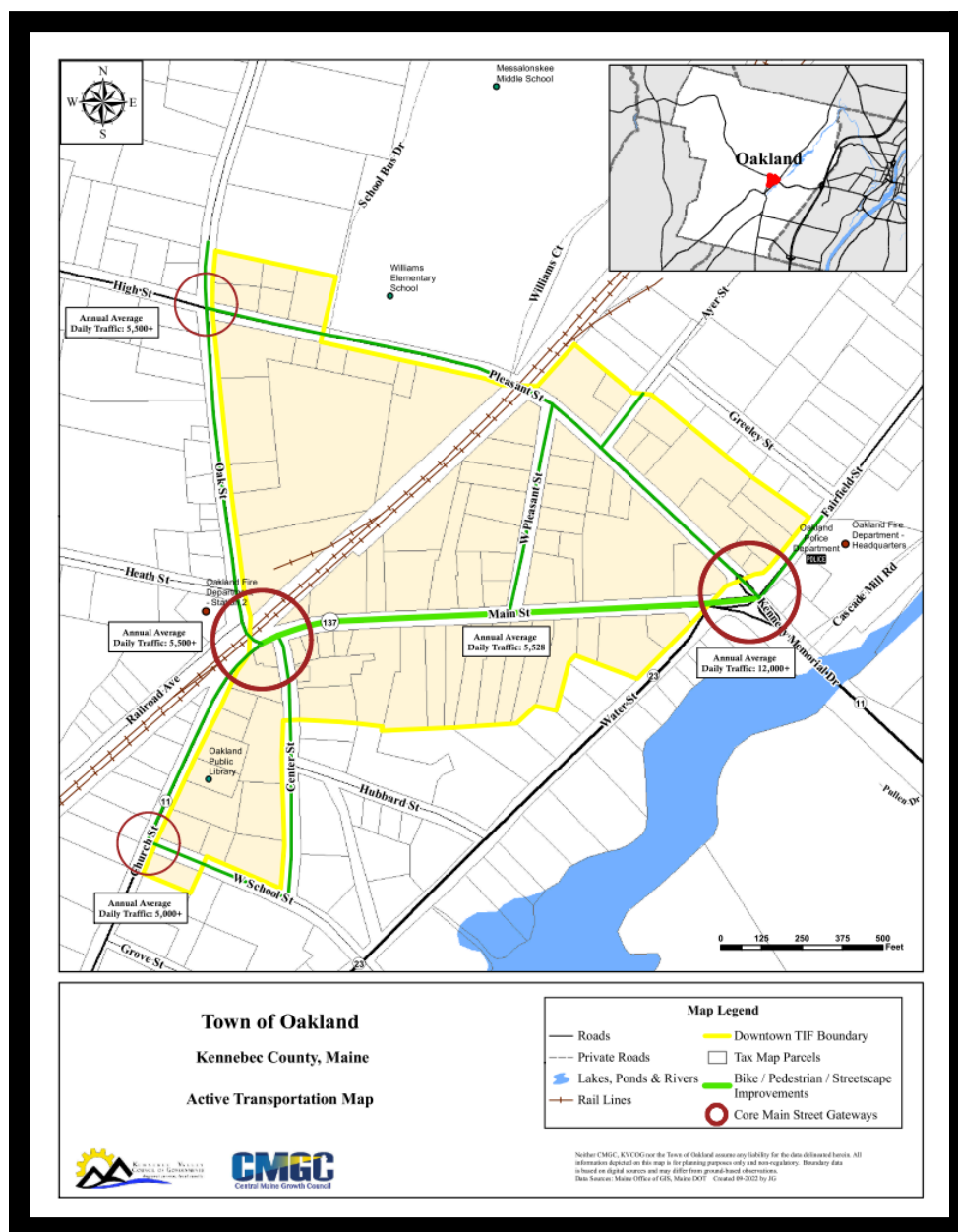


Town of Oakland

2025-26 OAKLAND FACADE & DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT GRANT (OFDIG)



