

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## Table of Contents

<a href="#"><u>What is the Corner Store Exterior Grant</u></a>	2
<a href="#"><u>Eligibility</u></a>	2
<a href="#"><u>Grant Offered</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>Eligible Costs</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>The Application Process</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Important to Know</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Design Principles</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Who Does What</u></a>	11
<a href="#"><u>Ten Tips for a Well Designed Storefront</u></a>	12
<a href="#"><u>The Application</u></a>	14

### Contact the Corner Store Program

Tel: 780-442-7148

Email: [cornerstore@edmonton.ca](mailto:cornerstore@edmonton.ca)

[www.edmonton.ca/cornerstore](http://www.edmonton.ca/cornerstore)

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## What is the Corner Store Exterior Grant?

Great storefronts support great businesses and help to create attractive, lively Neighbourhood Commercial Areas. The City of Edmonton encourages property owners to invest in exterior renovations to their commercial properties by providing matching reimbursement grants to cover a portion of the eligible costs.

This document provides information on the program, how it works, and how to qualify.

## Eligibility

### Targeted to Neighbourhood Commercial Areas

An area of commercial development within a residential neighbourhood located inside the Anthony Henday Freeway that is intended to meet and enhance the commercial needs of local residents, and support the revitalization of Edmonton's mature and established communities. For the purposes of the Corner Store Program Policy, Neighbourhood Commercial Areas may be:

- one **Small Commercial Centre** containing a low rise building with at least three commercial retail units at ground level, may also be referred to as small strip malls or mini-malls, and often have onsite parking lots at the front of the building, and on a property of no more than one hectare in area;
- a collection of several directly adjacent **Standalone Commercial Buildings**, each housing one or two commercial retail units at ground level, and all generally contained within no more than one full blockface; or
- a collection of several commercial properties/buildings at the intersection of two roads, with commercial retail units at ground level on at least two corners of the intersection.

### Other Eligibility Requirements

To apply to the Corner Store Program, you must be the property owner or someone approved by the property owner to act on their behalf.

Eligible commercial buildings must answer yes to all of the following:

- Not be located in a [Business Improvement Area](#), or a commercial corridor generally longer than one full blockface, or a commercial centre larger than one hectare.
- Be located in a mature or established neighbourhood within the Anthony Henday Freeway.
- Construction work has not started.
- Project includes at least **one critical improvement**.

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

- Building will have clear, unobstructed street-level windows once construction is complete and for the five year maintenance period.
  - Window tints, vinyl wraps, tinted or frosted glass, large window decals, and window perforations that obscure views in and out of the building are not permitted.
  - Typically security bars or rolling shutters are not permitted over windows or doors once construction is complete and for the five year maintenance period. The use of shatterproof clear glass or security films on windows is encouraged instead .
- Please see [Program Procedures](#) for full eligibility details.

Please contact the Program Manager if you are unsure whether or not your building meets the eligibility criteria.

## Grants Offered

There are two grant streams available for Eligible Commercial Properties with varying grant amounts.

1. The **Corner Store Stream** is available to Eligible Properties located in recent or active Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. Refer to this list of active or recent [Neighbourhood Renewal Areas](#). Consideration is given to neighbourhood commercial areas where there are opportunities to align with other City projects or initiatives.
  - Small Commercial Centres are eligible for a reimbursement grant of up to 50% of eligible construction costs for exterior improvements to active storefronts, to a maximum of up to \$60,000 per building.
  - Standalone Commercial Buildings are eligible for a reimbursement grant of up to 50% of eligible construction costs for exterior improvements to active storefronts, to a maximum of \$15,000 per building.
2. The **Small Business Support Grant** is available to any City of Edmonton Licensed or exempted business located within a property that is approved and participates in the Corner Store Exterior or Interior Grant Program.
  - Eligible businesses located within a participating property are eligible for a reimbursement grant of up to 50% of eligible costs for initiatives that will improve the capacity, efficiency, productivity, and/or competitiveness of the business to a maximum amount of \$1,000 per business.

