

## 2025-26 Curb Appeal Rebate Program Downtown Rock Island Special Service Area



### Give your business some curb appeal

The Curb Appeal Rebate Program provides incentives in the form of a rebate for physical improvements to storefronts and facades along public way. The goal of the Curb Appeal Rebate Program is to beautify and revitalize the City of Rock Island's Downtown Special Service Area (SSA) district; attract and retain businesses; and enhance the streetscape, character and qualities of the district. The **Downtown Rock Island Special Service Area** is a funding source to provide rebates for improvements on commercial and residential property within its boundaries. The Curb Appeal Rebate Program is administered by the Rock Island Downtown Alliance, which manages Downtown SSA programs in partnership with the City of Rock Island.

In 2025-26, the Downtown Alliance is partnering with the City of Rock Island on the Curb Appeal Rebate Program to incentivize **awning, signage and wall mural improvements**. Awnings, signage and murals should reflect and complement the design and character of the building and surrounding area.



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### Rebate Amounts

Approved applicants who make improvements permissible under the Curb Appeal Rebate Program may receive a rebate according to the following guidelines:

- **Awning & Signage Improvements:** Up to a 50% rebate for awnings and hanging and projecting signage worth at least \$500 with a maximum rebate amount not to exceed a total of \$15,000.
- **Wall Mural Improvements:** Up to a 50% rebate for wall murals worth at least \$500 with a maximum rebate amount not to exceed a total of \$15,000.

Curb Appeal Rebate Program eligibility is further defined in the section Program Eligibility & Policies. However, the rebate:

- Cannot be granted before the application is approved
- Cannot be used for improvements started before the rebate is approved
- Cannot be awarded until authorized improvements are completed in the allotted time, paid in full and all necessary documentation has been submitted to the Downtown Alliance

Applications will be considered in the order they are received until all the Curb Appeal Rebate Program funding is disbursed for the fiscal year (July 1-June 30). Rebate awards will be based on the merit and design of the project. To maximize the number of eligible projects that receive assistance, the Downtown Alliance reserves the right to award a rebate at an amount less than the allowable maximum. Maximum assistance is determined by need, and the Downtown Alliance reserves the right to prioritize applications based on the proposed benefits to the downtown.

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### Eligible Properties: SSA Boundaries

Only owners or tenants of street-level property within the boundaries of the Downtown SSA are eligible for rebates through the Curb Appeal Rebate Program. See the attached map of the SSA boundaries on the next page.



### Downtown Rock Island Special Service Area



Date: 2/15/2024



- Downtown Rock Island Special Service Area
- SSA Parcels



Disclaimer: This map is not a substitute for an actual field survey or online investigation. The accuracy of the map is limited to the quality of the records from which it was assembled. The City of Rock Island makes no warranty concerning this information.

## Eligibility & Policies

- Rebate requests will not be granted for improvements that were started before the application is received and approved.
- The application must be approved by the Downtown Alliance before work can begin. If the applicant moves ahead with the project before receiving the approval, the applicant accepts the project will not be approved for a rebate.
- All work shall be completed within a six (6) month period as allowed by City of Rock Island building permits. Any extension requests must be approved by the Downtown Alliance and City of Rock Island Building Official to remain in compliance with the terms of the rebate agreement.
- Applicants must be the entity paying for the improvements.
- If the applicant is a tenant or lessee, but not the owner of the property where the project is to take place, a notarized document from the property owner authorizing the improvements to the property is required.
- Applicants shall be in good standing with the City of Rock Island, Rock Island County, the State of Illinois and the United States Government. In good standing means the applicant is not delinquent in payment of any obligation, including taxes on unrelated properties, utility fees, fines or special assessments. To be eligible for participation in this program, applicants must submit full payment for all such items. A history of property nuisances may also be taken into consideration during the application review process.
- Downtown Alliance Board members are eligible to participate in the Curb Appeal Rebate Program, provided they meet all other program eligibility criteria and abstain from reviewing and voting on ALL Curb Appeal Rebate Program applications during the period beginning when their application is submitted until their rebate check is approved and processed.
- Applicants must have proof of the proper [City Sign/Awning Permit](#) and [Electrical Permit](#) for the improvements, as needed, and all improvements must adhere to the [City Sign Ordinance](#).
- To the extent the owner or tenant is supplying their own materials or labor for the improvements, profits and overhead are not eligible expenditures for the rebate.
- Applications are considered on a rolling basis July 1 through June 30. There is no guarantee funding will be available upon request of rebate.
- If any change in ownership of the property or business participating in the Curb Appeal Rebate Program occurs during the improvements, eligibility for the Curb Appeal Rebate Program will be suspended until a meeting with the Downtown Alliance and new ownership is completed and any changes to the original application are approved in writing. There is no guarantee new ownership will be approved for the same rebate amount as the previous owner. All such applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- If the same improvement project already received funding from a different grant or incentive program it is ineligible for additional funding through the Curb Appeal Rebate Program.
- Improvements must remain with the property.
- If the applicant is not able to fulfill the terms of the rebate agreement, the Downtown Alliance may recapture all or a portion of the assistance granted.