OFDIG Program Guidance

Table of Contents

I. PROGRAM GUIDANCE.....	3
II. FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION.....	3
III. PROGRAM GUIDELINES & ELIGIBILITY.....	3
IV. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.....	5
V. APPLICATION PROCESS & TIMELINE.....	6
VI. SELECTION CRITERIA.....	7
VII. HISTORIC PRESERVATION.....	9
VIII. FEDERAL FUNDING & LABOR STANDARDS COMPLIANCE.....	9
IX. AMENDMENT.....	9
X. OFDIG APPLICATION	10
XI. OFDIG PROGRAM PROJECT BUDGET FORM.....	16

I. PROGRAM GUIDANCE

The Town of Oakland has established a Façade and Downtown Improvement Grant Program to provide financial assistance to downtown business and property owners located within the established Downtown District (see attached map) who wish to make physical improvements to the exterior of their buildings.

A Façade Improvement Grant may be used for a variety of façade improvement activities, including painting, window or door repairs or replacements, signage, awnings, storefront restorations, and other activities outlined under the “Eligible Activities” section of this application package.

A Special Projects & Building Improvement Grant may be utilized for improvements to a building’s structure as well as critical economic development and redevelopment projects.

II. FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION

Funding for Façade and Downtown Improvement Grants will be funded in perpetuity by the Town’s Downtown TIF District. The administration of the Façade and Downtown Improvement Grant Program (OFDIG) will be carried out by the Town of Oakland according to the procedures and guidelines outlined in this document. The administration and operation of this program shall conform to all federal, state, and local codes.

III. PROGRAM GUIDELINES & ELIGIBILITY

1. Three categories of Façade and Downtown Improvement Grants will be offered:
 - a. Small Projects Grants up to \$2,500. (Examples of “small projects” include signs, awnings, small paint projects, etc.)
 - b. Façade Improvement Grants up to \$10,000.
 - c. Special Projects and Building Improvements (case-by-case basis)
2. Grants are available for up to 50% of the actual or estimated cost of the improvement project and therefore must be matched at a ratio of 1:1. **PLEASE NOTE:** The amount of grant fund reimbursement shall be up to 50% of the actual total UNLESS the actual total is greater than the estimated total, in which case the grant fund reimbursement shall be up to 50% of the estimated total provided in the grant application.
3. Each applicant may only be awarded one grant in each category. *Recipients of Small Projects Grants will still be eligible to apply for Façade Improvement Grants; however, the maximum Façade Improvement Grant award for a Small Projects Grant recipient will*

be \$10,000 minus the amount of the Small Project Grant. (Example: if Jane Smith receives a \$2,500 Small Projects Grant, she will be eligible for a Façade Improvement Grant up to \$7,500.)

4. The grant applicant may be the property owner or the tenant. A tenant must have the property owner's signed approval of the proposed building improvement.
5. A Façade Improvement Grant may only be made to a commercial or mixed-use property located within the defined Downtown District (see map). Please note that properties are eligible for grant funding regardless of occupancy, though a business recruitment plan must be identified and described in the grant application.
6. Applicants who have been awarded a Façade Improvement Grant from a previous round of funding but have yet to complete the improvements or submit for reimbursement, will not be considered eligible until the original project has been completed.
7. Proposals will be ranked by the following structure: First priority will be given to applicants or sites that have not previously received funding from this program. Secondary priority will go to sites or applicants who have previously completed a successful improvement project through this funding source. Priority will not be given to previous awardees who have yet to complete their originally proposed project.
8. New Applicants and/or Project Sites that have never received funding through this program will receive a bonus point in scoring.
9. Businesses & Entrepreneurs looking to open or expand into Oakland by improving the façade of a previously vacant/closed space will receive a bonus point in scoring.
10. Projects utilizing State of Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) funding must be reviewed by a certified design professional, who will provide concept sketches and assist with securing approval from Maine Historic Preservation Commission.
11. REIMBURSEMENT: The applicant will be **reimbursed** for the amount of the grant award only upon completion of the project. Reimbursement will not be made for work completed prior to grant application acceptance. Please see "Section V. Application Process & Timeline" for more details.
12. Applicants must comply with the design standards outlined in the Design Guidelines attached at the end of this packet.

