AURORA REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE AND WARD 3

FAÇADE, SIGNAGE AND SITE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

FUNDED BY ALDERMAN TED MESIACOS AND WARD 3 FUNDS

REVISED JULY 2025

Please Note: Work completed prior to December 1, 2025, does not qualify for reimbursement unless the owner already had a pending application into the Alderman's prior grant program.

The City of Aurora's Ward 3 Façade and Site Improvement Grant Program is intended to encourage business property owners and tenants in Ward 3 to reinvest in and renovate their buildings, signage. and properties. In additionally, the Façade, Signage and Site Improvement Grant Program encourages applicants to "shop" locally and are required to submit at least one bid/quote from an Aurora-based business when available. **Work MUST be approved prior to January 30, 2027, in order to receive funds. Funds will not be distributed unless the project was approved by the Aurora Regional Economic Alliance Foundation Grant Committee and the Ward 3 Alderman. Applicant can anticipate up to 21 calendar days for application initial review.**

Use of Funds:

<u>**Façade/Site Improvement Grants:**</u> Work that qualifies for reimbursement includes improvements to the exterior of the building, such as painting, cleaning, tuck pointing, façade repair, window repair, and other permanent improvements to the property consistent with the architectural integrity of the building and the neighborhood. Projects may also include parking lot improvements. Funds may not be used for working capital or property, equipment, or inventory acquisition, or refinancing of existing debt, or refinancing private funding.

<u>**Commercial Signage Grants:**</u> The Commercial Signage Grant can be used toward the design, purchase, and installation of a commercial sign on properties located in Ward 3. Funds may also be used toward purchase and installation of awnings when awnings include a logo and/or business name.

General Eligibility Requirements:

- Applicant must be a business enterprise with no more than 50 employees.

- Business must be registered with the City of Aurora and the State of Illinois.

- Applicant must be the owner, mortgagor, contract purchaser, or long-term lessee.

- Applicant must have a physical business location and be located within Ward 3 and the city limits of Aurora, Illinois. **Businesses located in unincorporated Aurora are not eligible.**

- Property and applicant both must be in Good Standing with the City of Aurora with no outstanding fees or violations. Outstanding fees and violations shall be corrected prior to application approval and push application review to the start of review timeline.

- At-home or work-from-home businesses are not eligible.

- Applicant does not need to be an Aurora resident.

- The exterior of the property must meet all City of Aurora Building Codes. If a violation is present, correction of the violation must be made prior to disbursement of the grant.

- All improvements are subject to any existing City of Aurora, and/or special district design guidelines, and sign ordinances that apply to their location, or type of business.

- All work must be completed by a licensed contractor(s) with the City of Aurora.

- Applicant must pay **prevailing wage** consistent with Illinois law. 820 ILCS 130 et. seq. Applicant is solely responsible for paying contractor in full.

- Overall project must cost at least $5,000; eligible costs include architectural and engineering services.

- Businesses and properties are only eligible to apply once every three years and only if the program is still active at that time.

Any pending application to the prior Ward 3 Façade and Site Improvement Grant Program, which has not yet received an approval or denial is retroactively eligible for this program.

Signage Grant Program Eligibility: In addition to the above eligibility requirements, applications for Signage Grants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Only work begun after approval by the Commercial Grant Signage Grant Program Administrator will be eligible for a grant.

- An approved sign permit or license is required, if applicable

- All work must be done on the exterior of the building and result in a publicly visible improvement.

- All work must be done on a street facing side of an existing building or side visible from street side or a residential address.
  - If the entrance of a business is not street fronting, the business can still apply
  - Shared space businesses must have a separate exterior entrance.

- Grant funds cannot be used to correct outstanding code violations.

- Work that does not comply with the above requirements is subject to reduction or retraction of award.

- All signage, awnings, and window signs must comply with the City of Aurora Code of Ordinances. https://aurora-il.municipalcodeonline.com/book?type=ordinances#name=CHAPTER_41_SIGNS

Application Process:

1. The applicant contacts the Aurora Regional Economic Alliance Foundation to determine eligibility of the project. Applications will be made available on the Aurora Regional Alliance website and in the Aldermen's Office. Applicants will be contacted by Aurora Regional Alliance staff within 72 hours of contact to arrange a meeting to determine eligibility.

2. The applicant submits a complete program application, along with the following supporting documents:
   a. A plan drawn to scale, elevations, if any, altered façade drawn to scale, and photographs of the existing condition
   b. Proof of property ownership (e.g. property warranty deed, current property tax bill, or land contract with the appropriate county). If the applicant is not the building owner, a letter of consent from the owner and a copy of the executed lease
   c. Proof of financial funds available to complete the project
   d. Construction timeline
3. Aurora Regional Economic Alliance Foundation staff will review the application.
4. Applicants will be notified in writing of project approval/denial within two-weeks of submittal.
5. Prior to renovation, the applicant secures any required building permits as applicable.
6. Project is completed, and a certificate of occupancy is obtained from the City of Aurora (if applicable).
7. Applicants submit copies of paid bills and cancelled checks after all contractors have been paid and signed lien waivers.
8. Aurora Regional Economic Alliance Foundation inspects completed projects to ensure that work was performed as outlined in application.
9. Applicant is reimbursed in the amount of the approved grant(s).

Approval:

Applications will be reviewed in the order in which they are received until the budgeted funds have been exhausted. The Aurora Regional Economic Alliance Foundation Grant Committee must approve the design of the project. Approval will be based on the following criteria: the condition of the existing structure, the value of the completed improvement, and the quality of the proposed design.

Availability of Funds:

After application and approval of the project, funds will only be reimbursed after work has been completed. Funds are first-come, first-served until exhausted; waiting list will be used. **The minimum project rehabilitation cost that will consider to be funded overall is $5,000. The grant reimburses 50 percent of the total rehabilitation costs, but does not exceed $25,000.00 in grant funds. The amount of the grant will be determined based on total rehabilitation project costs.**

Grant to include fees, up to a cap of 15% for soft costs of the total construction cost, for architects or engineers to ensure proper color rendering or structural integrity. Applicants and their architects and/or engineers may be required to meet with Aurora Regional Economic Alliance Foundation staff prior to applying.

The safest way to submit this application is to deliver it in person to the Aurora Regional Economic Alliance office (43 W. Galena Blvd., Aurora, IL 60506, ATTN: Sue Bertrand). If you prefer to email the information, you may send it to Sue Bertrand at Sue@AuroraAllliance.org.