

**CITY OF SYCAMORE
DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
2009**

Program Description

Purpose: The City of Sycamore values the overall appearance and historic architecture of Sycamore's downtown business district. To promote the charming appearance of these buildings, and to assist property owners in making high quality building improvements, the City has set aside general capital funds that may be available to qualified applicants through a revised downtown improvement program. For projects that meet or exceed program guidelines and receive the unqualified support of the Architectural Review Committee, the Council may provide a matching grant up to \$5,000 per building.

Eligibility: To be eligible for funding under the Downtown Improvement Program, the building must be located within the downtown business district, as defined by the Unified Development Ordinance, Chapter 5, Section 5.1.1, and more specifically must have frontage on State Street. Because this program is primarily focused on the historic preservation of existing downtown buildings, projects consisting largely of new construction, business expansion, or residential improvement may not be considered.

Either a property owner or a business owner in a leased unit may apply for this program. However, the property owner must sign the application form, and grant consent for the tenant to pursue funding for the property as well as the proposed work to occur at the property. In the case of one building owner with multiple tenants or storefronts, a determination as to the eligibility of any or all tenancies will be made on the merits of the proposal.

Availability of Funding: Funding will be awarded on a competitive basis following a thirty-day application period beginning on June 1 and ending on June 30. An individual property owner or tenant may only receive funding for one project during a two-year cycle. More than one project may be approved for a particular building over time, but not within a two-year period. The availability of funding is annually dependent on the Council's authorization of capital spending for such purposes. The City will match the property owner's investment in façade improvements on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to \$5,000.

Eligible Improvements: Each application will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. All improvements must generally achieve at least one of two general objectives: (a) restore the historic façade of a downtown structure or (b) bring the structure into compliance with locally-adopted building codes. Only exterior repairs or improvements will be considered, although related interior finish work may be acceptable if integral with the principal exterior work. Examples of eligible improvements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Removal of incompatible facades and appurtenances;
- Restoration of historic façade materials;

- Restoration of an historic building in accordance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation;
- Painting;
- Tuckpointing;
- Repair or replacement of exterior windows and doors, including storm doors and windows;
- Installation of new signage;
- Repair or replacement of appurtenances such as railings, stairs, awnings;
- Installation of handicap accessible entrances;
- Building cleaning using approved, preservation-based methods.

Repairs or improvements that do not improve the appearance of a building will not be eligible. Examples of such improvements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Roof sealing;
- Re-glazing;
- Demolition, except for the removal of architecturally incompatible facades or appurtenances;
- Incidental fees including architectural expenses, permit fees, and material testing costs;
- Most weatherization improvements.

Architectural Review Committee: A five-member committee appointed by the Mayor with the consent of the City Council shall be responsible for determining the eligibility of projects and for making funding recommendations. Such recommendations shall follow the preparation of a staff report on each potential project. The members of the committee shall include the following:

- ❖ One member of the Discover Sycamore Group;
- ❖ One member of the Sycamore Economic Development Commission;
- ❖ One Council member;
- ❖ An architect or design professional;
- ❖ One at-large member.

Each member shall be a full-time resident of the City of Sycamore. An exception may be made in the case of the architect or design professional if no local professionals are available to serve. Members shall serve a two-year term and shall not succeed themselves, but may serve multiple, non-consecutive terms. Three of the initial five members shall serve only one-year terms. The committee shall appoint a chair at the first regular meeting after May 1 of each calendar year.

After its review of a project, the committee shall report its findings and make a recommendation to the City Manager for City Council action at a regular City Council meeting, no less than seven days or more than twenty-one days following the committee’s deliberations.

Appearance and Maintenance: The general goal of this program is to provide a unifying and welcoming appearance to the downtown business district, without erasing

the diverse architectural styles that exist. To reach this objective, it is not expected that buildings will be made to look the same; rather, it is assumed that the program will assure that they relate more harmoniously in terms of proportion, materials, color, and architectural heritage.

How to Apply:

1. **Initial Consultation.** Interested parties should contact the City Manager or the Sycamore Chamber of Commerce for program details.
2. **Application Form.** An application packet will be available in the Office of the City Clerk at the Sycamore Center, 308 West State Street, or the office of the Sycamore Chamber at 407 W. State Street, Sycamore, Illinois, 60178.
3. **Narrative Description.** The application form contains a section in which the applicant shall state the clear and concise objectives of the grant support.
4. **Drawings.** In order for the Review Committee and the City Council to get a clear visual representation of the proposed project, drawings approximately to scale are required.
5. **Photographs.** Photographs or digital images are not required but would afford the Committee and the Council another representative view of the building in its “as is” condition. Upon the completion of the project, photos of the finished improvements will be required.
6. **Contractor Estimates and Invoices.** Written estimates from contractors must be provided unless the property owner or business owner, with the property owner’s consent, elect to make the improvements. All local codes respecting licensed work will apply.
7. **Copies.** At least six complete sets of the application and supporting documents are required prior to processing.
8. **Review of Applications.** All applications must be submitted to the office of the City Manager by the annual deadline for each round of funding. After the deadline, a meeting of the Review Committee will be scheduled. The meetings of the Committee shall be open to the general public. The applicants shall be separately informed of the meeting date, time, and place.
9. **City Council Award.** Following Committee action, each application shall be placed on the next available Council agenda.
10. **Funding of Awards.** Applications shall be considered on a competitive basis and are subject to funding limitations. In any given fiscal year, the amount awarded may be reduced below the amount requested, and some meritorious applications may not get funded.
11. **Commencement of Work.** After the Council’s award and the completion of all necessary documents, work may commence. Where permits are required, no work may commence without the approval of the Building Commissioner.
12. **Completion of Work.** All improvements shall be installed in a timely and workmanlike manner no more than six months from the date of the Finance Agreement.
13. **Protection of Work.** The building owner shall agree to maintain such improvements for a period of five years from the date of reimbursement by

the City. Only minor changes shall be allowed, such as painting or changing signs (if the nature of the business changes).

14. Changes or Alterations. Minor changes occurring during the construction process may be approved by the Building Commissioner. Major changes must be considered by the Review Committee and approved by the City Council.

15. Prevailing Wages. Contractors performing work that may be reimbursed with City funds must pay prevailing wages. The Sycamore City Clerk has the most current copy of the Illinois Prevailing Wage Act provisions and wage rates by classification.

For More Information: Contact the Sycamore City Manager at (815) 895-4853 or the Sycamore City Clerk at (815) 895-4515.