

**DOWNTOWN
FACADE
IMPROVEMENT
PROGRAM
FY2019**



Downtown Façade Improvement Program Packet

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Downtown Façade Improvement Program Project Guidelines

CITY OF ATHENS, TEXAS - DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Purpose

The façade improvement program is designed to promote the continued use and maintenance of historic commercial and multi-use properties in the Façade Improvement Program Downtown Area by helping property owners rehabilitate and preserve eligible structures. Reimbursement grants are provided to owners in recognition of the positive impacts that individual building improvements can have on overall appearance, quality, growth and vitality of the downtown.

Definitions

Character: visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of every historic building. Character-defining elements include the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces and features, as well as the various aspects of its site and environment.

Façade Improvement Program Downtown Area: the area designated by the City of Athens that determines which buildings are eligible for a façade improvement grant.

Historic significance: Facets of a building including its functional type, materials, construction or style that contribute to its historic qualities or significance. Additionally, other building attributes such as the feelings conveyed by a sense of time and place or buildings associated with events or people, contribute to historic significance.

Historic property: a district, site, building, structure or object significant in American history, architecture, engineering, archeology or culture at the national, State, or local level. Historic properties embody two important goals: 1) the preservation of historic materials and, 2) the preservation of a building's distinguishing character.

One-story building: a building consisting of a ground floor only.

Preservation: the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project.

Principal façade: the exterior portion of a building or structure elevation fronting a public street and which contains a principal entrance of the building.

Rehabilitation: the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

Side (or rear) façade: any exterior portion of a building or structure elevation, not including the primary façade but that is visible from the public right-of-way.

Two-story building: a building consisting of two floors or levels.

Funding of Program

The City will participate in funding façade improvements for historic properties by reimbursing the owner of the property for a portion of the cost to rehabilitate or preserve the façade. Funding for awarded projects will be available beginning in March of each year. In addition, a limited amount of funding may be available on a "first come, first served" basis at other points in the year.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the façade improvement program an existing building must be located within the Façade Improvement Program Downtown Area. Additionally, no application will be accepted for any project from a property owner who has payment in arrears for property taxes, special assessments, or other liabilities due the City or who does not possess insurance equal to or greater than the current appraised value of the building.

City Financial Participation

Costs will be shared for the façade improvement program on the following basis:

1. The City shall provide matching funds for up to 80 percent of the actual, eligible costs, not to exceed:
 - a. \$200.00 per linear foot of the building's principal façade for one-story buildings, or \$400.00 per linear foot of the building's principal façade for two-story buildings.

- b. \$100.00 per linear foot of the building's side (or rear) façade for one-story buildings, or \$200.00 per linear foot of the building's side (or rear) façade for two-story buildings.
2. The City will contribute a maximum amount of \$12,500 per façade, with a total grant maximum of \$25,000 per project.
3. Eligible project costs include the following: reconstruction, rehabilitation and preservation of the façade, façade cleaning, professional and consultant fees, tuck pointing, painting, and renovation or replacement of exterior lighting, awnings or other similar improvements not listed herein.
4. The City must calculate or assist in the calculation of the 80 percent contribution towards eligible costs prior to the commencement of construction.
5. Projects must follow at a minimum the Department of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. (See Pages 7-8)
6. When work has been completed in compliance with the approved application and inspected and approved by the City, the City shall remit payment for its portion of the cost to the owner based on the estimate approved on the application and upon receipt of the paid bill(s) of the contractor performing the work. The City will be unable to reimburse any payment without proof of receipt.

Program Compliance

1. The improvements must be completed within six months from the date of an applications approval.
2. Only complete applications will be considered for approval. Incomplete applications which are missing required application materials will not be considered and shall expire after six (6) months. The six (6) month time period will begin on the date of the most recent staff correspondence with the applicant. A new completed application shall be submitted in order to resume activity on a grant application.
3. Construction of improvements must commence within ninety (90) days of grant application approval and must be completed within six (6) months of grant application approval. The applicant may request a one (1) time thirty (30) day extension for construction commencement and a one (1) time three (3) month extension to complete the project from the City Manager or his or her designee. Agreements for projects not completed within nine (9) months of application approval will expire and require resubmittal of a new grant application for consideration of reinstatement of a grant award.

