



## **Downtown Façade Improvement Program**

### **Purpose**

The Downtown Façade Improvement Program (the “Program”) is intended to encourage property and business owners within the downtown to renovate their building fronts and other exteriors plainly visible to the public. By establishing a mechanism for the City of Cedar Rapids and the Downtown Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID) Commission to share in the project cost, the Program promotes more renovations, as well as higher quality exterior improvements. An increase in the visible private investment complements all other economic initiatives within the area.

This Program may be used in conjunction with other City urban renewal activities and programs, as well as private redevelopment projects.

### **Qualified Area**

Downtown is defined by the boundaries of the Downtown SSMID. See map on the next page.

### **Eligible Structures & Applicants**

Eligible structures may have various uses, such as commercial, residential, arts and entertainment or mixed-use properties, but must be located within the designated Qualified Area identified above. Projects will be considered, as applications are received. However, priority will be given for buildings determined by the City and Downtown SSMID to have greatest need for renovation or the greatest strategic importance for implementation of the Downtown Vision Plan. Targeted properties must be in compliance with standards for routine maintenance and upkeep. The program is not intended to benefit property owners that have been negligent in standard maintenance of buildings and property.

Applicants can be property owners. Applicants can also be business owners or tenants within the building being renovated, but such applications must be accompanied by written consent from the property owner.

### **Eligible Improvements/Expenses**

Program participation includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Removal of existing façade materials in preparation for restoration of historic building features
- Renovation of building facades, including exterior design elements, that lead to visible aesthetic improvements (ie: a routine tuck-pointing job would not be covered, but painting or brickwork cleaning/restoration may be eligible)
- Restoration of historic painting or design on building exteriors
- Installation of exterior lighting for the purpose of aesthetic enhancement that fits the character of the area
- Renovation of historic business signs remaining on buildings

The Program is not intended to cover replacement of existing signage, nor any work related to structural or mechanical upgrades.

### **City and Downtown SSMID Participation**

The Program will cover up to 50 percent of eligible expenses on a project. The City of Cedar Rapids and Downtown SSMID will each contribute up to 25 percent of the project cost in the form of a cash reimbursement to the property or business owner or tenant upon satisfactory completion of the project. Reimbursements cannot exceed \$100 per linear foot of building frontage in the project.

### **Committee Structure**

The Downtown SSMID will appoint a three-member Façade Improvement Committee consisting of two members of the SSMID and one member of the Economic Alliance Community Development Innovation Council. The City of Cedar Rapids and the Economic Alliance will each assign a staff member to assist the committee.

### **Participation Procedure**

Success of the Program depends, in large part, upon the mutual cooperation and response on the part of the participant and City/Downtown SSMID. The general procedure includes the following steps:

- Initial project consultation with the Façade Improvement Committee to establish eligibility based on concept plans. The Committee will be facilitated by the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, and applicant contact can be made via the Economic Alliance.
- Submit final plans and project bid to the Committee.
- Committee determines award to project and enters into an agreement with the applicant.
- Reimbursement to the applicant for eligible costs upon completion of improvements.

