

Facade Improvement Program Overview

The Architectural Improvement Program (AIP) Committee meets the 3rd Wed of each month at 5:30 pm in the Nehring Center Conference Room. The meetings are open to the public. AIP grant applications are reviewed and voted on at meetings.

ReNew DeKalb, Inc. and the City of DeKalb *strongly recommends* that individuals planning to apply to this program, as well as any professionals whom they may employ, consult with the Architectural Improvement Committee about objectives of the project design and appearance

Appearance and Maintenance

The goal of this program is to provide a unified, welcoming appearance to the Main Street district and yet still explore the diverse architectural styles that exist throughout the Central Business District. Each building represented a variety of architectural styles in downtown DeKalb and should be considered in terms of their own stylistic integrity as well as its contributions to the overall pattern of the district.

In order to implement the goal of the AIP project, individual buildings need to have a welcoming appearance. For that reason, the Council will only fund projects that provide overall improvement in the buildings appearance. The Council realizes that some buildings will need very little work to accomplish the goal, while others may need major rehabilitation.

As part of this approach, building owners are also expected to commit to maintaining the improvements that they choose to install. The City and the Applicant will sign an agreement that is valid for five years, setting forth the improvements to be completed and the portion funded by the City. The building owner will agree to maintain such improvements for the term of the agreement except for minor changes that would be allowed. Minor changes would include such things as painting or changing signs (e.g. if the nature of the business changes). The agreement will outline the terms of a forgivable loan program; each year over a five year period, the value of the funding provided will be reduced by 20% of the initial funds provided. If in any year within five years of the improvements being completed, they are removed or changed without Council permission, the balance of the funds provided will be returned to the City. This agreement would bind not only the property owner but also any successors or assignees within the five year period

Eligibility

To be eligible for funding under the Architectural Improvement Program, the building must be located within the Central Business District boundaries. The Central Business District is outlined in Exhibit "A", attached.

Either a property owner or a business owner in a leased or rented unit may apply for this program. However, the property owner must sign the application form, granting consent for the tenant to pursue funding for the property and consent for the proposed work to occur on the property. The funding is provided per building. Determination of funding in cases of one building with multiple storefronts or multiple buildings containing one business will be determined individually, based on the merits of the project.

In order to be eligible for this program, the property owner or other applicant must fully comply with the guidelines and full requirements of the program, including the eligibility determination, the application and review procedure, the terms of any agreements, the actual construction, the payment request procedure, and any other guidelines, requirements or procedures. The city is not responsible for any incidental costs incurred by the applicant that may have been necessary for compliance with this program.

Eligible Improvements

Specific improvements will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis during the application process. However, the improvements must follow the design standards established for the downtown District, and/or bring the structure into compliance with building codes. Many improvements, such as those listed below, will be eligible:

- Restoration of original facade materials
- Restoration of an historic building in accordance with Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation
- Painting, tuck pointing, installation of shutters and awnings
- Installation of eligible signage
- Repair or replacement of eligible windows, doors, walls or appurtenances (stairs, porches, railings)
- Removal of inappropriate facades or appurtenances
- Restoration of original interior materials
- Interior improvements† that create a better commerce environment

Items required for code compliance†, such as handicap accessibility improvements, step repair, removal of dangerous appurtenances, changes in door swings or widths, especially if said improvements will lead to an improved appearance of the building or are required because of other improvements being pursued as a direct result of this program.

- Window glazing and storm windows, if these items are no longer available as stock items and must be fabricated to return the building to its original appearance.
- Building cleaning using approved preservation-based methods.

†Interior improvements, code compliance items and other improvements that do not strongly add to the visual appearance may be funded at less than the normal 1:1 match.

ReNew DeKalb and the City of DeKalb *strongly recommends* that individuals planning to apply to this program, as well as any professionals whom they may employ, consult with the Architectural Improvement Committee about objectives of the project design and appearance. Up to 5% of the total matching funds awarded may be applied to architect's fees or other professional design/drafting services.

Some projects are not eligible for this program because the result will not improve the appearance of the building, such as:

- Most weatherization improvements
- Incidental expenses and fees, such building permit fees, estimate preparation fees, etc.
- Typical building maintenance items, such as roof sealing, glazing, and non-preservation based cleaning methods
- Demolition, except for removal of noncompliant facades or appurtenances.
- Addition of non-permanent interior items such as display cabinets
- Interior improvements that are not accessible to the general public (e.g. to apartment units or private office space)

Because of the limited funds for this program, the Council will only provide matching funding to those requests which are in compliance with the AIP Design Standards. In evaluating projects, priority will be placed on the projects that result in the greatest positive impact on the appearance of the individual building and/or on that of the Downtown as a whole. Because the program involves matching funding, proposed improvements will be held to a standard that is higher than that otherwise allowed for building rehabilitation. For that reason, the Council has the right to deny any application, even if it arguably meets the minimum standards set forth for this program.

The Council maintains the right to deny funding to any request, as well as the right to reduce the amount of funding for any proposal, regardless of the amount requested. The City Council will make the final determination of the eligibility for each request.

Application

If you are interested in applying for the Facade Improvement Program, contact ReNew DeKalb.

To contact ReNew DeKalb, Inc. contact:
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Send an Email to: jennifer@renewdekalb.com
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