



# For Immediate Release

**Contact:** Alex Mills, Community Development Director, City of Freeport 815-235-8221

## **City of Freeport and RAMP to Collaborate on 2016 Downtown Accessibility Improvement Program**

*(Thursday, August 18, 2016)* - The City of Freeport and RAMP are excited to collaborate on the 2016 Downtown Accessibility Improvement Grant Program. The program is designed to provide financial incentives to facilitate improvements that increase the accessibility of buildings located within the Downtown Tax Increment Financing District (Downtown TIF). The grants are provided in recognition that the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) may present compliance challenges for many buildings located in Freeport's downtown, and that financial assistance may help initiate improvements on behalf of building and business owners. The City has allocated \$15,000 for 2016 Downtown Accessibility Improvement Grants with the goal of increasing investment in downtown Freeport and prioritizing barrier removal in order to open doors for all who live in the community.

"We are excited to be a part of this initiative to engage businesses and encourage improvements in Freeport's downtown so that all individuals can be better served." said Autumn Kubatzke, Stephenson County Manager for RAMP. "RAMP's assistance with this project is an excellent way for us to support our mission and benefit not only those with disabilities, but Freeport's business community as well."

Under the program, property or business owners within the Downtown TIF area are eligible to apply for grants of up to 75 percent of the total cost of qualified interior and/or exterior rehabilitation, for a total award amount of up to \$7,500. Grant money will be payable as a reimbursement upon completion of the project, subject to project documentation requirements being met.

"This is an important new way for the City to foster downtown development and better serve our residents, our visitors and our business owners all at once. Improving access to a business leads to more sales, better service and positive word-of-mouth, which benefits everyone involved. This program helps create a stronger downtown and a stronger Freeport." said Alex Mills, Community Development Director for the City of Freeport.

Application packets may be picked up at City Hall, located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of 524 W. Stephenson St., or at RAMP's office at 2155 W. Galena Avenue. The application may also be found online at [www.CityOfFreeport.org](http://www.CityOfFreeport.org). The packets include maps indicating the Historic Business District and Downtown TIF District boundaries, as well information as to eligible uses of grant funds please. The timeline below indicates milestones and deadlines for the program:

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Outreach to downtown property and business owners	August 16 – 31, 2016
Applicants prepare project plans/drawings/estimates and meet with City and RAMP representative on-site.	August 16 – September 12, 2016
Historic Preservation review applications due	September 12, 2016
Public notices for Historic Preservation Review in paper	September 15, 2016
Historic Preservation Review Hearings	September 30, 2016
Grant applications due	October 7, 2016
Grant application review committee meets	October 10 – 14, 2006
Grant recommendations to City Council	October 17, 2016

RAMP empowers individuals with disabilities through services and advocacy to live an independent life. We accomplish this by partnering with them to make changes in their own lives, seek peer support and remove barriers. RAMP advocates for the implementation of current laws, promotion of needed legislation and improvement of existing systems for individuals with disabilities while working to diminish negative attitudes that threaten to impede equal access.

RAMP is a United Way Member Agency.