13. All projects must be completed by December 1, 2026, unless special arrangements are made and approved by the Town of Oakland. Approved “Special Projects & Building Improvements” may be subject to an extended special consideration deadline as determined in concert with the OFDIG Advisory Committee.
14. The Town of Oakland reserves the right to utilize project illustrations and images (prior to and after work is completed) for the purposes of marketing and/or branding.

IV. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Use of grant funds is restricted to eligible improvements to the exterior of buildings/structures. Eligible activities are listed below. Because it is likely that façade improvement requests will exceed the available funds, activities have been categorized as either High Priority or Low Priority. In general, the Town of Oakland will seek to fund High Priority activities before providing assistance for Low Priority activities.

Eligible Activities – High Priority:

- Signage (*The Design Guidelines strongly encourage perpendicular signage. See the Design Guidelines attached to the end of this packet for additional information.*)
- Awnings
- Storefront Improvements
- Restoration of original/historical windows, doors, and trim where possible
- Repair or replacement of windows, doors, and trim
- Cleaning and/or painting of wood surfaces
- Cleaning and/or repointing of surface brick or stone
- Re-painting of brick, stone or cement
- Removing paint from brick or stone
- Exterior lighting
- Outdoor seating
- Streetscaping improvements
- Removal of “modernization” efforts and/or inappropriate non-historic alterations/additions
- Murals and Art & Design Elements

Eligible Activities – Low Priority:

- Cleaning and repair or installation of approved siding
- Roofing visible from street-level
- Removal or repair of fire escapes
- Landscaping
- Screening for trash receptacles

- Security cameras
- Interior lighting

Ineligible Activities:

- Purchase of commercial property/equipment
- New construction
- Renovations started prior to approval for grant

V. APPLICATION PROCESS & TIMELINE

1. ***To apply for a Façade & Downtown Improvement Grant, fill out the attached form and return it to the Town of Oakland office by January 15, 2026.*** Please be sure to include any available drawings and descriptive information on the design of the project and products to be used. You must also provide both material and labor cost estimates for each item. (See the attached form for more details.)
2. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds originate from the federal government. As a result, there are requirements for historic preservation reviews and CDBG environmental clearance as well as possible labor standards compliance. Please see Sections VII and VIII of these guidelines for further details. The Town of Oakland will work with you to make this process as easy as possible.
3. The Façade Improvement Grant Selection Committee will review and score each application and will make announcements of awards on **March 17, 2026**.
4. Successful applicants may begin improvements at any time after receiving official grant award notification. ***No improvements begun prior to award notification and CDBG environmental clearance (if applicable) will be eligible for reimbursement.***
5. Upon completion of a Façade Improvement Grant project, the business/property owner shall submit paid bills/invoices for the work to the Town of Oakland, as well as photographic evidence of the completed work; these documents should be e-mailed to kmichaud@oaklandme.gov. The Town of Oakland will then perform an inspection to determine that the work was completed in accordance with the original grant application and cost estimates.
6. Reimbursement will be processed within 2-4 weeks upon satisfactory inspection. Reimbursement will be made in the form of a mailed check; mail delivery time will further extend the reimbursement timeline.

VI. SELECTION CRITERIA

Mandatory Criteria

OFDIG Applicant Checklist (Incomplete applications will not be scored):	
☐	Completed OFDIG Grant Application Form (and any available photos, design sketches, &/or cost estimates)
☐	Completed OFDIG Budget Form
☐	Signed OFDIG Applicant Agreement and Disclosure Statement
☐	Comply with the Required OFDIG Program and Design Guidelines.

Scored Criteria

Each Façade and Downtown Improvement Grant Program application will be scored according to the following criteria:

1. Compliance with the Suggested Design Guidelines *(15 points)*
2. Potential impact on the attractiveness of the building/business *(15 points)*
3. Priority of eligible activity *(20 points)*
4. Potential impact on the attractiveness of the downtown streetscape as a whole *(25 points)*
5. Financial feasibility *(10 points)*
6. Long-term value/viability/project endurance *(15 points)*

The Town of Oakland anticipates that there will be more demand than available funds. Funding will be provided to those applications receiving the highest scores overall until the grant fund is exhausted. The Façade and Downtown Improvement Grant Selection Committee reserve the right to deny funding to any applicant who does not comply with the required or suggested design guidelines. Should there be a lack of qualified applications, all remaining grant funds may not be awarded.