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## Eligible Costs

An eligible project must include at least three improvements, including one of the following **critical improvements:**

- Redesigning the storefront (example: enlarging, adding or moving windows and doors)
- Upgrading windows and/or doors
- Re-cladding the building with new materials (excluding paint or pressure washing)
- Adding awnings or canopies
- Designing and installing murals that face the street or face an alley but are still visible from the street.
- Installing new permanent patios or other active storefront uses on private property (does not include sidewalk cafes which are located on road right-of-way)
- Installing new accessibility features such as ramps or handrails

Other eligible work that may be reimbursed through the program includes design, construction and labour. **Work must be performed by a contractor with a valid City of Edmonton business licence.** Eligible work can include:

- Design/engineering fees (the program may reimburse up to 20% of the total grant)
- Project management and administration costs (the program may reimburse up to 10% of the total grant)
- Labour
- New paint or cladding
- Adding or replacing existing windows or doors
- Electrical and light fixtures
- Signage
- Landscaping
- Repairing or upgrading canopies and awnings
- Permanent patios
- Permanent street furniture (on private property)
- Power washing and cleaning

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton



## A note on rolling shutters and security bars

Rolling shutters and security bars are sometimes used to reduce vandalism and break-ins, however they also have a negative impact on a neighbourhood. They send the signal that a neighbourhood is unsafe or empty. Additionally, rolling shutters mean that intruders won't be seen from the outside and can take their time in your building. We strongly encourage clear security films over windows and doors instead of bars or rolling shutters. Bars and shutters are not an eligible cost and will not be reimbursed through the Corner Store Program.

Rolling shutters and/or interior security bars over windows may be allowed on a case-by-case basis if a building is able to meet the following criteria:

- Police reports from the last two years documenting break-ins or broken windows
- Interior bars must meet at least two of the following:
  - A decorative design other than bars, squares or diamonds,
  - Painted to match the building's colour scheme or to minimize the appearance from the outside
  - Are retractable and can be removed during the day when the business is open
- Rolling shutters must have a valence and be painted with a mural

## Ineligible costs include, but not limited to:

[edmonton.ca/cornerstore](http://edmonton.ca/cornerstore)

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

- Permit fees
- Insurance
- Gas
- Tools
- Consumables
- Cell phone fees
- Other incidental costs

Some improvements are **not permitted** by the Corner Store Program. If your building has any of these elements, or they are included in your proposed design, they must be addressed with the Program Manager and Project Review Committee in order to be considered eligible to apply to the program.

- Rolling shutters / interior security bars
- Reducing transparency by removing storefront windows or filling them with non-transparent material
- Mirrored, frosted or tinted windows or doors, or windows or doors with vinyl wraps, advertisements or other obstructions and/or visual clutter
- Digital screens, flashing signage, backlit box signage
- Radically altering the design of a building with the potential for heritage designation
- Removing ramps, curb cuts or other accessibility features

## The Application Process



### Step 1: Apply to the program

The property owner or someone approved by the property owner to act on their behalf may apply for the Corner Store Exterior Grant.

1. Contact the Program Manager to confirm eligibility. If eligible, the Program Manager will visit the property to discuss your plans and help you prepare for a successful project.
2. Complete an application package and submit it to the Program Manager.

[edmonton.ca/cornerstore](http://edmonton.ca/cornerstore)

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

- Application form
- Conceptual drawings
- Building elevations showing design and materials
- A site plan that clearly shows the property line

## Step 2: Application review

Completed applications are reviewed by the Project Review Committee against the design principles and intent of the program (see page 10 for the design principles). This review usually takes three to four weeks.

Applications will be approved, approved with conditions, or refused:

- If an application is **approved**, the applicant may enter into a Reimbursement Agreement.
- If an application is **approved with conditions**, the applicant must change the design to meet the conditions. Changes will be approved by the Program Manager.
- If an application is **refused**, the applicant may change the design and re-apply during the next application period. An explanation for why the project was refused will be provided for future consideration.

