

# **DOWNTOWN CHARM GRANT PROGRAM**

**Downtown Charm Grant Program  
City of Calais  
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## DCGP Program Guidance Table of Contents

I.	Program Summary	2
-----		
II.	Funding and Administration	2
-----		
III.	Program Guidelines and Eligibility	2
-----		
IV.	Eligible Activities	4
-----		
V.	Downtown Charm Grant Program Committee	5
-----		
VI.	Application Process and Timeline	5
-----		
VII.	Selection Criteria	6
-----		
VIII.	<b>DESIGN GUIDELINES</b>	<b>7</b>
-----		
IX.	Historic Preservation	7
-----		
X.	Federal Funding and Labor Standards Compliance	8
-----		
XI.	Amendment	8
-----		
XII.	Grant Application	9
-----		
XIII.	Applicant Agreement and Disclosure Statement	12
-----		
XIV.	Project Budget Form	16
-----		

## **I. PROGRAM SUMMARY**

City of Calais has established a Façade and Building Improvement Grant Program, Downtown Charm 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 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 Downtown Charm Grant Program will come from public and private sources, including but not limited to Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds, donations, and grants. The administration of the Downtown Charm Grant Program (DCGP) will be carried out by the Downtown Charm Committee recommendation to the City of Calais Council 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 Downtown Charm Grant Program will be offered:

(1) Small Projects Grants up to \$2,500. (Examples of “small projects” include signs, awnings, small paint projects, etc.)

(2) Façade Improvement Grants up to \$10,000.

(3) Special Projects and Building Improvements (case-by-case basis) Capped at \$15,000.

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 Joe 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 are 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 Calais 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 VI. Application Process & Timeline” for more details.
12. Compliance with design standards as suggested in the Design Guidelines attached to the end of this packet.
13. All projects must be completed by a time limit that is set by the DCGP committee, unless special arrangements are made and approved by DCGP. Approved “Special Projects & Building Improvements” may be subject to an extended special consideration deadline as determined in concert with the DCGP Committee.
14. DCGP 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, DCGP 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
- Improvements visible from the Concourse parking area

***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. DOWNTOWN CHARM GRANT PROGRAM COMMITTEE**

1. The DCGP Committee will include one member from the City of Calais Council, one member from the City of Calais Planning Board, the Economic Development Director, one member from the Calais Downtown Revitalization Committee, and one Calais Resident Volunteer. The City Manager and Code Enforcement Officer would advise the Committee, but due to conflicts cannot be on the Committee.
2. The DCGP Committee will give recommendations to the City of Calais Council for final approval.

**VI. APPLICATION PROCESS & TIMELINE**

1. ***To apply for a Façade & Building Improvement Grant, fill out the attached form and return it to the Code Enforcement Officer or City Manager by the appropriate deadline.*** 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. The Downtown Charm Grant Program Committee will review and score each application and will make announcements of awards on March 27, 2025.
3. Successful applicants may begin improvements any time after receiving official grant award notification. ***No improvements begun prior to award notification will be eligible for reimbursement.***

4. Upon completion of a Façade Improvement Grant project, the business/property owner shall submit paid bills/invoices for the work to DCGP, as well as photographic evidence of the completed work; these documents should be e-mailed to [assessor@calaismaine.org](mailto:assessor@calaismaine.org) , hand deliver to the Code Enforcement Office at the City Building, 11 Church Street, Calais, ME 04619 or Mail to City of Calais Attn: Code Enforcement Office PO Box 413, Calais ME 04619. DCGP and/or the Code Enforcement Officer or City Manager will then perform an inspection to determine that the work was completed in accordance with the original grant application and cost estimates.

5. 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.

## VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

### Mandatory Criteria

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

### Scored Criteria

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

01. Compliance with the Design Guidelines *(15 points)*
02. Potential impact on the attractiveness of the building/business *(15 points)*
03. Priority of eligible activity *(20 points)*
04. Potential impact on the attractiveness of the downtown streetscape as a whole *(25 points)*
05. Financial feasibility *(10 points)*
06. Long-term value/viability/project endurance *(15 points)*

DCGP anticipates that there will be more demand than available funds. Funding will be provided to those applications receiving the overall highest scores until the grant fund is exhausted. The Downtown Charm Grant Program Committee reserves 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 within the Business District must be in compliance with the Business District Revitalization Ordinance.
2. Only appropriate means of cleaning buildings will receive funding.
3. Vinyl and aluminum siding are inappropriate materials for covering historic structures and the use of those and similar inappropriate façade coverings will not be funded.