Required Design Guidelines

1. Planned improvements must preserve the architectural integrity of the building and adhere, where possible, to the original design of the façade. Improvements must not replace historic elements with modern ones.
2. Only appropriate means of cleaning buildings will receive funding. Sandblasting of historic buildings is inappropriate due to its destructive nature. Cleaning methods should be gentle and non-abrasive to ensure long-term preservation of materials.

3. Historical Preservation Projects: for formal Historical Preservation projects, including those that use state or federal grants or historical preservation tax credits, please consult a preservation specialist. Vinyl and aluminum siding are typically inappropriate materials for covering historic structures and the use of those and similar inappropriate façade coverings will not be funded.

Suggested Design Guidelines

While not mandatory, applicants are encouraged to follow these additional recommendations to enhance the downtown's visual and economic vitality. Architectural and Material Recommendations include:

Desirable materials include:

- Brick masonry (red face brick)
- Fieldstone or random rubble foundations visible above grade
- Cast, molded, or formed metal hardware for doors and sign brackets
- Weather-resistant woods for framing, bulkheads, and trim
- Fiberglass replications of decorative elements (such as cornices, lattice work, bulkheads, or kickplates)
- Structural glass for display window rehabilitation
- Trimmed and detailed window and door casings that add architectural depth and visual character

Signage and Awnings

- Perpendicular, hanging, or flush-mounted signs are preferred over large internally illuminated or plastic box signs.
- Sign placement should fit naturally within existing architectural bands, cornices, or recessed areas on the building façade.
- Awning colors should complement the building façade and surrounding streetscape; fabric or canvas awnings are encouraged over plastic or vinyl.
- Window signage should be pedestrian-oriented, maintaining transparency into the storefront and promoting an inviting streetscape.

General Appearance and Maintenance

- Facade colors should complement the architectural period of the structure and harmonize with adjacent buildings.
Decorative lighting should highlight architectural features rather than overpower them.
- Landscaping and streetscape elements (e.g., benches, planters, lighting) should align with town standards and support walkability.

Please refer to the *Design Guidelines* section of this packet for recommendations.

Call the Town of Oakland at 207-465-7357 for more specific information.

VII. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Since this project at times may utilize CDBG Community Enterprise Grant funds, which originate from the federal government, all potential façade recipient buildings and proposed scopes of work using funds from this grant must be reviewed by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The purpose of the review is to determine the effect of the proposed façade improvements on cultural resources listed in or potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In general, buildings that are more than 50 years old are reviewed more carefully. If a building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places either individually or as a contributing building to an existing district, or if the MHPC determines that a building is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the MHPC would scrutinize the proposed work to see if the work would change the historic character of the building, and they could require changes in the scope of work. As mentioned above, however, the façade program will be retaining a certified design professional to assist with this process in order to reduce the burden on the business/property owner and to minimize the likelihood of MHPC requiring changes.

VIII. FEDERAL FUNDING & LABOR STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

Federal Labor Standards are statutory provisions dealing with construction projects, including façade improvements that receive federal funds such as the CDBG Community Enterprise funds. Contracts in excess of \$2,000 which employ craftsmen, mechanics and/or laborers for construction-related activities shall contain provisions with respect to minimum wages and fringe benefits set by the federal Department of Labor, also known as Davis-Bacon wages. In general, if grant funds are used solely to purchase materials and/or for contracts less than \$2,000, the federal labor standards may not apply. If it appears that labor standards may be applicable, Central Maine Growth Council will provide assistance in planning the use of labor and materials so that any compliance requirements can be kept to a minimum.

IX. AMENDMENT

With the use of the OFDIG Funding, program guidelines, and eligibility may be amended upon final approval of the OFDIG Advisory Committee. All amendments to program guidelines and eligibility shall be pursuant to all state and federal regulations, which may apply to activities covered by this program.

