

Façade Improvement Grant Program

- Pilot FY2025-2026 -

Overview

The Downtown Austin Alliance has developed a façade improvement grant program to stimulate new investment and enhance the overall appeal and economic vitality of downtowns commercial corridors. In its first year, the program will focus on properties located along two corridors: Sixth Street between Congress Ave and I-35 Frontage Road, and Red River Street between Sixth and Twelfth Streets.

Purpose

The program is designed to provide an economic incentive to improve the appearance of facades of buildings along these corridors, and to encourage quality renovation that will enhance and be consistent with the historical design, materials, and architectural character reflected in the original buildings. Façade Improvements programs have been shown nationwide to boost local economies, encourage additional investment into an area, improve safety, and increase property values.

Eligibility

- **Applicants:** Building owners and/or business tenants currently owning or leasing properties on:
 - Sixth Street between Congress and I-35, and within a half-block of Sixth Street on the north/south cross streets. See eligibility map for reference.
 - Red River Street between Sixth and Eleventh Streets, and within a half-block of Red River Street on the east/west cross streets. See eligibility map for reference.
- **Property Tax Status:** Applicant properties must contribute to the Austin Downtown Public Improvement District (DPID) through the payment of ad valorem taxes and must be current on payments. Properties classified as partially exempt due to historic status are eligible, however properties designated as fully exempt by the City of Austin are not.
- **Building Status:** The property proposed for façade improvement must be structurally sound, with roof intact, and must meet basic public safety codes. The building does not need to be occupied.
- **Business Status:** If a business is active on the property, it must be an activity permitted by the city to operate in the designated area, follow all city codes, have current licensing, and be current on sales tax payments.

Amount

The program will provide a one-time, one-tier matching grant. This is a reimbursement grant for eligible expenses. There are three tiers of façade improvement activities:

Tier	Type of Façade Improvements	Maximum Grant Matching Amount	Maximum Percentage Match
Tier 1	“No permit” improvements	\$6,000	75%
Tier 2	Limited Façade Improvements	\$10,000	50%
Tier 3	Architectural improvements	\$15,000	50%

If architectural design services are required for eligible façade improvements in Tier 2 or 3 projects, grantees may also request an additional \$2,000 towards these services. No match is required for this award.

Eligible Improvements

The list below is a sample of eligible activities, by tier, but should not be considered an exhaustive list.

Consult with DAA staff to determine eligible activities and tier.

- **Tier 1: “No permit” Improvements:** Repair of existing signs, storefront window/display enhancements, existing lighting upgrades, building and window cleaning. This tier is designed to help achieve “quick wins” possible without an extensive permitting or approvals process.
- **Tier 2: Limited Façade Improvements:** Exterior re-painting; cleaning and repointing of brick and other masonry work, sign installation or removal, awning installation or removal.
- **Tier 3: Architectural improvements:** Window or door refurbishment/replacement, restoration of architectural details, removal of elements covering architectural details, installation of new exterior lighting elements.

Eligible Expenses

Eligible expenses include professional fees, permits, materials, equipment, including exterior furniture and fixtures, and contracted labor.

Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include roof improvements, MEP improvements, interior work to the building, property acquisition, and working capital.

Application Process

- Review all program guidelines and complete the online intake form
- If the applicant is selected, they must enter into an agreement with the Downtown Austin Alliance before work can commence
- Grantee secures necessary permits (if required) and completes the work
- Grantee submits for reimbursement (see reimbursement requirements)

Selection Criteria

Applicant projects will be considered on a rolling basis by DAA staff using the following criteria designed to deliver the most impact to the corridors, quickly, with the limited resources of the pilot grant program.

- **Impact:** To maximize impact of the program in year one, grantees may be selected based on visual impact and proximity to other applicant projects.
- **Shovel ready:** Projects that can be accomplished quickly and/or for which plans are already permitted and approved, will be prioritized.
- **Need:** Consideration will be given to storefronts in the most disrepair or in poor condition.
- **Vision:** A commitment to improvements that respect or restore the history and character of the property and contribute to district identity

Reimbursement Requirements

Funds will be disbursed upon certification of completion of the allowable improvements, verification by DAA staff that the completed work aligns with the proposed work, and proof of payments (including canceled checks and lien releases when applicable) are provided.

Application Checklist

An application can be completed and all documents uploaded [here](#).

- Program Application
- Conceptual design plans for proposed improvements. Depending on the scale of the work, this can be drawn plans or a narrative description of the proposed work.
- Detailed, contractor estimates for proposed work
- written consent from the property owner, if the applicant is a business tenant
- proof of ownership, if the applicant is a building owner
- Proof of current insurance
- Form W-9
- Photos of the current façade conditions
- Proof of funding for total project cost (current bank statement or letter from bank)

Questions?

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