



Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation

Vibrancy Grant Program

Successful downtowns have a variety of businesses, attractive streetscapes, and active sidewalks. The foundation for a successful downtown streetscape is created through public investments in pedestrian infrastructure and streetscape enhancements such as streetlights, street trees, and benches among others.

While infrastructure and streetscape enhancements are important, creating a truly active and vibrant downtown requires the involvement of the local business community through activating their storefronts and adjacent sidewalks. Activating sidewalks through the addition of potted plants, outdoor dining, sandwich board signs, outdoor merchandise displays, lighting and creative signage can greatly enhance the vibrancy of a downtown and allow businesses to highlight their unique character. The combination of public investment and private sector engagement creates a unique sense of place and an active downtown district.

The Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation Vibrancy Grant Program is a matching grant program established in 2023 to incentivize and encourage business owners to add vibrancy to our downtown sidewalks to enhance their business and create an active and unique downtown environment.

Overview

The Albemarle Downtown Vibrancy Grant Program encourages downtown business owners to activate their storefronts through the addition of creative and unique elements that will enhance their business and downtown Albemarle.

Activating store entrances could include strategies such as the addition of planters, outdoor seating, or merchandise displays along the sidewalk. Storefront enhancements could include the addition of outdoor dining space, lighting, or a-frame signage. Other creative ideas like activating an alleyway or vacant lot could be considered for the program.

Eligible projects include:

- Planters/pots
- Landscaping/potted plants

- Sandwich board, a-frame signage and/or feather flags
- Seasonally professional hand-painted window signage
- Outdoor merchandise displays
- Outdoor dining
- Outdoor seating
- Exterior lighting enhancements
- Interior storefront display lighting enhancements
- Activities (cornhole, oversized outdoor games, etc.)

Funding

- Applicants are eligible to receive 50% matching funds for an approved improvement project not to exceed \$1000 per application. Funds are reimbursed following the completion of the project. If a property is leased or currently under contract, all parties included on the lease or contract must agree in writing to the proposed project.
- The total amount of funding available for the grant program will be determined on an annual basis by the Albemarle Downtown and may fluctuate from year to year. Funding may also be divided among several applicants based on the project criteria.

Applicants

- Owner(s) or tenant(s) may request vibrancy grants separately; however, any tenant(s) must have the owner's written permission attached to the application. One application per project may be eligible per grant cycle.
- The Albemarle Downtown Vibrancy Grant is open to commercial property owners and business owners (hereinafter "applicants") located in the Central Business District (CBD), City of Albemarle Historic District (COA HD), or Municipal Service Tax District (MSD) as defined in the Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation service area.

Project Details

- Eligible projects must be visible from the public right-of-way. Improvements to building interiors are not eligible for funding. Top priority will be given to projects that will make a highly visible contribution to the commercial district.
- All sidewalk signage and displays must meet with local zoning or ordinance restrictions. If a Certificate of Appropriateness is required for the work to be done, the Design Committee will need a copy of the Certificate included with the application.
- Approved projects must be completed no later than three months after approval of the project.
 - If the extended completion date of the project will exceed the deadline, the applicant must notify Albemarle Downtown in writing and submit a request for a time extension for the project.
 - A request for a project extension must include an updated schedule for completion.

- Albemarle Downtown may, at any time, choose to withdraw the award of grant funding previously approved should it determine that the applicant has failed to move forward with the project in a timely manner. In this exceptional case, the applicant would forfeit any right to reimbursement for project expenses.
- Any changes in the design of the project without written approval from Albemarle Downtown renders the award of grant funding void. In such case, the applicant would forfeit any right to reimbursement for project expenses and bear the full cost of the project.
- Permanent installations may require additional approval. To determine whether a project is a permanent installation, please contact the City of Albemarle Planning Specialist at 704-984-9422.

Application Timeline

- The Vibrancy Grant is a revolving program, meaning that applications will be accepted throughout the year. Application(s) received by the Albemarle Downtown will be reviewed monthly by the Albemarle Downtown Design Committee at the meeting following receipt of the application.
- Grant recipients will be notified no later than the Friday after the Design Committee approves the application at their scheduled meeting.
- Projects must be completed no later than three months after the date of approval.
- Reimbursement requests must be received within 30 days of project completion.

Application Requirements

- The completed application packets must include the following forms and documents:
 1. Photographs clearly showing existing conditions
 2. Diagram, sketch, paint colors, or renderings showing the proposed improvements
 3. Contractor quote(s) and/or pricing for materials for proposed improvements
 4. Historic photographs of the building if possible
 5. Certificate of Appropriateness, if required by City of Albemarle Planning Department. Please contact the planning department at 704-984-9424 to determine if your project needs a certificate.

Application Process

1. Applicants are encouraged to contact Albemarle Downtown to discuss project details before submitting a grant application. Applicants should also determine early in the planning phase any applications and/or permits needed for the project. Applicants are responsible for all permitting and necessary approvals prior to commencing work on the project.
2. Completed applications may be submitted by mail or via email to klynn@albemarlenc.gov

Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation
Attn: Vibrancy Grant Program
PO Box 2123
Albemarle, NC 28002

3. Albemarle Downtown Design Committee reviews completed applications and selects grant recipients at their monthly meetings, held the fourth Tuesdays each month, except for July and December, when there are no meetings. Design Committee will make a final decision on the number of grants and amount of funding awarded to selected projects. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application no later than the Friday after the meeting date during which the application is reviewed. Applicants will receive prior notification of the meeting date during which their application will be reviewed.
4. Within 30 days of completion, applicants must submit via email:
 - a. Before and after photographs of the project
 - b. Copies of all receipts associated with the project confirming payment or project expenses.
5. Albemarle Downtown will review the receipts and process payment of the approved grant amount. Upon approval by Albemarle Down, a reimbursement check will be distributed to the applicant equal to 50% of the approved project expenses up to the maximum amount of grant funding awarded. The reimbursement check will be addressed to the applicant named on the grant application form.



**Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation
Vibrancy Grant Program
Application**

Business Name: _____

Address: _____

Applicant's Name: _____

Applicant's Phone Number: _____ Applicant's Email: _____

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Property Owner's Name: _____

Property Owner's Signature: _____

Summary of Project: _____

Estimated cost of project: _____ Amount requested: _____



Application Timeline

- The Vibrancy Grant is a revolving program, available to applicants on an as-needed basis throughout the Albemarle Downtown fiscal year (July 1-June 30). Applications received by the second Friday monthly will be reviewed at each Albemarle Downtown Design Committee meeting on the fourth Tuesday monthly. Applications received after the second Friday will be reviewed at the next available Design Committee meeting.
- Grant recipients will be notified by the Friday following the Design Committee meeting if they have been awarded the Vibrancy Grant.
- Projects must be completed no later than three months after approval date.
- Reimbursement requests must be received within 30-days of project completion.

Eligible projects:

- Planters/pots
- Landscaping/potted plants
- Sandwich board or a-frame signage
- Seasonally professional hand-painted window signage
- Outdoor merchandise displays
- Outdoor dining
- Outdoor seating
- Exterior lighting enhancements
- Interior storefront display lighting enhancements
- Activities (cornhole, oversized outdoor games, etc.)

Application Checklist

- The completed application package must include the following forms and documents:
 - Completed application
 - Photographs clearly showing existing conditions
 - Diagram, sketch, paint chips, or renderings showing the proposed improvements
 - Quotes/cost estimates for proposed improvements
 - Approval of project from City Planning. Please contact the City Planning Specialist at 704-984-9422 for clarification on requirements.

**Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation may request additional information to clarify the grant request.*