## **VIII. COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS**

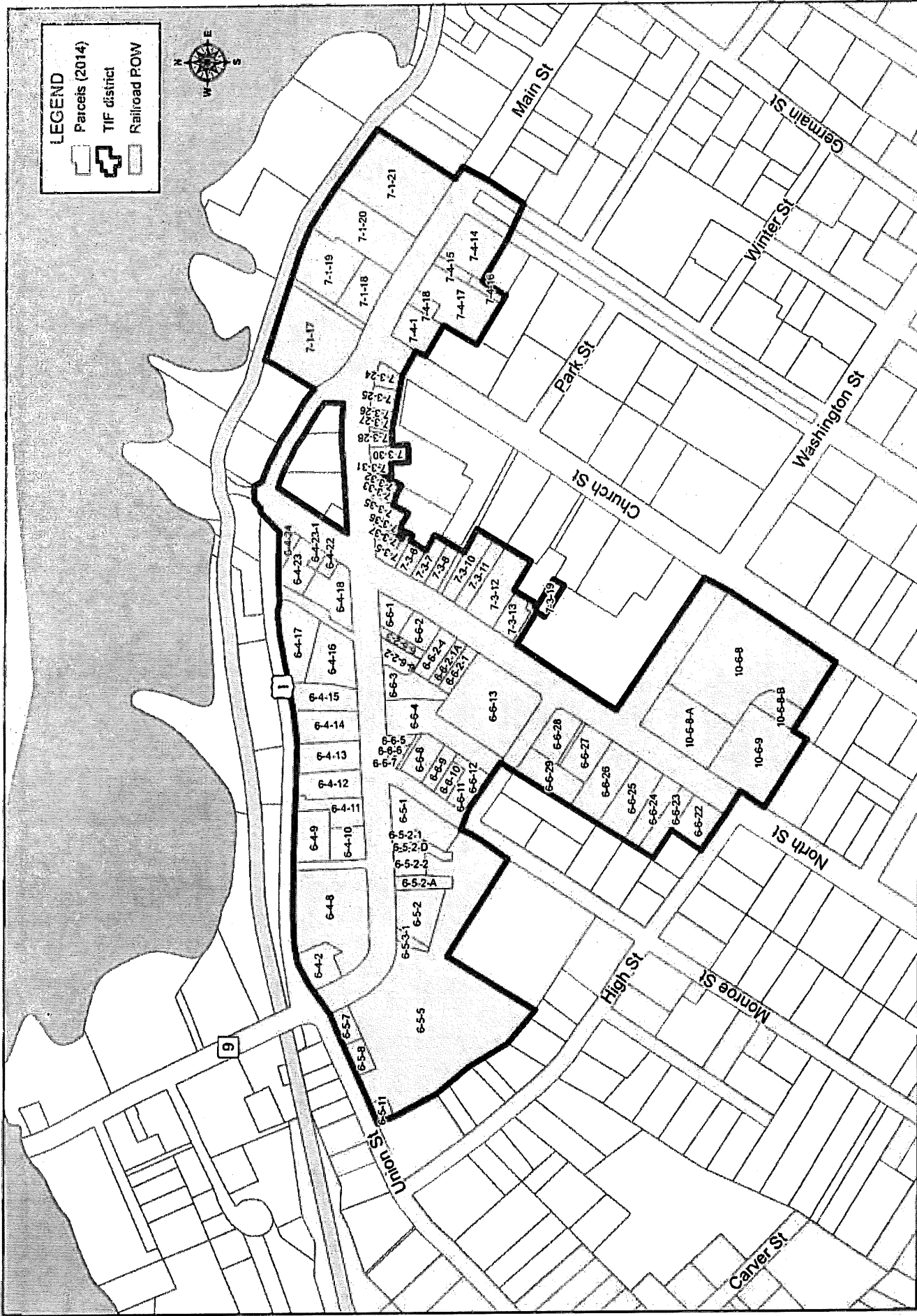
Recipients of the Downtown Charm Grant Program agree to comply with all applicable local, state, and federal rules, laws, and regulations. This includes, but is not limited to, adherence to the Land Use Codes, the Building and Property Maintenance Ordinance, and the Business District Revitalization Ordinance. Compliance with these regulations ensures that all projects align with the legal and community standards established to promote sustainable and responsible development within the district.

