



# Downtown Facade Improvement Program

Sponsored by:  
Almont Downtown Development Authority  
Revised: June, 2023

## **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.

### **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 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.

#### **PROJECT REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS:**

All applicants are required to meet with DDA Director when 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 (per side), and up to \$2,000 if multiple right of way sides were painted. 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.

### **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 (per side), and up to \$1,000 if multiple right of way sides had sign improvements. 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).

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.

## **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 (per side), and up to \$3,000 if multiple right of way sides had awning improvements.. Awning improvements with a total project cost under \$500 are not eligible for this program.

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

## **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 (per side), and up to \$1,000 if multiple right of way sides had landscaping improvements.. Landscaping projects with a total project cost under \$500 are not eligible for this program.

## **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.

## **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. 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.

## **INELIGIBLE PROJECTS FOR FAÇADE RENOVATION ASSISTANCE**

1. Property acquisition.
2. Site plan, building permit fees
3. Financing or loan fees
4. Consultant fees including architectural, engineering, appraiser, attorney, or decorator fees.
5. Items taxed as personal property
6. Reusable or removable items.

## **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 \$10,000.

Recipients of façade renovation funds may not be eligible for additional façade renovation funding within 10 years of the renovation grant award, or at the discretion of the DDA Board of Directors

## **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, proof of payment and lien waivers (if appropriate) will be submitted by the applicant (a project budget illustrating both private and public expenditures).
7. Once an application is submitted, it will be taken before the DDA for review.
8. If the application is inconsistent with program goals, it will be returned with a request for modifications.
9. Pictures of completed improvements must be submitted with the application.

## **APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR FAÇADE RENOVATION ASSISTANCE**

- 1) A property deed with the legal description of property.
- 2) Proof that all property taxes are paid and current.
- 3) Proof of property and liability insurance
- 4) If tenant is applying, please provide a letter from the owner expressing approval of the project