Key things to understand about the review process:

- Decisions by the Project Review Committee are final and cannot be appealed.
- Due to limited funding, not all projects that apply to the program and meet the design principles will receive a grant, or the maximum grant amount.
- Approval by the Project Review Committee **is not a formal review of the plans** and does not guarantee that projects will be approved for development or building permits without alterations to the design. If you have questions about permits, please visit the Service Centre for a preliminary review of the proposal (second floor, Edmonton Tower 10111 104 Ave).

## Step 3: Reimbursement Agreement

Applicants must send the following documents to the Program Manager within three months of the approval letter:

- Two quotes for the eligible scope of work.
- A cost breakdown from the chosen contractor(s).
- The City of Edmonton business licence number of the general contractor, or subcontractors if there is no general contractor.
  - If you are the building owner or company and doing the work yourself, only materials will be an eligible cost.
- An overall budget summary of the project.

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

- A copy of all permit applications.

The City of Edmonton will pull the Land Title and Corporate Registry Search for the property to confirm the legal address and property owner.

These documents are used to create a draft Reimbursement Agreement. The Reimbursement Agreement is a standard form contract identifying the maximum grant amount, the approved project design and the eligible improvements that the applicant may seek reimbursement for once construction is completed.

If this documentation is not provided within three months of the approval letter, the project file will be closed and the funding reallocated. You may reapply to the program provided no construction has begun and with the understanding that funding is not guaranteed.

## **Step 4: Construction**

Projects have one year from when the Reimbursement Agreement is executed to complete construction in order to be eligible to receive the Reimbursement Grant. Changes to the design during the construction phase must be approved by the Program Manager.

As soon as the project is complete, email the Program Manager.

## **Step 5: Reimbursement**

The Program Manager will visit the site to ensure the project complies with the terms of the Reimbursement Agreement. Deficiencies will be noted and must be addressed to the satisfaction of the City before the grant is paid.

Applicants must send the following documents to the Program Manager:

- All invoices and proof of payment for eligible work identified in the Reimbursement Agreement. All contractor invoices must be paid in full.
- City of Edmonton business licence numbers for all subcontractors.
- A cost summary for the work.
- The most recent property tax notice showing the property is current on municipal property taxes.
- Permit service reports showing that the work has been completed to the satisfaction of the City of Edmonton. You can arrange for an inspection by calling 311. Please have your permit number ready.

Documentation must be submitted in a timely manner. If documentation is not submitted within 30 days after completion of the project, the project file will be closed and grant funding reallocated. It usually takes three to six weeks to issue a reimbursement cheque.

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## Step 6: Maintenance

All renovations supported by the Corner Store Exterior Grant must be maintained for five years. This includes general maintenance, graffiti removal, and keeping windows and doors clear of clutter, vinyl wraps, security bars, or shutters. If the owner fails to maintain the building, they may be required to repay up to 50% of the grant.

## Important to Know

The Corner Store Program team wants all projects to succeed and will support you through the program process to ensure it does. However, there are some key things to understand about the program in order to be successful.

1. If you start the work before the Reimbursement Agreement is signed, the project will not receive a grant.
2. It is your responsibility to manage your contractors and keep track of invoices.
3. It is your responsibility to obtain all required permits, such as electrical, mechanical, plumbing, gas and building.
4. It is your responsibility to request approval for any changes in design or scope after the Reimbursement Agreement is signed. Changes may require further review from Development Services and Safety Codes.
5. It is your responsibility to be aware of deadlines. If you miss the deadline to submit documentation, the project file will be closed and the grant funding reallocated.
6. Grant amounts will not be increased due to changes in project scope or cost overruns.

## Design Principles

The Corner Store Program design principles identify the features and characteristics of a building that will support the more functional, attractive and accessible businesses in existing commercial buildings. The principles should guide the design of a storefront renovation and are used to review applications to the program.

Applications should strive to meet or exceed as many of the design principles as possible. We encourage you to explore ways to fulfill the design principles that go beyond the examples listed here. Be creative.

