

Program Guidelines, Curb Appeal Program

I. Executive Summary

A. Overview

These Program Guidelines provide guidance to the City of Jackson’s Community Development Department to approve projects and administer reimbursement funds for the Curb Appeal Program. Funding is allocated from the City of Jackson, and program guidelines / specifications are approved by City Council. All program materials, and the approval/denial of any/all projects, shall be the sole responsibility of City of Jackson Community Development staff. All approved projects must adhere to the guidelines and regulations established within this manual and outlined in program supporting documentation.

The Curb Appeal Program provides financial assistance for eligible home improvements to the front of their home. The program aims to encourage neighborhood beautification in all areas of the City. Projects can be supported for 80% of eligible costs, up to \$2,500. Eligible properties include owner-occupied single-family homes, and two-unit properties where at least one unit is occupied by the property owner. Larger multi-unit structures and non owner-occupied structures are *not* eligible for project funding through the Curb Appeal program. Vacant and/or commercial structures are *not* eligible for funding. All projects must be pre-approved by Community Development Department staff. All participating properties must be located within the City of Jackson. Projects will be reviewed on a rolling basis, and payments will be issued for approved projects until annual program funds are exhausted. This program will be evaluated on an annual basis for possible future funding.

The Curb Appeal Program aims to beautify City of Jackson blocks and neighborhoods by supporting eligible homeowner-initiated projects. The City recognizes that attractive front facades strengthen neighborhood and provides the opportunity for increased property values for participating and surrounding homeowners.

B. Authorization to Proceed

Approval of this Policy and Procedure Manual by the Jackson City Council authorizes staff of the Community Development Department to administer the Curb Appeal Program. Deviations from any policy or procedure must be approved by the Jackson City Council at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The Jackson City Council may waive any local policy set forth in this Policy and Procedure Manual for extenuating circumstances, but does not have authority to waive any statutory or regulatory local zoning code or ordinance.

II. Eligible Projects

The following projects are eligible for the Curb Appeal Program, provided they are within the front portion (street-facing side) of the home:

- Landscaping: Tree, flower, shrub, bush, vegetation, other landscaping materials (mulch, stone, pavers, etc) or *one-time* lawn maintenance
- Trim, Removal: Tree, stump, or shrub
- Power Washing: Exterior only
- House: Siding repair, replacement, painting, staining
- Fencing: Removal only
- Deck, Porch, Step, Railing: Installation, repair, replacement, painting, staining
- Windows, Doors, Trim: Installation, repair, replacement
- Gutter, Soffit, Fascia: Installation, repair, replacement (all sides of home **ARE** eligible)
- Lighting: Installation, repair, replacement
- Tuck-pointing, Masonry: Reconstruction of the building / existing masonry
- Private Walk, Driveway, or Driveway Apron: Installation, repair, replacement

Projects to be undertaken in the side-yard on the street side of a corner-facing lot will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The following projects are **INELIGIBLE** for the Curb Appeal Program. Please note, this is not an exhaustive list, and other items may be deemed ineligible at the discretion of City of Jackson staff:

- Any/all back or side-yard projects
- Purchase / planting of annuals
- Accessibility features (ramps, grab bars, etc.)
- Roof repair/replacement
- Routine lawn/landscaping maintenance (mowing, leaf removal, snow removal, seasonal maintenance, etc.)
- Fertilizer/pesticides (purchase or application)
- Installation of fruit/vegetable/flower raised beds (materials and/or plantings)
- Tool purchase/rental
- Permit/application fees

Detached garages and accessory buildings will be reviewed on a **case-by-case basis**. If you intend to do work on a detached garage or accessory building, you must contact us **BEFORE** you begin your project. Curb Appeal will only pay for professional licensed labor. That means that **you CANNOT be reimbursed for work that you do yourself, OR for work that you pay someone else to do IF that person is NOT a licensed professional** in the field that they are working for your project. You **CAN** receive assistance for any work that you pay a **licensed professional** to do. For example, you **CAN receive assistance** for a professional painter who paints your house, a professional tree trimmer who trims your tree, a professional concrete worker who lays new sidewalk, or a professional landscaper who installs landscaping. Financial assistance will **NOT** be provided for projects undertaken (started or completed) prior to Curb Appeal Program approval.

III. Application & Approval

A. Rules and Regulations

Applications for the City of Jackson Curb Appeal Program may be accepted online or in writing, at the discretion of program staff. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Application approval does not guarantee funding for a completed project. All funds will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. No projects (even those previously approved in the application stage) will receive funding once funds for this program have been exhausted. The City of Jackson does not guarantee when future funds may be available for additional funding under this program. Evidence of project approval shall only be provided in writing.

