

# Downtown Façade Grant

## *Application Packet*

### ***Steps towards a successful application:***

- Review the *Downtown Design Guidelines* as you plan your façade improvements to determine how you can be eligible for the grant. Also review the zoning standards in Chapter 29 of Ames Municipal Code, which are mandatory for all improvements.
- Consider engaging a design professional for your project, as the City will pay up to \$2,000 to reimburse fees for these services if a Downtown Façade Grant is approved.
- Meet with Planning and Housing staff prior to completing the application. Staff will advise you if it believes your proposed improvement project meets the *Downtown Design Guidelines* and assist you in the application process.
- Submit your completed Application Form, required information and Checklist (attached) to the Planning and Housing Department. Planning staff will review your application for eligibility and completeness. If additional information and materials are needed before the application is eligible and complete, staff can assist you.
- Staff will inform you when City Council will consider your request. It is beneficial for you or your representative to attend this meeting in order to answer questions of the Council.
- After City Council awards grants, Inspection Division will inspect the building and, if necessary, arrange for an evaluation by a structural engineer at City expense.
- The Downtown Façade Grant projects are required to follow this schedule:

Applications Due:	May 26, 2026
City Council Consideration:	June 2026

- Upon completion of the improvements, the City Building Official and Planning Department staff will inspect the project to ensure construction meets code and that all noted pre-existing defects in the building façade have been repaired and that the completed project is consistent with the grant application.

### ***For more information or to schedule a pre-application meeting, please contact:***

Department of Planning and Housing  
City Hall, Room 214  
515 Clark Avenue  
Ames, Iowa 50010

Phone: 515-239-5400  
E-mail: [planning@cityofames.org](mailto:planning@cityofames.org)

# Downtown Façade Grant

## Application Form

1. **Project Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Property Owner:** \_\_\_\_\_

Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Phone Number) (E-Mail Address)

3. **Applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_

Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Phone Number) (E-Mail Address)

4. **Designer:** \_\_\_\_\_

Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Phone Number) (E-Mail Address)

- I certify that to the best of my knowledge I have submitted all the required information to apply for approval of the Downtown Façade Grant and that the information is correct.
- I have read and agree to abide by the “Eligibility, Terms, and Conditions” of the Downtown Façade Grant.
- I have contacted the Building Official and have included in this project all work to correct code defects.

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

# Downtown Façade Grant

## Checklist

Please provide the following information with your application:

- Drawings or image edits** illustrating the design of proposed improvements, including:
  - A minimum of one exterior elevation of the façade and any other areas needed to convey the complete design proposed. (Clearly show dimensions and detail of all proposed architectural features. Enlargements of individual features are recommended.)
  - Labels identifying existing and proposed architectural features
  - Labels identifying existing and proposed types of materials
  - Overall dimensions of the façade and dimensions of the individual components that are to be modified.
  - Location, type, materials, lighting, and dimensions of any proposed signs
  - Property address
  - Date of preparation
  
- Written statement** that includes the following:
  - A description of the proposed project. Please specify which set of the *Downtown Design Guidelines*, historic façades, or other façades, applies to your project and explain how your proposal for changes meets each of the design guidelines.
  - A brief description or any information relating to the history of the building and/or to the historic design of the façade.
  - A description of the types of materials that exist on the façade of the building. Any available information about which materials have been added to the façade since its original construction and the approximate dates (if known) that the materials were installed.
  
- Written permission from the property owner** by signature on the application form for the specific improvements to be financed with the *Downtown Façade Grant*, if the applicant is a tenant of the building and not the owner of the property.
  
- Project budget** that includes cost estimates prepared by an architect, engineer, or contractor, including any fees of a design professional.
  
- Color photograph (4"x 6" minimum size)** clearly showing the existing condition of the street facing façades of the building at the time the application is submitted to the City for consideration.
  
- Submit a completed W-9** "Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification" Form as required by the grant program.
  
- Additional images or information** requested by the City.