Application and Review

Property owners or business tenants (with approval of the property owner) shall submit an application. Submittal requirements are set forth on the application form. Upon receipt of the completed application, with all required attachments, applications shall be accepted and considered administratively. Staff recommendations will subsequently be presented to the Cultural Resources Commission for confirmation of approval. All approved applications shall be conducted between the property owner and City staff prior to the execution of an agreement.

The City retains the right to approve an entire request, to approve portions of the request, suggest and/or ask for changes/additions to a request before approving, or to deny any request or portion thereof.

Evaluation Criteria

Grants applications will be awarded exclusively on merit and graded against the following evaluation criteria:

1. **Proposed façade improvements and design (45%):** Improvements and design that are congruent with the existing historic qualities of a building and the greater downtown and/or that seek to reestablish specific historic characteristics and architectural components of a building.
2. **Historic significance (25%):** facets of a building including its functional type, materials, construction or style that contribute to its historic qualities or significance. Additionally, other building attributes such as the feelings conveyed by a sense of time and place or buildings associated with events or people, contribute to historic significance.
3. **Overmatch (20%):** Total amount of funds invested in the façade/s of a building in excess of the required 20% grant match.
4. **Location (10%):** Direct proximity to the downtown square.

Building Permit and Inspection

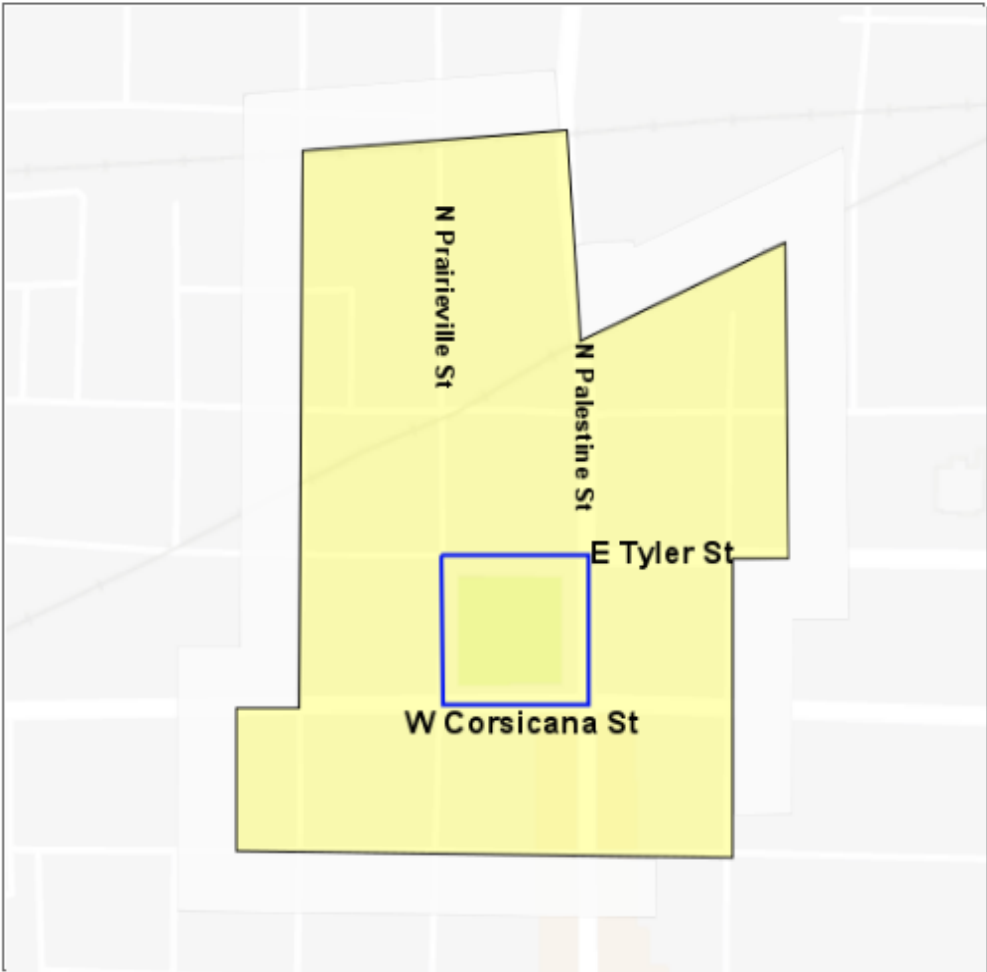
A building permit must be obtained from the City prior to construction, and all work shall be inspected by the City. All approved applications should confirm with the City's Planning and Development Department prior to construction to determine if a permit is required for their specific improvements. City permits for all projects will be free of charge.