### 1. Improvements contribute to a lively pedestrian experience.

Renovations to the building should improve how pedestrian friendly and lively the commercial main street is by adding or improving things for shoppers or visitors to do. Ways to meet this principle could include:

- Transparent, uncluttered windows for window shopping.
- Expanded or new windows or doors.

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

- Patios, walk-up counters or other commercial activities that “spill out” onto the street.
- Benches, bike parking, or other things for people to do or interact with.

## 2. Improvements support the business(es), building and the neighbourhood.

Building design should help to market the building to prospective tenants, or help communicate to customers what the business tenant offers. Ways to meet this principle could include:

- Overall building design and/or colours that support business branding and the overall commercial character of the neighbourhood.
- Improved signage for the tenants.
- Adding adaptable signage infrastructure should businesses change.
- Improving the usability of the building by adding entrances or adding/enlarging windows.

## 3. Improvements are focused on people, not cars.

Buildings should feel comfortable and interesting for people walking by. This means avoiding long, uninterrupted storefronts and walls, and making business entrances obvious.

- Frontages should create visual interest through regular entrances, varied articulation, and visual permeability.
- Making sure the main entrance(s) are easy to identify.
- Signage can be easily read from the sidewalk.
- Lighting plans should be attractive, avoid overspill, and be dark sky compliant.

## 4. Improvements address all four seasons.

Renovations should make the building more functional and attractive throughout the year, and should be comfortable for customers in all kinds of weather. Ways to address all seasons might include:

- Using durable materials such as natural stone or brick.
- Adding landscaping that looks great in summer and winter.
- Adding permanent patios in sunny locations.
- Adding or repairing awnings and canopies.
- Using lights and colours to make buildings stand out.

## 5. Improvements support accessibility.

Some people use canes, crutches, wheelchairs, strollers and other aids to get around. The more people who can enter your building means more customers overall. Ways to support accessibility may include:

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

- Ramps in front of doorways.
- Handrails.
- Large address numbers.
- Automated doors.
- Easy to read signs.

## 6. Improvements contribute to safe streets.

People feel safer when they can clearly see what is happening on the street and inside the building. Ways to meet this principle could include:

- Lighting that illuminates alcoves and street fronts without being blinding.
- Landscaping that clearly identifies where people should and should not go.
- Landscaping that supports clear sight lines.
- Encouraging the uses you want to see in front of your building.

## 7. Properties with off-street front parking lots must improve the connection and safety for pedestrians between the building and the sidewalk.

The aim of the program is to encourage attractive, pedestrian-friendly main street commercial areas through investment in existing commercial buildings. The program supports buildings to become as street oriented as they can be. Examples may include:

- New sidewalks, walkways or crosswalks connecting the building with the public sidewalk.
- New patios in parking stalls.
- Adding traffic calming such as painted markings, bollards or speed bumps.
- Adding landscaping between the sidewalk and parking, including rain gardens or bioswales.
- Curb cuts or other improvements to support universal accessibility.

## Who Does What?

<b>The Applicant</b> is responsible for:	<b>The Program Manager</b> is responsible for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading and understanding this Program Guide</li><li>• Completing the application package</li><li>• Obtaining all Development Permits/Building Permits</li><li>• Providing all required documentation to the Program Manager in a timely manner</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Answering questions</li><li>• Identifying application periods</li><li>• Provide advice for successful applications</li><li>• Reviewing submitted applications for completeness</li><li>• Performing site visits</li><li>• Presenting completed applications to</li></ul>

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completing the approved renovations as per the Reimbursement Agreement</li><li>• Submitting all invoices and proof of payment in a timely manner</li><li>• Ensuring all contractors have a City of Edmonton business licence</li><li>• Post-construction building maintenance for five years</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the Project Review Committee</li><li>• Creating Reimbursement Agreements</li><li>• Issuing reimbursements at the end of a project</li><li>• Managing overall Program finances</li><li>• Ensuring that projects supported by the program contribute to program outcomes</li></ul> |
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The **Project Review Committee** is made up of City of Edmonton staff with expertise in urban design, accessibility, heritage, and construction. The Review Committee is responsible for:

- Reviewing completed applications

## Ten tips for a well designed storefront renovation

The following 10 tips will help you design your new storefront to support your business and fulfil the Corner Store Program design principles. This will result in a better design for your business, a stronger application to the program, and a more attractive commercial main street.