X. OFDIG APPLICATION

2025-26 OFDIG Grant Application		
1. Name of Applicant / Grantee:		
2. Please check one:	☐ Landlord	☐ Tenant
3. Have you received prior local, state, federal, and/ or private sector grant funding for your building (e.g. Community Dev. Block Grant)?	Yes - Grant Name(s) & Year(s)	No
4. Business Name, if applicable:		
5. Number of Employees, if applicable:	F.T.E.	P.T.E.
6. Property Address:		
7. Is your property on the National Historical Registry?	Yes - Reference Number	No
8. Is your building vacant? (Y/N) If so, how will this grant facilitate business recruitment?		
9. Mailing Address (if different from above):		
10. Contact Information:	Phone	
	Email	
11. Grant Request Amount:	\$	

12. Planned Improvements *(Please check all that apply.)*

High Program Priority

☐ Awning	☐ Cleaning &/or repointing of surface brick or stone
☐ Signage	☐ Re-painting of brick, stone, or cement
☐ Storefront Improvements	☐ Removing paint from brick or stone
☐ Restoration of historical/original windows, doors, &/or trim where possible	☐ Removal of “modernization efforts” &/or inappropriate non-historical alterations/additions
☐ Repair or replacement of windows, doors, &/or trim	☐ Cleaning &/or painting of exterior surfaces

☐ Exterior lighting	☐ Mural &/or Art & Design Elements
☐ Outdoor Seating (e.g. bench)	☐ Streetscaping improvements (e.g. designated crosswalks)

Low Program Priority Activities

☐ Cleaning and repair or installation of approved siding	☐ Cleaning &/or painting of interior surfaces
☐ Security Cameras	☐ Roofing visible from street-level
☐ Interior lighting	☐ Screening for trash receptacles
☐ Removal or repair of fire escapes	☐

16. Please provide a brief written description of each proposed activity.

(Feel free to attach another page if needed)

For example: (1) Painting – Paint the entire street façade with 3 colors, a base wall color, a trim color and an accent color. (2) Sign – Remove existing internally illuminated sign and replace it with a new projecting externally illuminated sign. (3) Install a new awning at the main entry.

17. To complement the written description, please attach a photo(s) and/or design sketch(es) to help the Selection Committee understand where each proposed activity will take place and/or what it might look like. A completed design is not necessary.

18. Please describe the estimated project timeline for project completion as well as the long-term maintenance plan that will be in place to protect the façade improvements.

Start Date: _____

End Date: _____

Timeline description & long-term maintenance plan:

19. Which fund are you applying for? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Small Projects Grants (up to \$2,500)
- ☐ Façade Improvement Grant (up to \$10,000)
- ☐ Special Projects & Building Improvement (_____)

20. Estimated Cost* of Improvements: _____

**Using the attached Budget Form. A formal bid is not required at this stage.*

21. Total Project Amount: _____

22. Applicant's Signature

I have read and understand the attached guidelines. I understand that this is a matching grant program, and that money is granted on a reimbursement basis, following completion of work. I also understand that improvements not formally approved by the Façade & Building Improvement Advisory Committee will not be funded.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

23. Landlord's Acknowledgement (if Applicant is a Tenant)

I am the landlord of the above address, I have been informed of the Applicant's intention to perform the improvements described in the attached documentation, and I hereby approve the proposed improvements.

Landlord's Signature _____ Date _____

24. Landlord's Contact Information

Landlord's Full Name: _____

Landlord's Address: _____

Landlord's Email: _____

Landlord's Phone: _____

Applicant Agreement and Disclosure Statement

By signing and submitting this application, the applicant hereby agrees to the following:

1. The information submitted herein is true and accurate to the best of my (our) knowledge. I understand that this information is being submitted to the OFDIG Advisory Committee so that they can decide to make a grant and that the OFDIG Advisory Committee is relying on this information. I give permission to the Town of Oakland to research the building's history, research the applicant's history, contact respective financial institutions, and perform other related activities necessary for the reasonable evaluation of this proposal.
2. I give permission to the Town of Oakland to utilize project illustrations and images for the purposes of marketing and/or branding.
3. I (we) have read, understand, and agree to comply with the requirements and conditions of the Town of Oakland's Façade & Downtown Improvement Grant Program and hereby agree to comply with the OFDIG Program Guidance document.
4. I have not paid anyone employed by the Town of Oakland for help in obtaining this grant.
5. I acknowledge that any work commenced before grant approval by the OFDIG Advisory Committee and a signed grant agreement is an unallowable expense and will not be reimbursed. I understand that this is a matching grant program, and that money is granted on a reimbursement basis, following completion of work. I also understand that improvements not formally approved by the Town of Oakland will not be funded.
6. I understand that the project must be completed as agreed by December 1, 2026, or as extended in writing as necessitated by extenuating conditions. Approved projects within the category of "Special Projects & Building Improvement" may be eligible for an extended timeline as determined in consultation with the OFDIG Advisory Committee.
7. I agree and acknowledge that: (a) the acceptance of this application does not commit the Town of Oakland to enter into an agreement, to pay any costs incurred in its preparation to participate in subsequent negotiations, or to contract for the project; (b) the acceptance of this application does not constitute an agreement by the Town of Oakland that any contract will be entered into by the Town of Oakland or that any application shall be granted; (c) the Town of Oakland expressly reserves the right, in its sole discretion and for any reason, to reject any or all applications (whether or not an application meets the guidelines, criteria, or other grant requirements) or to request more information from the applicant; (d) all decisions of the Town of Oakland, including whether to accept or reject an application, are final, non-reviewable and non-appealable, and the undersigned applicant waives any and all claims, including without limitation, claims for damage or loss, against the Town of Oakland, its agents, employees, officers, or others acting on its behalf in connection with this grant program, arising out of or related to the grant process, including without limitation, any claims that a rejected application should have been granted.

8. Should assistance be provided, I agree:

- a. To comply with all applicable provisions of federal statutes and regulations concerning equal employment opportunities for persons engaged in rehabilitation work undertaken in connection with program assistance.
- b. To keep such records as may be required by the Town of Oakland in connection with the work to be assisted.
- c. To not discriminate upon the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religion or national origin in the sale, lease, rental, use or occupancy of the property to be assisted.
- d. To allow no member of the governing body of the Town of Oakland and no employee of the Town of Oakland to have any interest, direct or indirect, in the proceeds of any loan or in any way contract entered into by the borrower for the performance of work financed, in whole or in part, with the proceeds of the loan.
- e. That NO financial assistance will be provided if the project involves the permanent and involuntary displacement of tenants unless the applicant agrees to provide financial assistance to the tenants at levels consistent with the Federal Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Act, as amended. Such assistance granted will not, however, be counted in the private match requirement.
- f. Upon conclusion of the facade improvements, I agree to maintain the completed project. I understand there will be no alterations of the completed work without approval from the Town of Oakland.
- g. I certify that there are no liens other than mortgages against this applicant's property and that all payments to municipal, state, and federal governments are current.
- h. The word "I" shall refer to the undersigned applicant, and shall include any corporate or entity applicant.

Printed Property Owner Name*: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Property Owner* Signature

Date

**Owner as determined by the Town of Oakland Tax Assessor's Office*

Printed Business Owner/Tenant Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

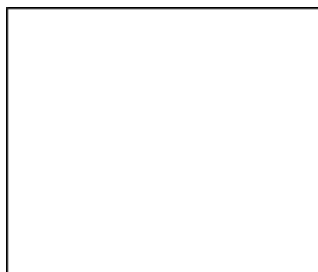
Email: _____

Business Owner/Tenant Signature

Date

Business License #: _____

If applicant is a Corporation, sign below:



Corporate Name and Seal

Witnessed By

Date

Please send your completed application along with all documentation to the Town of Oakland at kmichaud@oaklandme.gov.

All grant applications are due by January 15, 2026 . Applications must be electronically emailed to the Town of Oakland.

Additional Contact Information:

Town of Oakland
6 Cascade Mill Road
Oakland, ME 04963

Email: kmichaud@oaklandme.gov

Phone: 207-465-7357

XI. OFDIG PROGRAM PROJECT BUDGET FORM

2025-26 FAÇADE & DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM PROJECT BUDGET FORM

2025-26 OFDIG Project Budget – please submit with application form.			
DESCRIPTION OF IMPROVEMENTS (Please break down by activity, such as painting, sign, awning, etc.)	Grantee Amount	OFDIG Amount	TOTAL COST
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7			
TOTAL			
Total Project Cost			