## **IX. 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, City of Calais will aid in planning the use of labor and materials so that any compliance requirements can be kept to a minimum.

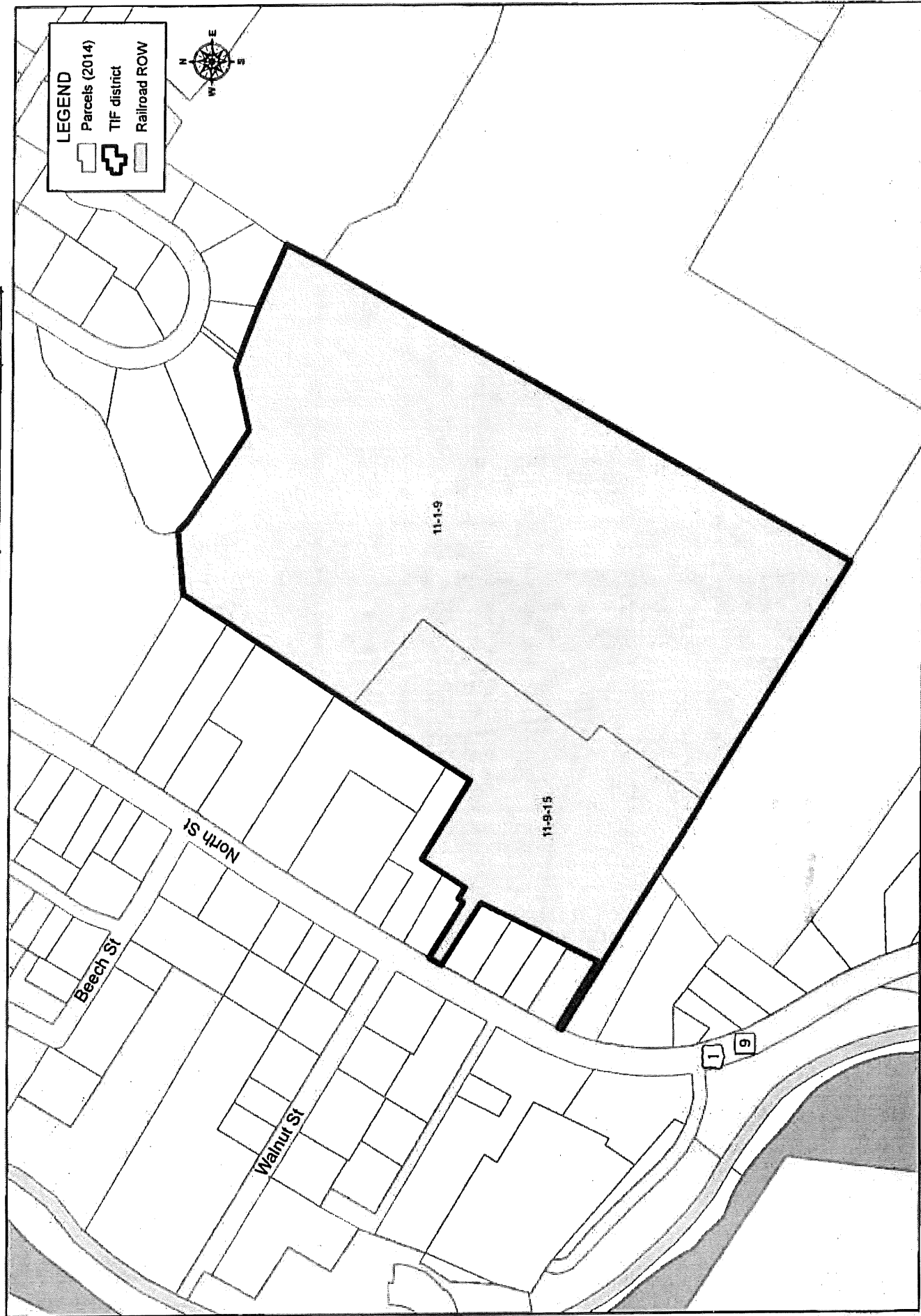
## **X. AMENDMENT**

With the use of the DCGP Funding, program guidelines, and eligibility may be amended upon final approval of the DCGP Committee and City of Calais Council. 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.



