



AMERICUS MAIN STREET FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Design changes that take place at commercial properties are a critical part of any successful revitalization strategy. Customers want to shop in an attractive and inviting environment, not in one that is poorly designed or maintained. Property owners want to generate adequate rents from their commercial properties while lessees want to have pride in their place of business. Americus Main Street wishes to maintain and improve quality of life for its citizens by fostering economically viable commercial districts. In order to reach this goal Americus Main Street has established a Façade Improvement Program. The program will be administered by the Design Committee of Americus Main Street and will offer technical and financial assistance to commercial property owners seeking to renovate or restore the exterior of their buildings. There will be two rounds of funding offered twice each year. Both rounds of funding, the grant will be allocated to building rehabilitation/renovation projects in the form of a 50/50 matching grant to business and property owners.

Round One Applications Due: April 1st at 5:00pm*
 Round Two Applications Due: September 1st at 5:00pm*

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

There is currently matching grant money to be awarded to potential projects per year in the Central Business District (map attached). Funding for façade project will be paid through a reimbursement process. Only after applicant has paid for work to be done will the applicant be reimbursed for up to 50% of that amount. How much each applicant gets is determined by how many grant applications are received and how the project is scored. Grant assistance is limited to the amount available to Americus Main Street.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All improvements must comply with standards set forth in the City of Americus Planning and Inspections Department, Downtown Façade Guidelines, and all applicable Building and Maintenance Codes. Applicants must purchase all required permits prior to submitting application. All exterior improvements must be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. More information on these standards can be obtained at the City of Americus Planning and Inspections Department (229-924-4411 ext 239).

Applicants for participation in the program must meet the following eligibility criteria.

- Applicants must be property owners, or be tenants with written permission from property owner
- Commercial properties must be up to date on all property taxes and other applicable fees to the City of Americus.
- Property must be in the Central Business District (map attached)**
- Tenants must have minimum of two years remaining on their lease or an option to renew

*If this date falls on a weekend or holiday, then applications are due the next business day

ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

- Removal of materials which cover original architectural details
- Repair and/or replacement of original architectural details
- Replacement of original architectural details
- Window repair or replacement including window framing (must match original in size, style and scale)
- Repainting and repair of facade
- Exterior lighting
- Gutters and downspouts
- Other improvements can be made if they meet the objectives of the program and have prior written approval of Americus Main Street

INELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

- IMPROVEMENTS MADE PRIOR TO GRANT APPROVAL
- Interior improvements
- Removal of architecturally important features
- New construction and additions
- Sweat equity (payments for applicant's own labor)
- Planting or landscaping
- Residential properties, excluding mixed use developments

How are projects selected for funding?

Applications will be ranked and selected based on a clear and documented set of evaluative criteria. Depending on the number of applications, we may assign "waiting list" status to projects that qualify for selection, but do not rank as high as other applications selected for funding.

The evaluative criteria and their respective weights are as follows:

- **Impact (40%):** – Overall impact of the project on the Central Business District. Are inappropriate design elements removed? Will the project eliminate what was previously a liability for the commercial district? Does the project seek to restore the historical or architectural significance of the building? Does the project fall into a priority-funding category? Is the project in a highly visible location that has significant impact on surrounding properties?
- **Financial Leverage (10%):** –Projects that leverage more private investment will be graded higher than those seeking just the grant funding.
- **Sustainability/Permanence (30%):** – How permanent are the improvements (signs are more changeable than new glazing, for example) and is there a maintenance plan for improvements? Does the business own the building? If not, how much time remains on the lease?
- **Community Contribution (20%):** – Is the applicant a good neighbor? Is the area around the business kept clean and free of debris on a consistent basis? Does the business participate in organized Americus Main Street promotions or other community based activities? Does the applicant actively promote downtown Americus and their own business?

PROCEDURE

The application process below shows how this will work:

1. Americus Main Street will notify building owners and tenants in the Central Business District of the grant and when the deadline will be for the applicants to send in their applications.
2. All exterior improvements in the Central Business District must be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission before submitting application. The deadline for this Façade Grant will allow for each applicant to participate in a review by this Commission. For more information on the Historic

Preservation Commission's meetings and on the standards they use please contact the City of Americus Planning and Inspections Department (229-924-4411 ext 239).

3. Applicant picks up an application for a Façade Grant from the Americus Main Street office located at 101 West Lamar Street or by downloading it at www.americusga.gov.
4. Applicant mails an application before the deadline to Americus Main Street along with color photographs that show existing building conditions, detailed sketches or drawings of the proposed improvements (including placement, color, dimensions and materials), two separate bids from two separate contractors on their letterhead and any other additional information that may be considered during the review process. **Mailing Address: 101 West Lamar Street, Americus, GA 31709**
5. Americus Main Street will review all applicants and determine which projects get funded and at what amounts each will receive. Applications will be scored based on need, project, and impact to the downtown. Project that score higher will be given higher funding priority. Projects that do not score high may not be funded or will be funded at a lesser amount.
6. Americus Main Street will notify each recipient of the results by mail within 60 days after the grant deadline and require a signed contract (attached to letter) returned to them before work may begin.
7. Once the Americus Main Street has received the signed contract the applicant may begin their work. (Applicant must start the work within three months of being notified of their grant status and work must be completed within twelve months from the start of construction.)
8. Once construction begins, a Façade Improvement Program sign should be installed at project location during construction. (This will be provided)
9. The Director of Americus Main Street has the right to conduct weekly site inspections. Any minor changes in the approved work must have prior approval of the Americus Main Street Director and also the Historic Preservation Commission.
10. Applicant must submit copies of cost documentation (invoices, etc.) along with copies of all cleared checks to Americus Main Street for reimbursement. Proof of all closed permits issued for project must be included with copies of cleared checks. Reimbursement will be made to applicant within 30 days of receipt of project payment and closed permit documents.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Americus Main Street reserves the right to discontinue or modify funding for this program; however, all approved grants will be fulfilled as per contracted agreement.

CHANGES TO THE FAÇADE AFTER COMPLETION

Participants must agree not to change or alter the improved façade without prior written approval from Americus Main Street for two years from the date of Final Closeout of the application.

APPLICATION AND INFORMATION

*****We strongly encourage all potential applicants to meet with either the Director of Americus Main Street or a committee member of the Design Committee prior to filling out the application. To contact our director, Patrick Kay, call (229) 924-4411 ext. 235 or email pkay@americusga.gov.**