## Application Process

- Prospective applicants shall schedule a pre-application meeting with the Downtown Alliance to discuss their project prior to submittal.
  - The formal application process begins with the submittal of an application form, W-9 form, photographs of the existing building and proposed project area and the proposed design.
  - Applications will be evaluated by the Downtown Alliance and selection shall be made at the sole discretion of the Downtown Alliance within 30 days of submittal. All rebate applications are subject to the availability of budgeted funds.
  - Final approval will be in the form of a rebate agreement approved by the Downtown Alliance.
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## Rebate Request and Distribution

All improvements shall be completed as submitted in the program application. Applicants must request the rebate by submitting the following documentation to the Downtown Alliance in writing via the Rebate Request form:

- Proof of payment from the contractors/vendors involved with the project
- Copies of Certified Payroll confirming payment of Prevailing Wage
- Photographs showing the completed work
- Copies of all required City permits

After the Rebate Request has been received, the Downtown Alliance and City staff will inspect the project to verify compliance with the Program guidelines and pre-approved plans. A rebate check will then be processed and sent to the applicant after the final inspection has taken place.

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## Design Guidelines

These design guidelines are intended to ensure improvements funded by the Downtown Alliance will benefit the public way by improving the physical appearance and curb appeal of downtown streets and properties within the SSA's boundaries. The design guidelines seek to enhance the pedestrian environment, emphasize historic building elements, reduce non-transparent facades and reinforce community identity through harmonious design while still allowing individual businesses to assert their unique presence and identity on the street.

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## Awnings

Awnings can be both a decorative and functional addition to storefronts. They can shelter customers, merchandise and storefront windows from direct sunlight and inclement weather. They also provide space for signage, welcome customers, help to visually define the width of an individual store and can contribute to business identity. Awnings should be complimentary in color, design and profile and should not cover distinctive architectural details of the building.

## Recommendations:

- Keep it simple
- Use minimal words and information
- Awning material should be canvas or fabric-like, not plastic
- Use a straight awning, not curved
- Awning should extend at least 30 inches from the building and have at least nine feet of clearance above the public way
- Keep sides of awnings open
- Avoid using too much white or light colors, which can get dirty easily



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## Signs

Well-designed signs make a strong first impression and can be a creative demonstration of business character. Signs should clearly communicate the name and identity of the business in a few words without covering architectural details of the building. Signs that are simple and compatible with each other make it easier for people to locate businesses in a commercial district, while contributing to the character of the district. Creative signage design, theater-district style signage and blade signage are encouraged. Signs should be designed as a permanent storefront element with the purpose of identifying a business and what it does and should be designed for both drivers and pedestrians. Signs should not be overbearing or cluttered with excessive information or marketing/advertising messages. Signs for previous businesses must be removed as part of any improvements.

## Recommendations:

- Remove nonfunctioning signs
- Place flat signs above the store's windows
- Reuse and restore historic signs
- Use materials consistent and compatible with those found on the building
- The size, shape and style of signage should be similar or complement surrounding uses
- Avoid any light box signs, flashing lights, LED displays or digital light boards
- Neon lights will be addressed on a case-by-case basis

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## Wall Murals

Wall murals can be an attractive addition to a building and to an overall commercial neighborhood. Murals also can help establish a unique identity. If the side of a building proposed for a mural is highly visible from the public way such artwork may be considered an eligible improvement. Quad City Arts will be consulted on all murals, and all walls must be inspected and primed by a registered contractor prior to applying new artwork.

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