

# **“T.O.P. T.I.E.R.” PROGRAM**

## **Program Purpose and Goals:**

### **“T.O.P. T.I.E.R.” (Targeted Options Providing Tangible Investment in Economic Revitalization)**

Is an economic development program funded and maintained by the Town of Dallas to offer limited, but targeted, public economic assistance in support of private sector investment in assets needed to spur job creation, business sector growth, and overall economic vitality.

## **Creation and Maintenance of Funding:**

As a result of, and following the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (Audit) for the Fiscal-Year-ended June 30, 2013, The Town of Dallas will create the “TOP TIER” Fund by “seed-funding” it through the re-allocation and transfer of those funds determined to exist as “surplus” within the non-reserved, ending Fund Balance of the Electric Utility Fund and constituting **twelve and one-half percent (12.5%)** of the amount exceeding forty percent (40%) of the approved, Fiscal-Year 2013-2014 Electric Fund revenue Budget (less) any Fund Balance Appropriation to the General Fund included in the Expenditure Budget for the same Fiscal-year period.. In subsequent years, following conclusion of the Audit, the Town will continue to re-allocate and transfer such amounts, if any, to the TOP TIER Fund which, when using the calculation of **12.5 %** of non-reserved Fund Balance totals exceeding 40% of the then-current and approved Electric Fund Revenue Budget (not including any Fund Balance allocation to the General Fund) are determined to be “surplus” under the meaning defined herein.

## **Program Components and Features:**

- The Program offers direct incentive grants to private-sector applicants in the form of partial reimbursement of building facade improvement, building up-fit, architectural design services, and/or infrastructure improvement costs or expenditures when meeting the program’s eligibility and location requirements.
- Funding is limited in any given fiscal year to the program expenditures allocated and approved by action of the Board of Aldermen and funding is merit-based and provided on a first-come, first-served basis subject to such funding limitations.
- The Board of Aldermen of the Town of Dallas shall have final authority and discretion over the award of any or all grants, subsidies, and/or incentives under the TOP TIER program; and may or may not continue, alter, or discontinue funding for any one portion or all of the program at any given time.

## **Eligibility Criteria:**

In order to be eligible for funding assistance under the TOP TIER Program, an applicant must be able to demonstrate the following:

- The business is owned and operated as a “for profit” enterprise, open and accessible to the general public on a non-discriminatory basis.

- The business must be located within the Town Limits of the Town of Dallas and the premises must be fully contained within, and lawfully compliant with the Zoning classification eligible for such funding assistance as detailed below.
- The business must be new to the Town of Dallas (except in the case of Façade Improvement Grants) and not simply relocating from one location in Town to another, unless: 1.) it represents a clear improvement, increased investment in, or substantial expansion of the business; 2.) it is an additional location in a chain; 3.) it is only moving in order to allow its previous location to house another business which is new to Dallas; or, 4.) the business was unable to continue at its previous location due to circumstances beyond the control of the business owners.
- The business must represent one of the following seven (1-7) numbered categories:
  - 1.) Retail: Engaged in the sale of new, or pre-owned designer, collectable, or antique merchandise (not to include the consignment or sale of used or second-hand clothing or general merchandise) at retail to the general public.
  - 2.) Restaurant: Engaged in the sale of prepared food and beverages primarily for on-site consumption; can include catering off-site.
  - 3.) Lounges, Pubs, Bars: Engaged in the presentation of broadcast sports and entertainment programming, and/or occasional live music, but where the majority of gross revenues are derived from the sale of beverages and food consumed on-site. Includes cigar bars.
  - 4.) Theater/Nightclub/Entertainment: Engaged primarily in the presentation, for a fee, of on-site performance of vocal and instrumental music, theater, dance, comedy, variety, or combinations (excluding adult entertainment). Can include component functions of #2 or #3 above.
  - 5.) Personal Service: Engaged in the on-site provision of hair care & grooming, make-up and/or nail care, spa services including therapeutic massage, health clubs, photography, art studios (including gallery sales), and dance and martial arts studio, and similar.. Not to include tattoo shops or body piercing/modification.
  - 6.) Professional office: Offices of Attorneys, CPA's and Accounting firms, Architects, Engineers, Realtors, Medical and Dental professionals, Software designers, and similar. Not to include blood plasma centers or addiction treatment clinics.
  - 7.) Light Manufacturing, Assembly, Value-Added Processing & Research & Development: Engaged in the Manufacture, assembly, processing, and/or packaging of products or component parts, the combined efforts of which produce no pollution, emissions, discharges, undue noise or negative environmental impact. Also, the activities associated with product or process development and/or research.