Tax Incentives

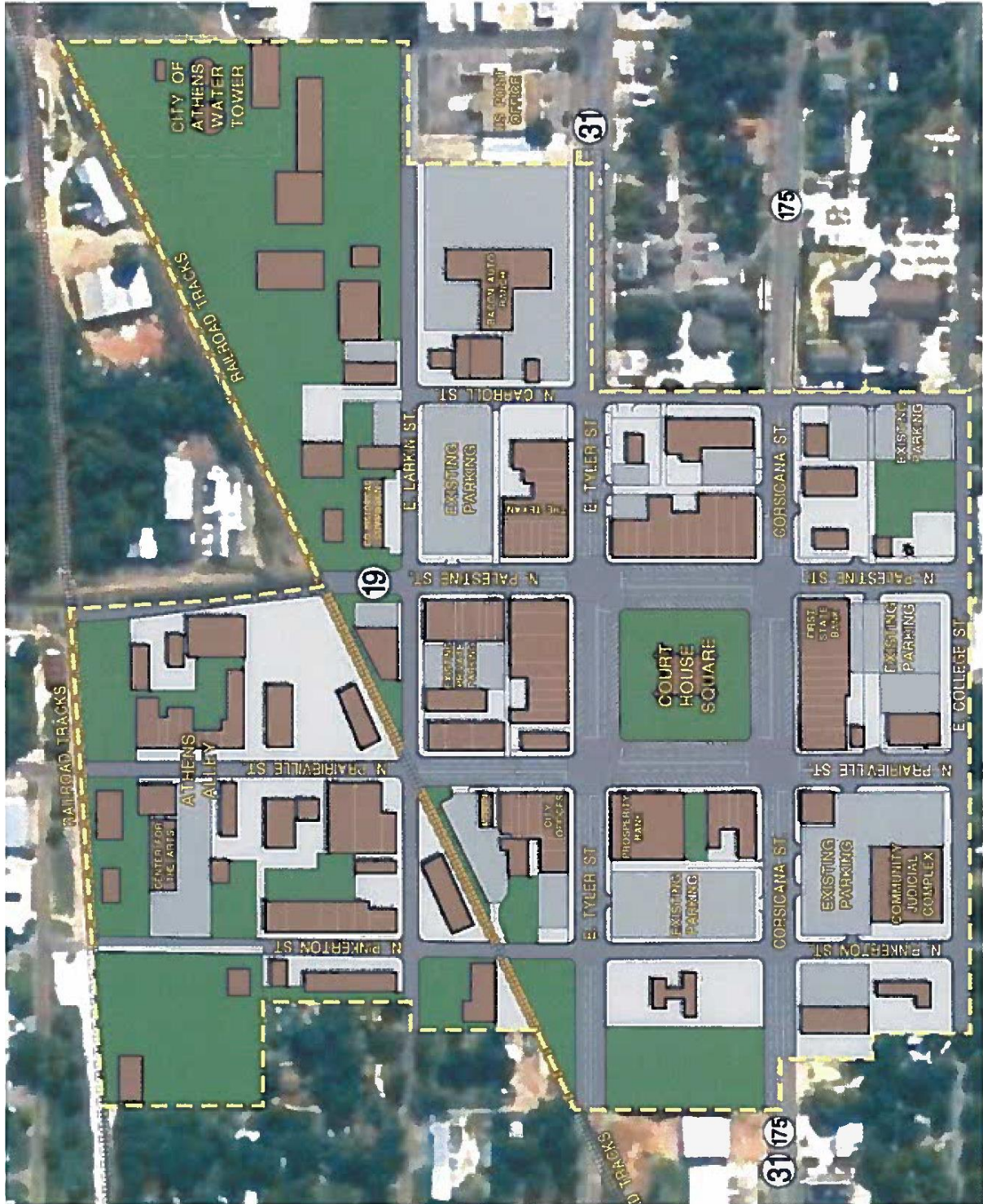
Federal and state tax incentives exist for owners of historic properties. The City of Athens will provide assistance for property owners interested in applying for federal and state tax incentives.

