



# Downtown Suwanee Façade Grant Program

The City of Suwanee is recognized as a certified Main Street Community by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In Suwanee, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) directs the Main Street Program for downtown development, focusing its efforts around four key issues:

- **Organization**
- **Promotion**
- **Economic development**
- **Design**

It has been the experience of over 1,200 Main Street communities in the U.S. that the design and physical integrity of downtown structures is extremely important. It is not only as a matter of aesthetics, but an important factor in the success of retail and commercial businesses, the quality of life for residents, and the sustainability of the community.

The DDA has created the Façade Grant Program to provide an incentive for property owners to reinvest in their buildings through restoration and façade improvements.

## Goals of the Façade Grant Program

The intent of the Façade Grant Program is to encourage private investment in appropriate improvements to downtown structures.

What we hope to accomplish is:

1. To encourage historic preservation through restoration of downtown structures.
2. To abate any continued deterioration of downtown commercial and residential structures.
3. To augment the natural assets of downtown by restoring the uniqueness, character, and integrity of downtown structures to the period of their construction.
4. To help in the economic development of downtown through increased sales and increased valuation of properties.

Because the Suwanee DDA is interested in making the biggest visual impact in the downtown area, we are certainly encouraging large restoration projects.

However, just as important are bringing signs up to standards, lighting display windows, or applying a fresh coat of paint. All these have significant effect on the visual presentation of downtown Suwanee, and therefore, its image.

## Financial Assistance Offered

In order to encourage widespread participation, this program offers up to \$1,500, dollar for dollar, in matching grants.

The Downtown Development Authority's contribution shall match up to 50% of the cost of eligible improvements but not more than \$1,500 for commercial properties and \$500 for residential properties. The minimum grant size is \$250.

### Examples:

#### Exterior Improvements to Home

Homeowner's Expenditure	\$1,000
<b>Façade Grant</b> (50%, up to \$500 max.)	<b>\$500</b>
Total Project Cost	\$1,500

#### Restore Historic Commercial Façade

Property Owner's Expenditure	\$8,500
<b>Façade Grant</b> (up to \$1,500 max.)	<b>\$1,500</b>
Total Project Cost	\$10,000

Grants are awarded according to the criteria listed in the Application Review section. The program is subject to funding availability.

The grant funds are paid as reimbursement for eligible expenses upon completion and final approval of the improvements.

The property owner shall agree to maintain the property that has received grant assistance and will sign a Façade Maintenance Covenant Agreement with the DDA.

## Eligibility

### Who is Eligible?

Owners or tenants (with minimum 5-year lease term and landlord approval) of existing commercial buildings and homes located within the Downtown Development Authority District. The DDA District is a specific area designated by the City of Suwanee ordinance which created the DDA. The map available on [www.downtownsuwanee.com](http://www.downtownsuwanee.com) indicates generally what is included, but prospective applicants must verify the eligibility of their property address.

Applicants who have received a Façade Grant in the last five years are not eligible.

### Eligible Activities:

Including, but not limited to:

- Repairs to exterior façades
- Restoration of storefronts and architectural elements
- Masonry repair
- Cleaning of building exterior
- Exterior painting
- Repairing or replacing cornices, entrances, doors, windows, trim, decorative detail and awnings
- Sign repair and replacement of non-conforming signs
- Architectural lighting
- Landscaping and hardscaping
- Other repairs that improve the aesthetic quality of the building

To qualify for assistance, an applicant must comply with the Old Town Design Guidelines. Any work done prior to the approval of the grant application is not eligible.

### Ineligible Activities:

Including, but not limited to:

- Interior improvements
- Roofing
- Inappropriate cleaning methods, repairs, replacements, or alterations

## Grant Application Process

### Before Applying:

Downtown Suwanee has structures built from the 1870's to the present. Some of them have been inappropriately altered or inadequately maintained through the decades.

The Façade Grant Program can provide specific design advice to prospective applicants. The Program offers assistance with conceptual plans and understanding of the Old Town Design Guidelines. Meeting with the Downtown Suwanee Manager before applying is recommended in order to help avoid misunderstandings as to the eligibility of proposals.

Some questions to consider when making an application include:

- What really needs to be done to the building?
- How much will it cost?
- Does the building have historic or architectural merit?
- How does the building fit in with its neighbors?
- How can this relationship be enhanced by façade improvements?
- Are there several different ways to solve the building's problems?

### Application Requirements:

Applications must be completed and approved prior to any construction activity.

Each applicant must submit the following:

- Completed grant application form
- General description of the proposed work and a site plan
- Architectural plans necessary for the project
- A detailed sketch of the proposed work
- Samples of the exact fabric, materials and paint colors to be used
- Cost estimates from at least two qualified contractors
- Construction schedule
- Evidence of ownership or the property owner's written approval
- Copies of the any permits required by the City of Suwanee. Contact the City of Suwanee at 770.945.8996 for building permits and sign permits.

Property owners, who have two or more businesses occupying a single building/property, with each business having its own entrance, are eligible for a façade grant for each business.

## **Deadlines:**

Application deadlines are: 3:00 p.m. on June 30, 2010 and December 31, 2010. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

## **Application Review:**

The completed design must be approved by the DDA's Design Committee, which will then determine the amount of the grant award, based on the following criteria:

- Conformance with the Old Town Design Guidelines
- The visual prominence of the building and its location
- The aesthetic quality and historical accuracy of the design proposal
- The historical and architectural significance of the building
- The potential impact on the attractiveness of the city streetscape, the particular building, and the economic development of the project area
- The comprehensive approach of the design, and the long-term maintenance plan

Once the Design Committee has reviewed the completed application, the applicant will be notified within 30 days of the outcome.

If not approved, the Design Committee may explain, in writing, to the applicant the reasons for rejection and what, if any, steps can be taken to receive approval.

## **Project Implementation**

Applicants whose projects are approved shall sign an agreement with the Downtown Development Authority.

The Design Committee and Downtown Suwanee Manager shall monitor the progress of the project.

Written approval of changes in approved work specifications shall be obtained before the work is commenced. The approval of change, dated and signed by the Downtown Suwanee Manager, shall be attached to the original application.

The applicant and the Design Committee shall conduct a final inspection before grant payment shall be made to the applicant. A Certificate of Approval shall be issued to the applicant. In order to receive payment, the Certificate of Approval shall be submitted to the City of Suwanee along with paid invoices (documented by two-sided copies of cancelled checks or by credit card receipts). Provided, however, such approval shall not replace the applicant's need to obtain proper permitting/certification, where applicable, and such Certification of Approval shall not be construed as any warranty or representation as to workmanship of such renovations.

## General Information

### **Grant Policy:**

The City of Suwanee and the Downtown Development Authority does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, age, race, color, national or ethnic origin or disability and no determinations or eligibility shall be based on these grounds.

### **Program Amendments:**

The details of the Façade Grant Program may be amended from time to time by the formal approval of the majority of the Suwanee Downtown Development Authority.

### **Contact Information:**

For more information, to arrange for a pre-application meeting, or to obtain application materials, please contact:

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