

DOWNTOWN
FAÇADE
IMPROVEMENT
PROGRAM

Sponsored by:
Almont Downtown Development Authority
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DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Almont Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has created a Downtown Façade Improvement Program that is designed to encourage economic investment and revitalization to the commercial buildings within the DDA district. The appearance of individual buildings, storefronts, signs, window displays, parking lots, and sidewalks establishes the visual character of the downtown and plays a major role in the success of the business district.

The façade improvement program is designed to encourage physical improvements to the commercial facades visible from the public right-of-way. It is the intent of the program to strengthen the economic vitality of downtown Almont by improving the exterior physical appearances of buildings. The appearance of the downtown has a significant influence on its economic success. By improving the physical appearance, the downtown will have a much greater potential for attracting and retaining businesses.

This program is also designed to encourage design improvements that preserve and promote the historical character and integrity of the buildings within the district. Priority funding will be given to projects that meet these design criteria. By coordinating improvements that preserve the historical elements within the business district, the overall image of downtown Almont will remain consistent and preserve the unique character of the community.

ALL FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANTS MUST BE APPROVED PRIOR TO WORK COMMENCING.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY:

A property must be located within the legal boundaries of the Downtown Development District to be eligible. For this program, the building or business is defined by either an address or owner. This is because large buildings often house several businesses. However, if the building is not occupied and the building owner is applying for the grant, it is limited to funds one time within the specified timeframes provided within each assistance description. An owner or tenant with multiple buildings may apply once for each building, again within the given time restrictions.

The following criteria will also apply:

1. Only buildings with retail, commercial or professional uses are eligible.
2. Properties must be structurally sound, roof intact and meet basic public safety codes.

3. Only facades abutting public right-of-ways are eligible projects. This includes side and rear facades.
4. Building owners or tenants are eligible. If a tenant applies for assistance, they must provide written proof that the building owner has authorized the proposed improvements. All Village of Almont volunteers, committee, board or council members are eligible to apply for program funds.
5. All required municipal/governmental permits must be pursued by the building owner/tenant, and must be obtained prior to the start of any construction.
6. Property taxes and other Village accounts must be current.
7. All improvements are subject to the reviews and approvals required by village codes and ordinances.
8. All elements of the application must be consistent with the DDA plans and policies as well as village ordinances. This includes design, color, style and placement of these improvements.
9. The Almont DDA reserves the right to award grants it deems to be in the best interest of the Village of Almont, the DDA and the Façade Improvement Program. The DDA reserves the right to nullify grants which are found to be noncompliant with the conditions of the program.
10. All grant awards are subject to available funding. Annual funding will be limited. Application does not guarantee funding.

Ineligible Improvements:

1. The DDA will not accept applications for previously completed improvements, design or permit fees, for roof repair or replacement, or maintenance and repair to landscaping, signs, windows, doors, awnings or other building and site issues.
2. Labor costs paid to the owner/applicant or relatives of the owner/applicant unless otherwise approved.

PROJECT REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS:

All applicants are required to meet with DDA Director prior to submitting a grant application. Once the DDA Director has reviewed the application and has deemed that it is eligible under the program guidelines, the application will be placed on the next regularly scheduled Almont DDA Regular Meeting agenda. Project approvals require a majority vote of the DDA Board of Directors. It is strongly encouraged that applicants attend the DDA Board meeting when the application is reviewed.

Projects that are approved by the DDA will be reimbursed after completion and installation of the improvement. Lien-waivers must be secured from all contractors when appropriate and presented to the DDA prior to payment. All fixtures including signs, awnings and other items will remain with the building for which they are purchased should the tenant/building owner change hands or vacate the premises. Only upon full reimbursement to the DDA for funds received for the project will they be allowed to be removed.

RIGHTS RESERVED:

The Almont DDA reserves the right to reject any and all applications. The specific program guidelines detailed herein are subject to revision or amendment by the DDA. The Almont DDA may discontinue this program at any time, subject to availability of program funding.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

This section will provide the individual guidelines specific to each type of project eligible for funding, including: Paint, Signs, Awnings, Landscaping, Design Assistance, and Façade Renovation.