**Eligible Locations By Zoning Classification:**

To be eligible to receive funding assistance, the building and property in/upon which the business is housed, must fall within one of the below-listed Zoning Classifications (Districts), and be an eligible business category as correspondingly matched thereto.

**Zoning Classification (District):**

**Corresponding Business Category:**

**B-3**

**1.) Retail; 2.) Restaurant; 3.) Lounges, Pubs, Bars;  
4.) Theater/Nightclub/Entertainment; 5.) Personal Service; 6.) Professional Office.**

**B-3P**

**1.) Retail; 2.) Restaurant; 3.) Lounges, Pubs, Bars;  
4.) Theater/Nightclub/Entertainment; 5.) Personal Service; 6.) Professional Office.**

**I-2**

**7.) Light Manufacturing, Assembly, Value-Added Processing & Research & Development. And,  
2.) Restaurant; 3.) Lounges, Pubs, Bars; 4.) Theater/Nightclub/Entertainment; ONLY if  
The applicant business proposes a Brew pub, Dinner Theater, Comedy Club, Community Theater, Themed Restaurant, or similar destination venue within an otherwise vacant former-industrial building in an I-2-Zoned District East of U.S. 321.**

**Incentive Grant Program:**

• **FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT:**

Only available for the B-3 Zone; the Façade Improvement Grant Program shall require successful application and Board of Aldermen approval prior to commencement of any grant-eligible work.. Thereafter, grant recipients shall receive grant payment of an amount equaling 50% of total, eligible investment spent on Façade alteration and/or improvement to a maximum of \$5,000 per building façade. Funds are payable as a reimbursement upon receipt of paid invoices evidencing actual expenses.

### **Typical Examples of Work Components Eligible for Façade Improvement Grants:**

- Removal of false fronts (i.e. aluminum panels over original brick)
- Repair or replacement of windows, doors, and cornices.
- Repair or replacement of façade materials.
- Tuck-pointing of brick; repair or replacement of stucco, tile, or masonry.
- Removal of paint from Brick Surfaces ( chemical or water only; no sandblasting)
- New or replacement signage.
- New or replacement awnings.
- Exterior painting (when combined with other work components listed).
- Restoration of historic features.
- Actual reconstruction of store front.

#### **• ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN SERVICES GRANT:**

Only available for the B-3 Zone; the Architectural Design Services Grant program shall require successful application and Board of Aldermen approval. Thereafter, grant recipients shall receive a voucher for architectural design services, not-to-exceed ten (10) billable hours at an hourly professional rate not-to-exceed one-hundred twenty-five dollars (\$125.00) per-hour, provided on the grant recipient's behalf by the Town's designated, on-call architect as formally selected by action of the Board of Aldermen. Building owners who own multiple buildings or storefronts in the B-3 Zone may be granted, or benefit from multiple vouchers so long as the cumulative total of the vouchers granted in any one program year does not exceed ten (10) billable hours. Payment for Architectural design services shall be remitted from the Town to the approved and designated on-call Architect only, within 10 business days following submittal of invoices evidencing work completed under a granted voucher.