### 1. Choose a good designer.

Most storefront renovation work will need a permit from the City. Choose a designer and/or contractor who knows the regulations, bylaws and processes so your project is completed safely, quickly and legally.

### 2. Does your storefront sell your business?

As a property owner, what kind of tenants do you want to attract? Will your building support the branding and business image of your tenants through architectural style and colours? Does your building add to the experience for people walking through the neighbourhood?

### 3. Think about signage.

Signage supports brand awareness and helps customers find your business. Can you easily see your signage when you're standing on the sidewalk? Can you change the signage if the business tenant changes? Blade signage is easy for pedestrians to see and relatively low cost.

### 4. Where is the door?

Make it easy for customers to visit your business. Use colour, lighting, signage, cladding and architectural details to make it obvious where the main entrance(s) are. Visually break up long buildings using colour, texture and materials so you can easily spot individual businesses.

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## **5. Make it easy for people to get inside.**

Customers can't buy your product or service if they can't visit your building. What can you do to welcome people with mobility challenges into your place of business?

## **6. Support window shopping.**

An attractive window display or a glimpse of the interior of your building is often the first impression a customer will have of your business. Large, clear windows also promote safety because employees can keep an eye on what's happening outside on the street.

## **7. Attract customers all year round.**

Customers stay longer when they're not running from the weather. Consider installing awnings for sun and weather protection, patio heaters for spring and fall, and adding bright colours, winter-friendly landscaping and creative lighting to draw attention to your building in the darker winter months.

## **8. Take pride in your investment.**

Cheap materials break down more quickly, especially in our winter climate. Where will the material be located? Will it need to withstand shovels, bikes, or high traffic areas? Consider including brick, natural stone, metal panels or stucco instead of vinyl or composite materials in high traffic areas. The Corner Store grant only applies to a building once so make the most of it!

## **9. Think about safety.**

A welcoming and well cared for storefront discourages crime. Lighting and landscaping can be decorative and help keep your building safe and secure. Use light to illuminate alcoves and nooks. Security films are a more attractive alternative to security bars and shutters.

## **10. It's more than the storefront.**

Design doesn't have to end at the storefront. Blur the line between your business and the sidewalk. Adding patios, benches, window counters and landscaping makes your storefront lively and attractive.

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## Application

Application packages must be completed in full, including all of the following:

- Part 1: Applicant and Project Information
- Part 2: Eligibility Criteria
- Part 3: Project Information
- Part 4: Attached Documentation
- Part 5: Applicant Declaration and Authorization for Agent of the Property Owner

Your name, contact information, and project information is collected in accordance with 33(c) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). This information will be used to administer the Corner Store Program. If you have any questions about the collection and use of your personal information, contact the Corner Store Program Manager at 780-442-7148, 9th Floor 10111 104 Ave, Edmonton Alberta, T5J 0J4. Please note the name and location of the buildings, building details, building designs, grant amounts, and total costs of projects may be released to various organizations, the media, and the public, in connection with the Corner Store Program

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## Part 1: Applicant and Project Information

**\*Fill out all the fields. Incomplete applications will not be considered or kept on file.**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant name \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant is the  property owner  agent of the property owner  tenant

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

If the applicant is not the property owner, please fill out the following:

Property owner name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Building address \_\_\_\_\_

Legal address ----- Lot: \_\_\_\_\_ Plan: \_\_\_\_\_ Block: \_\_\_\_\_

Building age \_\_\_\_\_

Total estimated project budget \_\_\_\_\_

Is the building a designated heritage property?  Yes  No  Unsure

Have you or do you intend to apply for any other City of Edmonton grant programs to support this project? Which ones \_\_\_\_\_

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## Part 2: Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the Corner Store Exterior Grant, **all** of the following criteria must be met:

- Building has a ground floor commercial use
- Building is located within a Neighbourhood Commercial Area
- Building is 20 years or older
- At the end of the project, and for the five year maintenance period, I understand that:
  - All glazing will be clear. Mirrored or tinted films, large window decals or vinyl wraps are not permitted.
  - Security shutters and/or interior bars over windows and/or doors are typically not permitted.
- I have met with/spoken to the Program Manager to discuss the project and the requirements of the Corner Store Program.