PAINT

Grant funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis until budgeted funds are committed for the purpose of having a building “painted.” Grant amounts are calculated as 50% of the cost of eligible improvements from a minimum grant amount of \$250 to a maximum of \$1,000. Painting improvements with a total project cost under \$500 are not eligible for this program.

Paint color will be negotiated, with the owner/tenant in accord with generally recognized “historical color palettes” available from leading paint manufacturers and the Almont DDA. It is the intent of the Almont DDA to promote improvement projects that serve to compliment the character of the downtown as well as maintain the integrity of the building.

Paint assistance is awarded per building/not per building owner and will be available per building one time every 5 years from the completion of previous use of façade paint assistance.

Painting projects must commence within 30 days of approval (unless otherwise approved by the DDA Board) and be completed within 60 days after the painting starts. If the assistance is not used within that time, the funding commitment will revert back to the DDA for reallocation. Assistance payment, based on approved submitted receipts and a DDA inspection, will be issued to the applicant within thirty (30) days after completion.

Additional requirements for paint assistance include:

1. The applicant must complete the program application and submit a completed application and all required attachments to the DDA office by the third Monday of the month.
2. Two written quotes for the work with labor and materials broken out into two separate amounts must be provided.
3. Specific color samples must be submitted with the application.
4. Proof that all property taxes are paid to date.
5. If the tenant is applying, a signed letter from the owner expressing approval of the project must be submitted.

SIGNS

Grant funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis until budgeted funds are committed for the purpose of fabricating, placing, and/or painting no more than two new outdoor signs or for the renovation of existing signage, which conforms to the Village of Almont sign ordinance. A sign is an element that specifically identifies the business. It can be attached to the building or lettering applied to the building. Grant amounts are calculated as 50% of the cost of eligible improvements with a minimal grant amount of \$250 and maximum potential grant of \$500. Sign improvements with a total project cost under \$500 are not eligible for this program.

Signage assistance is offered per building owner or tenant (not per building). Signage assistance is limited to funding no earlier than two years following the completion of the previous signage project. Applications for signage assistance from new business owners can be requested and approved by the DDA, however reimbursement for these projects will be held until the applicant has remained in their location for a minimum of six months.

Ineligible signage projects include: Temporary signs, swing signs or movable signs, Neon signs, or decorative building accents that do not specifically identify the business. Reusable or removable signs will not be funded.

Sign projects must commence within 30 days of approval (unless otherwise approved by the DDA Board) and be completed within 60 days after the painting starts. If the assistance is not used within that time, the funding commitment will revert back to the DDA for reallocation. Assistance payment, based on approved submitted receipts and a DDA inspection, will be issued to the applicant within thirty (30) days after completion.

Additional requirements for sign assistance include:

1. The applicant must complete the program application and submit a completed application and all required attachments to the DDA office by the third Monday of the month.
2. Two written quotes for the work with labor and materials broken out into two separate amounts must be provided.
3. A conceptual design or schematic drawing for the proposed work, including color must be submitted with the application.

4. Proof that all property taxes are paid to date.
5. If the tenant is applying, a signed letter from the owner expressing approval of the project must be submitted.

AWNINGS

Grant funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis until budgeted funds are committed for the purpose of fabricating and installing building awnings. Awnings are defined for grant purposes as a single awning across the entire storefront at the street level, an awning over the door entrance, several street level awnings, or several awnings across second story windows. Grant amounts are calculated as 50% of the cost of eligible improvements with a minimal grant amount of \$250 and maximum potential grant of \$1,500. Awning improvements with a total project cost under \$500 are not eligible for this program.

Awning assistance is awarded per building/not per building owner and will be available per building one time every 5 years from the completion of previous use of awning assistance. All awnings are to remain with the building and are not to be removed after a tenant has vacated or owner sold the building.

Ineligible awning projects include requests for awning repair or maintenance or for projects which include the placement of lettering/screen printing on current awnings.

Awning projects must commence within 30 days of approval (unless otherwise approved by the DDA Board) and be installed within 60 days. If the assistance is not used within that time, the funding commitment will revert back to the DDA for reallocation. Assistance payment, based on approved submitted receipts and a DDA inspection, will be issued to the applicant within thirty (30) days after completion.