Calais Downtown TIF District: Tract 1

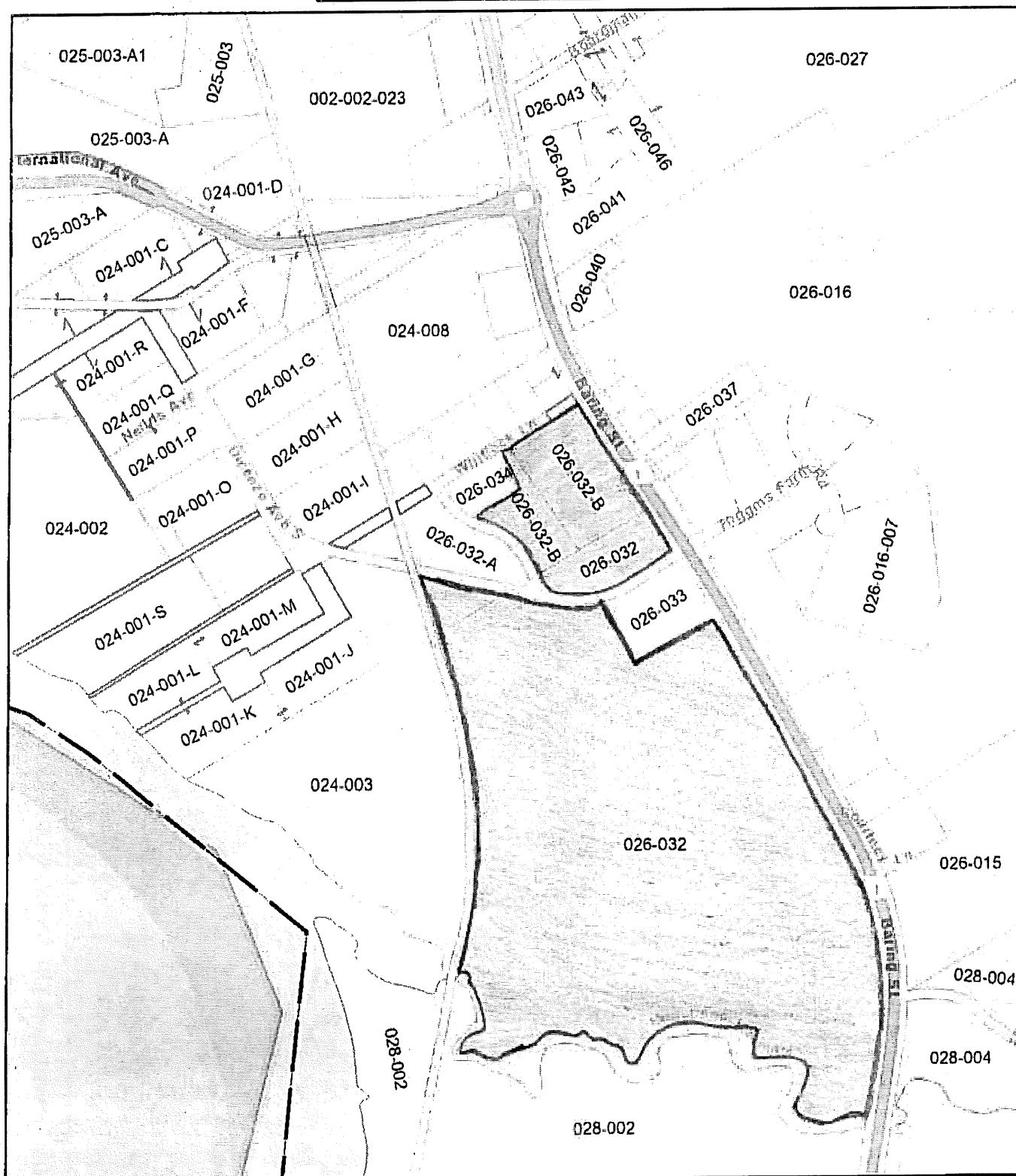
Map created: January 2017  
 Map prepared by Lettman Logo LLC  
 Sources: Town of Calais, MEDOT and MEGIS



Map created January 2017  
Map prepared by LatLong Logic, LLC  
Sources: Town of Calais, MEDOT and MEGIS

0 250 500 Feet  
1 inch = 300 feet

Calais Downtown TIF District: Tract 2



Data shown on this map is provided for planning and informational purposes only. The municipality and CAJ Technologies are not responsible for any use for other purposes or misuse or misrepresentation of this map.