

DOWNTOWN AMERICUS "TURN THE LIGHTS ON" PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Americus Main Street has partnered with Georgia Power to create a new grant program "Turn the Lights On" intended to assist in the cost of upgrading a downtown building's electrical system. Many of the properties in Downtown Americus were built before the present building and code standards and therefore are not up to code. Georgia Power has agreed to sponsor this program in the amount of \$15,000 to assist in the progress of the downtown and help businesses open or expand. Americus Main Street's Economic Vitality Committee has agreed to administer the program that will be in the form of a grant that business and property owners can apply for. This program will be a first come first served process and will be allocated to building rehabilitation/renovation projects in the form of a 50/50 matching grant up to \$2,500 per building. Priority will be given to buildings that are considered new service or currently are not metered.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

There is currently matching grant money to be awarded to potential projects in the Central Business District (map attached). Funding for the "Turn the Lights On" Grant Program will be paid through a reimbursement process. Only after an applicant has paid for work to be done will the applicant be reimbursed for up to 50% of that amount. How much each applicant gets is determined by how the project is scored. Grant assistance is limited to the amount available to Americus Main Street and up to \$2,500 per building.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All improvements must comply with standards set forth in the City of Americus Planning and Inspections Department and all applicable Building and Maintenance Codes. Applicants must meet with an employee of the Planning and Inspections Department prior to submitting application. All exterior improvements must be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. More information on these standards can be obtained at the City of Americus Planning and Inspections Department (229-924-4411 ext 239).

Applicants for participation in the program must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Applicants must be property owners, or be tenants with written permission from property owner

- Commercial properties must be up to date on all property taxes and other applicable fees to the City of Americus.
- Property must be in the Central Business District (map attached)**

ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

- Removal and replacement of “knob and tube” wiring
- Removal and replacement of outdated and illegal wiring
- Basic lighting (not to exceed 20% of total project)

INELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

- IMPROVEMENTS MADE PRIOR TO GRANT APPROVAL
- Electrical Equipment (HVAC, appliances, motors, etc.)
- Sweat equity (payments for applicant’s own labor)
- Residential properties, excluding mixed use developments

How are projects selected for funding?

Applications will be ranked and selected based on a clear and documented set of evaluative criteria.

The evaluative criteria and their respective weights are as follows:

- **Impact (40%):** – Overall impact of the project on the Central Business District. Will the project eliminate what was previously a liability for the building? Does the project fall into a priority-funding category? Is the project in a highly visible location that has significant impact on surrounding properties?
- **Financial Leverage (10%):** – Projects that leverage more private investment will be graded higher than those seeking just the grant funding.
- **Sustainability/Permanence (30%):** – How permanent are the improvements and is there a maintenance plan for improvements? Does the applicant own the building? If not, how much time remains on the lease?
- **Community Contribution (20%):** – Is the applicant a good neighbor? Is the area around the business kept clean and free of debris on a consistent basis? Does the business participate in organized Americus Main Street promotions or other community based activities?

PROCEDURE

The application process below shows how this will work:

1. All improvements in the Central Business District must be approved by the City of Americus Planning and Inspections Department before submitting application. For more information please contact the City of Americus Planning and Inspections Department (229-924-4411 ext 239).
2. Applicant picks up an application from the Americus Main Street office located at 101 West Lamar Street.
3. Applicant mails an application to Americus Main Street along with color photographs that show existing building conditions, detailed sketches or drawings of the proposed improvements, two separate bids from two separate contractors on their letterhead and any other additional information that may be considered during the review process.

Mailing Address: 101 West Lamar Street, Americus, GA 31709

4. Americus Main Street will review all applicants and determine which projects get funded and at what amounts each will receive. Applications will be scored based on need, project, and impact to the downtown.
5. Americus Main Street will notify each recipient of the results by mail within 60 days after the grant deadline and require a signed contract (attached to letter) returned to them before work may begin. APPLICANT MUST OBTAIN A BUILDING PERMIT PRIOR TO BEGINNING WORK.
6. Once the Americus Main Street has received the signed contract the applicant may begin their work. (Applicant must start the work within three months of being notified of their grant status and work must be completed within twelve months from the start of construction.)
7. Once construction begins, a "Turn the Lights On" sign should be installed at project location during construction. (This will be provided)
8. Applicant must submit copies of cost documentation (invoices, etc.) along with copies of all cleared checks to Americus Main Street for reimbursement. Proof of all closed permits issued for project must be included with copies of cleared checks. Reimbursement will be made to applicant within 30 days of receipt of project payment and closed permit documents.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Americus Main Street reserves the right to discontinue or modify funding for this program; however, all approved grants will be fulfilled as per contracted agreement.

APPLICATION AND INFORMATION

*****We strongly encourage all potential applicants to meet with either the Director of Americus Main Street or a committee member of the Economic Vitality Committee prior to filling out the application. To contact our director, Patrick Kay, call (229) 924-4411 ext. 235 or email pkay@americusga.gov.**