B. Eligibility

The following basic requirements must be met for any project to be considered:

1. The property must be located within the City of Jackson's jurisdictional boundaries.
2. The property must be a residential structure (commercial structures are ineligible)
3. The property may not have more than two (2) units; at least one unit must be occupied by the property owner.
4. The property must not be vacant.
5. The property must be the primary residence of the property owner.
6. The property must have clear and marketable title, properly recorded at the Jackson County Register of Deeds. A contract for deed, installment contract and land sales contract are specifically excluded.
7. Must be current on all property taxes, special assessments, water utility billings, AHB judgments, and other costs as may be charged by the City of Jackson.
8. Must be sufficiently insured and current on payments.
9. Must be current on mortgage payments or loans involving the property, if any. All existing mortgage(s) or loan(s) on the property must be in the name(s) of one or more owners of the property.
10. Must not be in foreclosure or bankruptcy.
11. Must not have unresolved violations from the City of Jackson, State of Michigan, or HUD. Any housing code violations that would not be rectified at the completion of the rehabilitation work must be corrected before the project is undertaken.
12. Applicant's annual household income may not exceed 80% of the current area median income (AMI) as published annually by HUD, adjusted for family size. Annual household income includes the combined income of all adult persons 18 years of age or older residing in the property. Applicant's income must be stable and verifiable (evidence of two years' employment, if applicable).
13. Income shall be determined via submission of a current 1040 tax form or other staff-approved income verification documentation.

C. Intake & Processing

City of Jackson staff from the Community Development Department will process applications, project approvals, and payments. Applications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis, and no priority will be given for processing/approval. The following documentation shall be required of all applicants. This is not an exhaustive list, and City staff reserve the right to alter this list as needed.

1. Completed application
2. 1040 or other income documentation (for persons over the age of 18 residing in the home)
3. Copy of driver's license for all adults residing in the home
4. Proof of property ownership
5. Proof of property insurance
6. Proof of current mortgage payments
7. Proof of property tax payments (summer & winter)
8. Picture of area to be improved (*before* picture)

Applicants must complete the program application and be approved in writing before work begins. All applicants will be notified in writing regarding project approval/denial. If a project is approved, work can begin immediately. Payment will **NOT** be provided for projects undertaken (started or completed) prior to Curb Appeal Program approval.

IV. Financial Assistance

A. Processing

Requests for payment must be submitted in writing on the approved Curb Appeal Program form. Incomplete forms or requests made without all required supporting documentation will not be considered. The following documents shall be required for payment processing:

1. Completed payment form
2. Copies of all invoices for supplies/contractors
3. Proof of contractor license
4. Proof of permit (if needed)
5. Picture of area improved (*after* picture)

All payments will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Requests will be processed by City of Jackson staff, and checks may take up to 30 days to arrive once a payment request has been submitted. Only work completed **AFTER** initial application approval and **BEFORE** a request for payment will be considered for financial support. Projects undertaken that were not part of the original application/approval may not be approved. Applicants should consult with City of Jackson staff if there are changes to the scope of an approved project.

B. Payment

Payments can only be made to the applying contractor. A household can request payment for approved projects **ONCE** every twelve (12) months. Projects can be supported for 80% of eligible costs, up to \$2,500. For example:

If your project costs **\$500**, Curb Appeal will pay **\$400**.

If your project costs **\$1,000**, Curb Appeal will pay **\$800**.

If your project costs **\$3,125**, Curb Appeal will pay **\$2,500**.

If your project costs **\$5,000**, Curb Appeal will pay **\$2,500**.

**The maximum amount that may be paid is \$2,500.*

V. Administration

A. Equal Opportunity

The City of Jackson shall take the necessary steps to ensure that applicants for this program are treated without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or disability. The City of Jackson also agrees to post in conspicuous places, available to staff, notices setting forth provisions of this non-discrimination clause. The City of Jackson shall comply with the provisions of Federal Executive Order 11246 of 1965 as amended by Federal Executive Order 11375 of 1967 and the Equal Employment Act of 1972.

B. Conflict of Interest

In order to avoid personal conflict of interest in approving applications for this program:

1. No application shall be approved which may cause any person in an administrative capacity within the City of Jackson Community Development Department to benefit, unless specifically authorized by the City Council, in conformity with applicable federal, state and local laws.
2. No application shall be approved which may cause an immediate family member of a person in an administrative capacity with the City of Jackson Community Development Department to benefit unless authorized in writing to do so by the City Council.
3. No application shall be approved which may cause a City of Jackson elected official to benefit.
4. No City of Jackson employee shall solicit or accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from applicants contractors, or potential subcontractors.

C. Funding

Funding for the Curb Appeal Program shall be determined and allocated on an as-needed basis by the City Manager and City Council. Additional program funding may be provided by non-City of Jackson sources (IE grant funds, donations, etc.) at the discretion of City of Jackson staff, with the approval of City Council.