# Downtown Façade Grant

## *Eligibility & Terms*

### 1. Eligibility Requirements

- Eligible participants include the owners and/or tenants of buildings located inside the boundaries of the project area for the *Downtown Design Guidelines*, which contain Office Uses or Trade Uses as defined by the Ames zoning ordinance.
- Ineligible participants include the owners and/or tenants of residential structures and buildings owned by the government, churches and other religious institutions, to the extent prohibited by State and Federal guidelines.
- Concurrence of the property owner is required, in writing, before improvements proposed by the tenant can be considered for approval.
- Improvements must be made to one or more of the façades of a building and the design of such improvements must comply with the current *Downtown Design Guidelines*.
- For Historic Façades, grant money will be provided for replacing existing compliant elements only when the proposed project also includes replacing non-compliant elements with compliant elements. This is distinguished from Rehabilitation Grants.
- For other existing buildings whose design is not consistent with the Historic Façades as described in the *Downtown Design Guidelines*, grant money may be provided for additions or alterations that comply with the section “Other Buildings” in the current *Downtown Design Guidelines*.
- Grants may be offered if all non-compliant elements of the entire façade or of all façades intended to be improved are not to be improved under one grant project. However, the improvements must contribute to a project that, when complete, will be generally consistent with all design standards. To determine this, an application must include elevation plans for all façades intended to be improved showing how they are intended to look when complete.
- For all projects for which all improvements will not be completed under the grant, the scope of proposed improvements for the grant shall be visually significant in the context of how the whole building is intended to look when all improvements to the façade are complete. The City may approve a grant based upon a proposed improvement’s contribution to the finished product, and may deny a grant for improvements that, while compliant in part, are not visually significant in terms of how the overall building is intended to ultimately look when all improvements to the façade are complete.
- If a project is phased, a grant shall be offered only to those improvements that are done in correct sequence of construction. For example, a finished project may require installing or changing windows, in some cases siding is installed after windows are in place. In such cases the windows would need to be replaced before grant monies may be expended on siding materials.

## 2. Terms of the Grant Agreement

- **Accounts and Records.** The grant recipient shall maintain books, records, documents, and other evidence pertaining to all costs and expenses incurred and revenues acquired under the grant to the extent and in such detail as will properly reflect all costs, direct and indirect, of labor, materials, equipment, supplies, services, and other costs and expenses of whatever nature for which payment is made with the proceeds of the grant. The grant recipient will retain these records for three years from the date City makes payment of the grant.
- **Administrative Costs.** No grant proceeds shall be used for administrative expenses.
- **Amendments.** These Program guidelines, terms and conditions may be amended from time to time by the Façade Program Coordinator for reasons of operational efficiency or unforeseen circumstances that may arise or conflict with applicable City or State regulations affecting the administration of the Program.
- **Amount of the Grant.** The maximum amount of the grant will be \$23,000. (Exceptions may be approved by the City Council on a case-by-case basis.)
- **Complaint/Dispute Resolution Process.** Any dispute arising between the grant recipient, property owner(s), consultant(s), or contractor(s) regarding the grant application, its terms and execution of work under the grant will be resolved through the Façade Grant committee and the Façade Program Coordinator. The decision of the Façade Grant committee will be final and binding on all parties.
- **Cost Sufficiency.** The City does not make any warranty, either expressed or implied, that the proceeds of the grant available for payment of the costs of the project will be sufficient to pay any specific portion of the costs that will be incurred in that connection. The City is under no obligation to advance funds in addition to those specified in the grant approval by City Council.
- **Disbursement of Grant.** Grant funds shall be disbursed to the grant recipient only upon the satisfactory completion of the project in accordance with a design for the project that has been approved by the City. The amount of the payment to the grant recipient will be one-half of the total cost of the work approved for the grant as documented by the bills submitted by the grant recipient, but shall not exceed the total grant amount approved by the City Council.
- **Fees of a Design Professional.** When included in the grant application, the City shall make a grant of up to \$2,000 to reimburse the grant recipient for the documented fees of a design professional other than the grant recipient or family member of the grant recipient.

The applicant may also be eligible for Main Street Iowa Design Assistance. Contact the Main Street Cultural District for further information.