Additional requirements for awning assistance include:

1. The applicant must complete the program application and submit a completed application and all required attachments to the DDA office by the third Monday of the month.
2. Two written quotes for the work with labor and materials broken out into two separate amounts must be provided.
3. A conceptual design or schematic drawing for the proposed work, including color must be submitted with the application.
4. Proof that all property taxes are paid to date.
5. If the tenant is applying, a signed letter from the owner expressing approval of the project must be submitted.

LANDSCAPING

Grant funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis until budgeted funds are committed for the purpose of installing permanent landscape materials. Landscaping is defined as trees, turf, shrubbery, flowers, planters, or ground cover arranged in a fashion to enhance the building or business. A grant for landscaping is for a collection of improvements strategically arranged to visually enhance any side visible from the public right-of-way. Grant amounts are calculated as 50% of the cost of eligible improvements with a minimal grant amount of \$250 and maximum potential grant of \$500. Landscaping projects with a total project cost under \$500 are not eligible for this program.

Landscaping assistance is awarded per building/not per building owner and will be available per building one time every 5 years from the completion of previous use of landscaping assistance.

Ineligible landscaping projects include requests for funds to assist in the purchase of annuals, movable containers, maintenance, and replacement of current materials.

Landscaping projects must commence within 30 days of approval (unless otherwise approved by the DDA Board) and be installed within 60 days. If the assistance is not used within that time, the funding commitment will revert back to the DDA for reallocation. Assistance payment, based on approved submitted receipts and a DDA inspection, will be issued to the applicant within thirty (30) days after completion.

Additional requirements for landscape assistance include:

1. The applicant must complete the program application and submit a completed application and all required attachments to the DDA office by the third Monday of the month.
2. Two written quotes for the work with labor and materials broken out into two separate amounts must be provided. Specific plant warranties must be included.
3. A conceptual design or schematic drawing for the proposed work must be submitted with the application.
4. Proof that all property taxes are paid to date.
5. If the tenant is applying, a signed letter from the owner expressing approval of the project must be submitted.

DESIGN ASSISTANCE

Grant funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis until budgeted funds are committed for the purpose of securing façade design assistance. The purpose of these grants is to provide funding for architectural design consulting services for façade renovations. Furthermore, these funds are used to pre-determine the cost of façade improvement projects and help ensure that any renovations adhere to the historic integrity of the building and village codes and standards. Grant amounts cover 80% of design services, up to \$800. The owner/tenant must contribute

20% of total costs, to be paid prior to disbursement of DDA funds. Program funds cover exterior design work only.

Design assistance is awarded per building/not per building owner and will be available per building one time every 10 years from the completion of previous use of design assistance funds. The Village of Almont and Almont DDA will be provided and retain a copy of all design work completed.

Professional design services must be completed within 90 days of execution of a “Remuneration Agreement.” If the assistance is not used within that time, the funding commitment will revert back to the DDA for reallocation.

Additional requirements for design assistance include:

1. The applicant must complete the program application and submit a completed application and all required attachments to the DDA office by the third Monday of the month.
2. The applicant and architect will also be required to execute a “Remuneration Agreement” to access program funds.
3. Proof that all property taxes are paid to date.
4. If the tenant is applying, a signed letter from the owner expressing approval of the project must be submitted.

To utilize design assistance funds, applicants must demonstrate a bona fide commitment to implement building improvements and must certify that construction will commence within 120 days of design completion. Time extensions may be granted by the Almont DDA upon request. Such requests must be in writing and presented prior to the end of the initial 120 days.

Fees will be paid directly to the design firm under a “Remuneration Agreement”, executed by the applicant, architect and Village and upon submission of detailed invoices to substantiate services rendered.

Projects receiving design assistance will receive priority status for consideration of funding for façade renovations. However in no way does participating in the design assistance program guarantee approval for façade renovation funding.