#### **• UP-FIT GRANT:**

Available for the B-3; B-3P, and I-2 Zones; the Up-Fit Grant program shall require successful application and Board of Aldermen approval prior to any grant-eligible work. Thereafter, grant recipients shall receive a one-time Grant of:

**\$3.00 per-square-foot** of total dedicated space occupied by a "Category 1.), 5.), or 6.) business use", but not to exceed 50% of allowable, cumulative total up-fit expenses; to a maximum Grant total of \$15,000.00

**\$5.00 per-square-foot** of total dedicated space occupied by a "Category 2.), 3.), 4.), or 7.) business use", but not to exceed 50% of allowable, cumulative total up-fit expenses; to a maximum Grant total of \$25,000.00

Allowable up-fit expenses will be limited to those improvements, additions, renovations, equipment, or fixtures which will remain with the building following lease termination and/or property transfer. Payment of up-fit grant funds shall be remitted from the Town to the grant awardee within 30 days following the submittal and approval of both contractor lien waivers and paid invoices evidencing actual up-fit expenses.

If determined eligible for, and approved consistent with the requirements specified herein, a property owner may receive all, or any combination of a Façade Improvement Grant, Architectural Design Services Grant, or Up-fit Grant, for the same business and property; to a maximum cumulative Grant total of \$31,250.00.

- **INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT GRANT:**

Available for the B-3; B-3P, and I-2 Zones; the Infrastructure Support Grant program shall require successful application and Board of Aldermen approval prior to any grant-eligible work. Said approval may be considered either with TOP TIER funds, or over and above the funding assistance which may then be available from the TOP TIER Fund, on a case-by case basis as alternative funding is determined available. Thereafter, grant recipients shall receive grant payment of an amount equaling 75% of total, eligible investment spent on approved elements of public (Town-owned) infrastructure which enhance the business/property, but are either not required to lawfully operate the business, or which serve areas and/or properties beyond the property. These elements might include, but not be limited to: replacement or ornamental sidewalks, street trees, ornamental light-poles, bike racks, trash receptacles, planters or planting areas, ornamental benches, storm-water improvements, water line or sanitary sewer line upgrades, or parking improvements for non-exclusive public use. Funds are payable as a reimbursement upon receipt of paid invoices evidencing actual expenses, if grantee purchased and/or installed; and as a 75% credit against total invoiced expenses if Town purchased and/or installed.

The Town of Dallas shall also consider, on a case-by-case basis, covering 100% of certain total, eligible costs of approved elements of public infrastructure (Town-owned) which may or may not be lawfully required to operate the business within or on the property. These shall be limited to; fiber-optic loop extensions and connections, electric transformers, and/or underground electric line extensions.

**APPLICATION PROCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA:**

The Town of Dallas will consider a request for Incentive Grant Funding assistance, consistent with one or more of the Grant Programs detailed herein, under the following circumstances:

- A fully completed application form, along with any related and required supporting documentation must be submitted.

- The application must seek assistance on behalf of an expanding existing business (except in the case of the Facade Improvement Grant program which can be applied for by an existing business seeking to improve its building Façade), relocating business, or new business which is or will be housed in a building and on property within the Town limits of Dallas, consistent with all of the requirements detailed herein.
- The application must be signed by both the legal property owner as well as the business owner (holding a controlling interest in the business and with a letter of intent to lease or a signed lease contract for the property ), unless they are one and the same.
- Supporting documentation, by request of Town Staff can include any one, or all of:
  - A detailed business and marketing plan.
  - A projected pro-forma profit and loss statement.
  - A projection and evaluation of cash flow.
  - Detailed resume of business owner/operator/key staff as to experience.
  - Detailed cost-estimates for planned up-fit and/or façade improvement expenditures (if applicable).
  - Letter of Franchisor approval & support if business is/to be a franchise.

The selection process will begin with a thorough review of the application and required supporting documentation by the TOP TIER Review Committee consisting of The Town Manager, Electric Utility Director, Administrative Services Manager, and Development Services Director for the Town, as well as a representative of the Small Business Center at Gaston College and two (2) Business-Owner/members of the Gaston Regional Chamber-Dallas Branch. The Committee will provide its written recommendation to the Town Board of Aldermen who will, in turn, take formal public action to grant (in whole or in part), or deny each application request.

Applicants are encouraged to seek the assistance of the Small Business Center at Gaston College in the development of their application as well as in the creation of their business plan and for any ongoing inquiries as to entrepreneurial or business expertise.