**Façade Improvement Program Downtown Area
Qualifying Area**

MAP:



AERIAL VIEW:



Athens Downtown Study Area Boundary and Existing Conditions

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility. Any proposed improvement project submitted by an Applicant shall demonstrate and incorporate an awareness of the Standards of Rehabilitation as follows:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be

compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.



Downtown Façade Improvement Program Application

CITY OF ATHENS, TEXAS - DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 30th

APPLICANT INFORMATION:

Building Owner: _____ Date: _____

Tenant (if applicable): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Building Address (if different than above): _____

Contact Name(s): _____ Email: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____ Fax Number: _____

BUILDING INFORMATION:

Physical Address: _____

Property Legal Description: _____

Year of Construction: _____ Number of Stories: _____

Building Space Type (check one): Commercial, Retail, Restaurant Office Other

Details of Planned Improvements: (attach additional description to this page, as necessary)

ATTACH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

- Scaled drawings/plans of proposed work and description of materials to be used.
- Copy of current commercial property insurance policy.
- Contractor quotes/bids (attach a minimum of three original proposals unless the work is self-contracted).

Downtown Façade Improvement Program Agreement Form

I, _____, fully understand the Downtown Façade Improvement Program procedures and details established by the City of Athens. I intend to use this program for the aforementioned renovation projects to forward the efforts of downtown revitalization and overall aesthetic improvement of the downtown area.

I affirm and understand that:

- a) The information submitted herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.
- b) I have read and understand the City of Athens’ Downtown Façade Improvement Program Project Guidelines and agree to be bound by and abide by these conditions.
- c) I understand that approval of a façade grant shall be communicated to the applicant in writing by the City of Athens via a Façade Grant Funding Commitment Letter.
- d) I understand that receipt of a Façade Grant Funding Commitment Letter from the City of Athens does not constitute application or approval for a City of Athens building permit.
- e) I understand that any changes made to the approved façade improvements without the approval of City staff will be cause for the City of Athens to withdraw its funding commitment.

Business/Organization Name

Applicant’s Signature ***Date***

Building Owner’s Signature ***Date***

Resource List:

Links for resources, articles, and success stories

For additional information please e-mail kbirk@athenstx.gov

- <https://savingplaces.org/>
- <https://www.preservationsociety.org/green/>
- <http://www.mainstreet.org/main-street/main-street-news/story-of-the-week/2015/measuring-the-economic-impact.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>
- <http://www.achp.gov/docs/deluxe-theater.pdf>
- <https://www.athenstx.gov/resources/planning> (View the Downtown Master plan here) There are suggestions for upgrades on each building.

State & Federal Tax Credit Information

*For those interested in receiving the tax credit or wanting additional information please e-mail
kbirk@athenstx.gov.*

- **State:**

Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program:

<http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/preservation-tax-incentives/federal-historic-preservation-tax>

- **Federal:**

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program:

<https://www.nps.gov/TPS/tax-incentives.htm>