FAÇADE RENOVATIONS

This program is designed to provide greater funding to encourage more extensive building restorations and historic preservation projects. Grant funds are available usually on a first-come, first-served basis until budgeted funds are committed for the purpose of assisting in façade renovations. Priority consideration will be given to those projects that have utilized design assistance funds. Applicants for this funding must commit to making capital improvements or repairs on items that have a useful life of at least 10 years. Only exterior improvements will be considered.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS FOR FAÇADE RENOVATION ASSISTANCE

1. Repairs or replacement of windows, doors, walls or other appropriate architectural elements.
2. Exterior painting (only in conjunction with other major improvements; painting is not to exceed 30% of total project cost)
3. Awnings (only in conjunction with other major improvements; awnings are not to exceed 30% of total project cost)
4. Masonry repair or cleaning
5. Restoration of vintage elements:
 - a) Removal of inappropriate “modern” façade treatments.
 - b) Removal/replacement of inappropriate signs and/or lighting (new signs/lights must be compatible with existing architecture)
 - c) Repair or restoration of original brick, woodwork or metalwork.
6. Materials and labor for work performed in association with above-mentioned improvements.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS FOR FAÇADE RENOVATION ASSISTANCE

1. Expenses incurred prior to approval of the project.
2. Property acquisition.
3. Site plan, building permit fees
4. Financing or loan fees
5. New construction
6. Consultant fees including architectural, engineering, appraiser, attorney, design or decorator fees.
7. Items taxed as personal property
8. Reusable or removable items.

PROJECT PRIORITIES FOR FAÇADE RENOVATION ASSISTANCE

Projects which demonstrate any of the following characteristics will be given priority consideration when approving applications. This is not an all-inclusive list.

- Highly visible projects
- Projects identified on corner lots
- Projects containing a high ratio of private to public dollars
- Projects designed to remove/replace boarded windows.
- Projects designed to resolve deteriorated/inappropriate/unsightly conditions that have existed for many years.
- Projects designed to restore the historic condition of building façade or posterior.
- Projects in which the building is owner occupied

FAÇADE RENOVATION AWARD

Façade renovation assistance will be awarded on a one-to-one matching basis between the applicant and the Almont DDA.

The minimum total project amount that will be considered for assistance is \$1,000 (\$500 façade assistance match) and the maximum assistance given will be \$5,000.

Recipients of façade renovation funds may not be eligible for additional façade renovation funding within 10 years of the renovation grant award.

PROCESSING OF ASSISTANCE REQUESTS FOR FAÇADE RENOVATION

1. A façade improvement application may be obtained from the Almont DDA
2. The application is completed by the property owners or tenant of the building with owner's consent and returned to the DDA office where it will be reviewed for accuracy and compliance.
3. The application is reviewed by staff to verify that it is located in the DDA district. Staff will provide a preliminary review outlining how well the project meets the program objectives.
4. If the application meets program objectives, the applicant will be notified that his/her project has been accepted for consideration.
5. The applicant must submit a detailed plan illustrating proposed improvements.
6. In addition to the site plan, a detailed break out of all costs, including signed estimates from two qualified contractors will be submitted by the applicant (a project budget illustrating both private and public expenditures).
7. Once a plan is submitted, it will be taken before the DDA for review.
8. If approved, then project construction may commence upon written notification by the DDA. If the plan is inconsistent with program goals, it will be returned with a request for modifications.

POST-APPROVAL PROCEDURES FOR FAÇADE RENOVATION ASSISTANCE

- 1) The Almont DDA, prior to construction/installation, must approve any changes to the scope of work.

- 2) All approved changes in work verification shall be attached to the original site plan in the form of an addendum and dated.
- 3) Village staff may conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance with the site plan and adopted eligible activities.
- 4) Project completion must occur within 120 days of approval. Only under extenuating circumstances, a single extension of time to complete the project can be requested in writing and may be awarded by the Almont DDA.
- 5) Upon completion of project improvement, the grant recipient is to provide photographs of the new façade to the Façade Committee to ensure that all components of the site plan are met.
- 6) After final project inspection, the DDA will each review the complete application and consider the approval of the grant reimbursement.
- 7) Façade Renovation Assistance funds will be paid as a reimbursement to the grant recipient(s) at the close of the project upon receipt of proof of payment. Reimbursements will not be made if any recipient(s) grant requirements go unfulfilled.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR FAÇADE RENOVATION ASSISTANCE

- 1) Two (2) contractor quotes/construction bids for total project.
- 2) A property deed with the legal description of property.
- 3) Proof that all property taxes are paid and current.
- 4) Proof of property and liability insurance
- 5) If tenant is applying, please provide a letter from the owner expressing approval of the project