

# **COMSTOCK PARK DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BUILDING EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

## **WHAT IS THE BUILDING EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM?**

The Building Exterior Improvement Program has been established by the Comstock Park Downtown Development Authority (“DDA”) to encourage the preservation, restoration, and/or renovation of significant building exteriors for properties located within the DDA district. The program is administered by the DDA, which has determined, consistent with the DDA’s adopted “Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan,” that the preservation and enhancement of building exteriors, parking areas, overall building integrity and exterior ADA compliance in the district will facilitate and encourage the goals of the DDA as more fully stated below. Monies available for the program come exclusively from funds controlled by the DDA Board and may only be used in a manner consistent with the DDA Board’s approved policies and plans.

The minimum cost of a project for which a DDA Building Exterior Improvement Grant is sought is \$3,000. Approved projects will receive a grant of 20% of documented and approved project costs, up to the maximum grant amount of \$10,000.

## **WHY WAS THE PROGRAM ESTABLISHED?**

The DDA Board believes that the appearance and structural integrity of buildings is critical to enhancing the viability of the Comstock Park business district. The defined DDA district is not an incorporated village, but rather an historic small business center surrounded by neighborhoods in the extreme southwest corner of Plainfield Township. The DDA Board believes an attractively preserved business district will encourage pedestrian and vehicular traffic, thus sustaining if not improving good economic conditions.

## **WHO/WHAT IS ELIGIBLE FOR DDA FUNDING SUPPORT?**

Projects to restore or renovate building facades, including windows, roofs, and driveway/parking areas – for which the DDA has a façade easement or license – are eligible for this grant program. Construction costs including design/removal/replacement of exterior elements and improvements to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act are also eligible. Structural assessments and associated feasibility studies for interior or exterior improvements will also be considered for grant funding. The DDA Board or its designated committee/agent will, at its sole discretion, determine the eligibility of a proposed project (or project element).

Examples of eligible exterior improvements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Awnings
- Front, side or rear entrances
- Painting
- Exterior restoration

- Removal of existing facade
- Signs and electronic message boards
- Handicapped access ramps
- Parking Lot Improvements – repair or replacement only
- Landscaping – permanent in nature, such as hardscape, trees, etc.
- Exterior lighting – permanent.
- Security Systems – including new installations and / or upgrades to existing systems. Systems must be affixed to the building and not easily removable.

Program funds may not be used for any of the following:

- Refinancing existing debt
- Financing new debt
- Complete Building Demolition
- Property Acquisition
- Site Plan, building or sign plan fees
- Property Appraisal costs
- Legal Fees or Loan Origination Fees
- Labor costs paid to the owner/applicant or relatives
- New building construction.

The following criteria will also apply when determining eligibility:

- For facade improvements, building owners must grant the DDA a facade easement or license for a period of at least two years. The facade easement will limit additional changes to the façade during the period covered by the easement.
- Buildings must contain retail, commercial or professional businesses with use consistent with desired land use in the District.
- Proposed improvements must also comply with all applicable building and zoning codes.
- Properties must have overall building integrity, intact roofs and must meet basic public safety codes.
- Only building owners are eligible.
- Applicants will be required to complete an application form provided by the DDA.
- All required governmental permits must be obtained prior to the start of construction.
- Licensed contractor, builder, or service provider must be employed to do any structural changes
- Only approved out-of-pocket expenditures will be considered for reimbursement.
- Owner-applicants and their employees' wages will not be reimbursed.

## **WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES?**

An application available on the DDA website must be completed and submitted to the DDA by the property owner. This application will be processed by the DDA Project Review Committee or a designated Board member. Applications must be received, reviewed and approved before work commences. Upon approval by the Review Committee, construction must commence within **60 days** of approval, and the construction must be completed within **one year** after construction start

date. Any deviations from this schedule are not authorized unless approved in writing by the DDA Project Review Committee. Project Review Committee members will work closely with applying property owners to determine initial eligibility. Once the initial scope of work has been defined, the applicant will present the project to the Project Review Committee. The Committee will meet as needed to provide input, make suggestions concerning the scope of work and recommend approval or denial of the individual project to the DDA Board.

All payments will be made upon determination of completion by the Review Committee, with payment to be made directly to the property owner, after signed and notarized waiver(s) of lien or other releases acceptable to the Committee have been received.

The DDA reserves the right to reject any and all applications. The specific program guidelines detailed herein are subject to revision or amendment by the DDA Board in its sole discretion at any time, with timely written notice to approved applicants as appropriate. Because of budget, cash flow, and other unforeseen circumstances, the DDA may discontinue or suspend the program at any time. Approved applications will be honored even if the program is terminated or if program guidelines and procedures are changed – if the work is already underway.

After a grant is approved, the applicant shall not be permitted to apply for additional grant money for the approved project and may not apply for other projects on that parcel of record until the approved project is completed.

Application forms are available on-line at the Comstock Park DDA website: “comstockparkdda.org” under the General Information tab.