- ***Inclusions and Omission.*** The requirements and regulations for Program administration outlined in the grant design guidelines, terms and conditions are designed to supplement and amplify the provisions as set forth in the applicable zoning and building code regulations administered by the City of Ames. These regulations, utilized together with the grant guidelines, terms and conditions, provide the basis for Program administration. The lack of any item to be included in these guidelines, terms and conditions shall not relieve or release the grant recipient(s), property owner(s), consultant(s), contractor(s) or City from the responsibilities under the provisions outlined in the applicable zoning and building codes and Program guidelines, terms and conditions.
- ***Matching Funds.*** The grant recipient's expenditures for the project from sources other than the proceeds of the grant shall equal the amount of the grant proceeds.
- ***Notice to Proceed.*** After the City has approved all design elements, all required permits and received the W-9 form, the City will issue a Notice to Proceed. No work funded by the grant shall proceed until on or after the date of the Notice to Proceed. No reimbursement from grant funds will be made for work carried out before the date of the Notice to Proceed.
- ***Permits.*** All pertinent permits must be obtained and all work must comply with City, State, and Federal regulations.
- ***Report of the City Building Official.*** The City Building Official shall determine if the work conforms to all applicable codes and regulations, and that any and all pre-existing code defects in the building façade have been corrected to conform to all appropriate codes.
- ***Request for Payment.*** The grant recipient shall submit to the City on a form provided by the City a listing of all bills for the materials and work completed and a statement that all work under the approved grant has been completed and that the listing is complete. The grant recipient shall also submit evidence as may be reasonably required to substantiate all payments that are requested, such as lien waivers or conditional lien waivers.
- ***Statement of Work and Services.*** The grant recipient will perform the work in a satisfactory and proper manner, as determined by the City conforming to the approved application, project budget, and project schedule.
- ***Tax Payer Identification Number.*** After City Council awards grants, all grant recipients are required to provide to the City a copy of Internal Revenue Service Form W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification. The City will only issue a Notice to Proceed after it receives the W-9 Form.
- ***Time of Project Completion and Fund Request.*** The work approved for the grant shall be completed within twelve months of the date of the "Notice to Proceed." The grant recipient shall request grant funds only after the project has been completed in accordance with the approved application.
- ***Use of Grant Funds.*** The grant funds shall not be spent on any other purpose(s) than the activities approved in the application.
- ***Failure by the grantee to comply with the terms of eligibility may result in forfeiture of award.***

## Downtown Façade Grant Review

There are **three** façade grants:

1. Street-facing modifications to bring façades into compliance with the Downtown Design Guidelines.
2. Rehabilitation of historically significant, character-defining features.
3. Non-street-facing modification to bring façades into compliance with the Downtown Design Guidelines.

### Requirements for Downtown Design Guidelines Façade Grants (Street-Facing)

- The building must be located downtown within boundaries established by City Council.
- The ground floor must be Office Uses or Trade Uses as defined by the Ames zoning ordinance.
- The façade design must comply with the Downtown Design Guidelines.
- Improvements to historic façades shall include replacing non-compliant elements with compliant elements. Maintenance is not eligible for grant funding.
- Residential structures and buildings owned by the government, churches, and other religious institutions are not eligible.
- No façade grant shall exceed \$23,000.
- The Ames Planning Division shall administer the Grant Program and prepare eligibility requirements, terms, and application forms as necessary for effective implementation.

### *Downtown Design Guidelines Program Logistics*

The following process for review of applications for façade grants provides time to inform all potential applicants of the opportunity, to work with applicants, applicants to prepare submittals and for staff to review applications and report to City Council. Two grant periods will be planned for each fiscal year.

#### First Grant Period

For this first grant period, preference for grant awards will be given to:

- façades that have not received any previous grant funding
- front façades

#### Action Steps:

- Staff will inform all property and business owners of grant availability, process, and deadlines.
- Staff will work with applicants to define the project, ensure that it meets the guidelines, and assure that it is feasible and can be completed within the time frame.
- Applications will be accepted in the summer, as early as June.
- Staff will review and score applications and report to City Council in July or August for awarding grants.
- Projects may then start in the fall and be potentially completed before the holiday shopping season or completed the following year.

#### Second Grant Period

If the entire budget is not committed in the first grant period in each year, a second grant period will begin in October for projects to be implemented the following spring/summer. While façades on Main Street and façades for which no previous grants have been awarded will still receive first preference in this second grant period, all downtown grant requests will be considered and potentially approved if funds remain after all first-preference proposals are awarded.

