. Outdoor furniture
3. Temporary shade structures ie: umbrellas, tents, canopies
 - excretory activities or organs, including any male or female genitalia or female breasts).

APPLICATION & REVIEW PROCESS

To be considered for a grant, applicants must submit the following information to the Michigan Street Design Committee via email to: info@mistreet.org.

Applications will be reviewed monthly on a first-come first-served basis.

1. Application cover sheet (attached)
2. Detailed written description of the improvements, including materials, intended users, and programming.
3. Project site plan

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4. Drawings, sketches, product spec sheets, or mood board to provide a visual representation of the project. Professional drawings are not required. Example here.
5. Third party estimates

PRELIMINARY REVIEW

Applications will be evaluated on two criteria: (1) completeness and (2) adherence to design guidelines.

Satisfactory applications will be considered for formal approval. Incomplete applications or projects not meeting the Design Guidelines will be rejected. Denied applicants will be provided with an explanation that details the reasons for denial. If a denied applicant remedies the concerns outlined, the application may be resubmitted.

FORMAL REVIEW

Applications passing the preliminary review phase will be awarded grants on a first-come, first-served basis. The amount of funding will depend upon the number of eligible applications, the quality of the project and the visual impact on the business district. Michigan Street reserves the right to approve and reject any-and-all requests. Partial or full funding may be awarded.

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PAYMENTS

Michigan Street will pay the applicant on a reimbursement basis upon submission of original contractor invoices after the work is completed. Work completed prior to program application approval will not be reimbursed. Reimbursement will be provided within 45-60 working days after submission of the receipts, Waiver of Lien, and verification of the completed work per site review by Michigan Street staff.

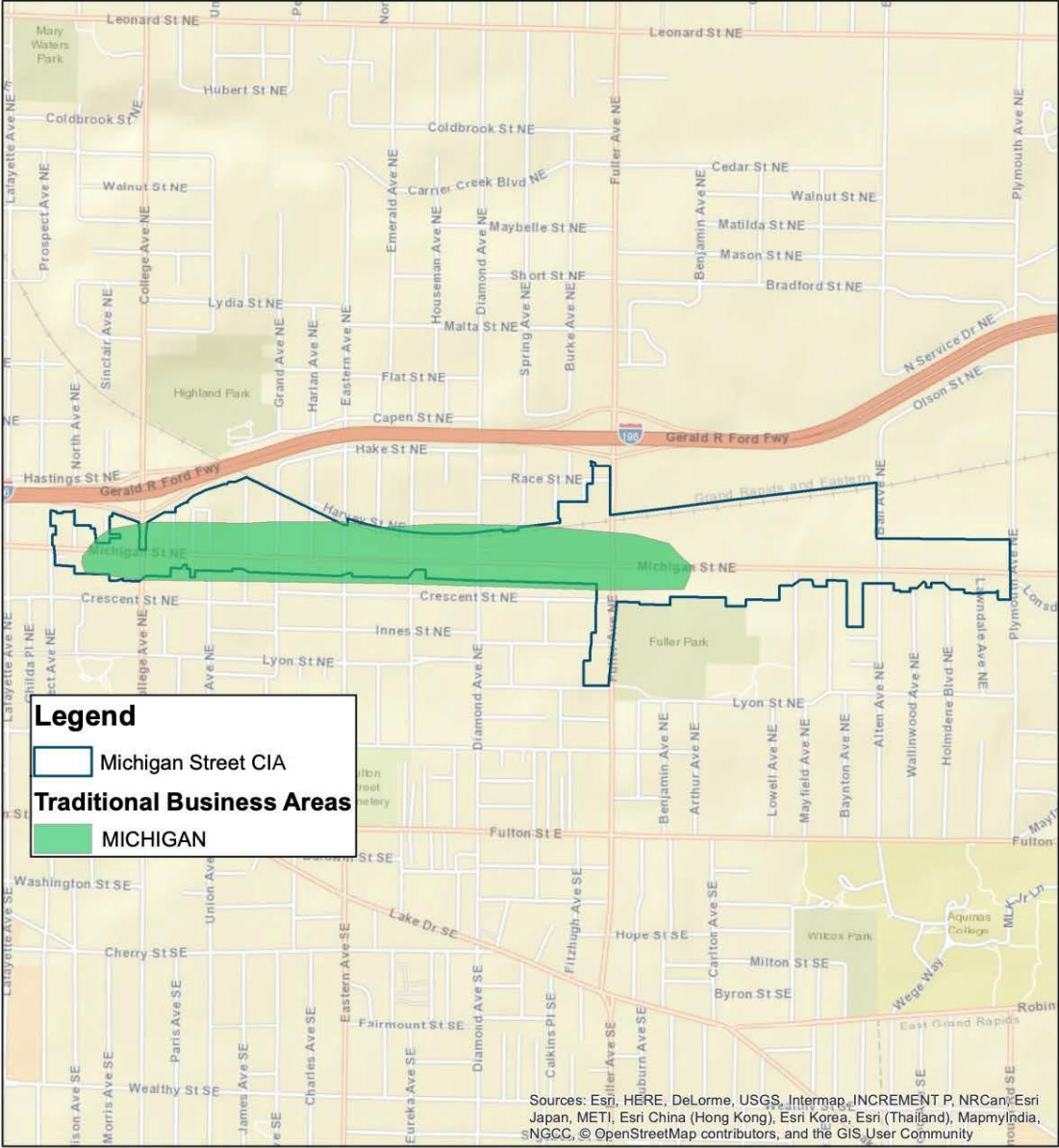
PERMITS & APPROVALS

Improvements are subject to standard City approvals. Depending on how extensive the work is, permits may be required for electrical and structural repairs. Any new signs will require a sign permit. Any changes to properties located in the historic district require review by the Historic District Commission. Any project proposed in the Right-of-Way (sidewalk or street) will require an encroachment permit.

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MAP

Michigan Street Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA)



These guidelines were approved by the Michigan Street CIA at a regular public board meeting in 2025.