Eligible projects must include at least **three** improvements, one of which must be a critical improvement. Please describe all improvements that will be included in your project.

Critical improvements (must check at least one):

- Redesign the storefront (example: enlarging, adding or moving windows and doors)
- Upgrade windows and/or doors
- Re-cladding the building with new materials (excluding paint or pressure washing)
- Adding awnings or canopies
- Design and installation of murals that the street, or face an alley or property but is still visible from the street
- Installing new permanent patios or other active storefront uses on private property (does not include sidewalk cafes which are located on road right-of-way)
- Installing new accessibility features such as ramps or handrails

Other improvements being made are: (feel free to attach a list if you need more room)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## Part 3: Project Information

Projects that apply to the Corner Store Exterior Grant will be evaluated based on the impact and extent of the improvements you propose, not on existing characteristics of the building.

Provide a brief description of why you are doing this work. What will the benefit be to you, the businesses, and/or the community? (examples include a more attractive building, better accessibility for those with mobility challenges, better visibility for the tenant, safer environment due to lighting, more space for pedestrians, etc)

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Below are the principles that your project is evaluated against. How does your project contribute to these principles? Please refer to the guidelines included in the Program.

Check each design principle that the improvements address:

- Improvements contribute to a lively pedestrian street
- Improvements showcase the businesses and the building
- Improvements fit a human scale
- Improvements address all four seasons
- Improvements support accessibility
- Improvements contribute to safe streets
- Improvements increase the energy efficiency and climate resiliency of the building

**Note: Properties with parking lots must improve the connection and safety for pedestrians between the building and sidewalk.**

Provide a description of how the project achieves the design principles you selected:

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

**Projects contribute to a lively pedestrian street.**

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**Improvements showcase the businesses and the building.**

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**Improvements fit a human scale.**

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**Improvements address all four seasons.**

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**Improvements support accessibility.**

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**Improvements contribute to safe streets.**

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

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Improvements increase the energy efficiency and climate resiliency of the building
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<b>Improvements improve the connection and safety for pedestrians between the building and the sidewalk.</b>
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# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## Part 4: Attached Documentation

To complete the application package, please attach the following documents:

- Three or more photos of the existing storefront and sides of the building.
- All relevant project design details, including:
  - Site plan
  - Elevations
  - Detailed drawings, photos, samples or brochures of key products
  - Renderings showing the proposed project (if available)

The City will pull the Land Title and perform a Corporate Registry Search to confirm the legal address and property ownership.

Additional information may be required depending on the nature of your project. The Program Manager will contact you for more information if necessary.

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton

## Part 4: Applicant Declaration

I understand that submitting an application package does not guarantee funding under the Corner Store Program Interior Grant. I further certify that:

- I/we have reviewed the Program Guide and I/we understand the conditions attached to the funding;**
- This application includes all relevant documentation;
- All information in this application and supporting documents is true and complete to the best of my knowledge;
- Incomplete applications and those that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be evaluated or kept on file;
- I/we acknowledge that it is my/our responsibility to determine whether or not my/our Corner Store Exterior Grant project needs a permit to complete and therefore obtain any necessary permits. Reimbursement will not be granted to projects completed without required permits;
- I/we understand that all decisions regarding applications are final and cannot be appealed;
- If a grant is approved, work will be completed as outlined in the application. Any deviations must be evaluated and approved by the Program Manager. Approval is not guaranteed.

Applicant name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Authorization for Agent of the Property owner

I/we, (print name) \_\_\_\_\_ the owner of the subject property hereby authorize (print name) \_\_\_\_\_ to act on my behalf with respect to the application.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Property Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Corner Store Exterior Grant

Program Guide and Application

Edmonton