*Requirements for Rehabilitation of Historically Significant,  
Character-Defining Features*

- The work must retain and restore the architectural feature related to the building's historic significance. Examples include original windows, transoms, decorative cornices. Maintenance activities of a building are not eligible.
- The architectural features must relate to the front façade.
- The building must be a contributing structure to the National Register Ames Main Street Historic District or otherwise an individually listed Historic Resource on the National Register.

*Rehabilitation Program Logistics*

Two grant periods will be planned for each fiscal year.

First Grant Period

The Rehabilitation Grant may only be applied for in conjunction with work eligible for the standard grant. A property may be awarded a total of \$46,000 for one façade (\$23,000 for compliance with *Downtown Design Guidelines* and \$23,000 for rehabilitation of historically significant, character-defining features). Only one Rehabilitation Grant may be approved for a property in this round.

Action Steps:

- Staff will inform all property and business owners of grant availability, process, and deadlines.
- Staff will work with applicants to define the project, ensure that it meets the guidelines, and assure that it is feasible and can be completed within the time frame.
- Applications will be accepted in the summer, as early as June.
- Staff will review and score applications and report to City Council in late summer for awarding grants.
- Projects may then start in the fall and be potentially completed before the holiday shopping season or completed the following year.

Second Grant Period

A Rehabilitation Grant applies to historically significant, character-defining features by themselves, and need not be in conjunction with other work. Grants can be awarded independently for significant features, for a maximum of \$23,000.

*Requirements for Downtown Design Guidelines Façade Grants  
(Non-Street-Facing)*

- The building must be located downtown within boundaries established by City Council.
- The building must be a contributing resource to the Downtown Ames National Register Historic District (see map below)
- The ground floor must be Office Uses or Trade Uses as defined by the Ames zoning ordinance.
- The façade design must comply with the Downtown Design Guidelines.
- Improvements to historic façades shall include replacing non-compliant elements with compliant elements.
- Residential structures and buildings owned by the government, churches, and other religious institutions are not eligible.
- No façade grant shall exceed \$23,000.
- The Ames Planning Division shall administer the Grant Program and prepare eligibility requirements, terms, and application forms as necessary for effective implementation.

Conditions of Grant Approval

- Grantees must receive a notice to proceed from the City prior to starting work.
- Grantees must apply for a notice to proceed within 9 months of the approval of the grant.
- Construction must be completed within 1 year of issuance of the notice to proceed.
- Any required building code and/or safety improvements to a structure must be completed before grant work proceeds or before grant funds are paid.
- If a grantee does not move forward with a project consistent with the Program’s Eligibility and Terms, including the program logistics, the award will be considered forfeited.

**Classification of Properties in Ames Main Street Historic District**  
National Register of Historic Places



## Scoring Criteria for Downtown Façade Grants

*To be used to evaluate competing grant applications and to advise City Council in awarding grants. Higher scores will be given to projects that meet most of the criteria.*

### **VISUAL IMPACT**

**Maximum Score 30 Points**

- Improvements apply to more than one story on one façade
- Improvements apply to more than one 25-foot wide bay on one façade
- Improvements will create more visual significance because:
  - key, highly visual elements of the building are being improved
  - the building is prominently visible due to its location (e.g., it serves as a focal point from a street, is at a prominent intersection, or is larger than other buildings around it)

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

**Maximum Score 30 Points**

- Matching funds exceed the minimum dollar-for-dollar match
- The project includes improvements being made to
  - ensure public safety,
  - establish or preserve the building's structural integrity
  - resist water and moisture penetration
  - correct other serious safety issues
- The façade project is part of a larger project that improves other exterior or interior parts of the building
- The project helps to make use of space that has been unoccupied or used only for storage

### **EXTENT OF IMPROVEMENTS**

**Maximum Score 20 Points**

The number points granted in this category shall be based upon the number of elements from the Downtown Design Guidelines being improved (see following graphic). More improved elements deserve more points.

### **HISTORIC DESIGN**

**Maximum Score 20 Points**

- Project includes historically appropriate materials and restoration techniques
- Project goes beyond basic rehabilitation and re-establishes a more historically accurate appearance than other projects

# Elements of a Historic Façade in Downtown Ames

