

Procedure

Storefront Improvement Program



This procedure falls under Storefront Improvement Policy C216C.

Program Impacted	<i>Economic Development</i> Edmonton has a diverse and prosperous economy that thrives locally and globally.
Approved By	City Manager
Date of Approval	November 26, 2020
Approval History	June 14, 2019 October 31, 2017 April 1, 2016 April 15, 2008
Next Scheduled Review	November 26, 2023

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 Active Storefront - a facade that supports commercial activity and creates the opportunity for pedestrian activity through at least 50% ground-level clear, transparent glazing that opens into an active section of the business, in combination with one or more other features that support activity and vitality on the street. Proportion of glazing is calculated as a percent of linear meters at 1.5m above finished Grade.
- 1.2 Building Age - the year the building was built as identified in municipal tax records.
- 1.3 Commercial Building: for the purpose of administering the Storefront Improvement Program, a Commercial Building means a building that:
 - will be used for a commercial purpose at ground level, excluding home based businesses;
 - is designed to support and visually communicate the commercial use of the building; and
 - will be street-oriented.
- 1.4 Facade - the exterior of a commercial building. For the purpose of administering the Storefront Improvement Program, a facade is defined as a maximum of two stories in height.
- 1.5 Storefront - the first storey of the facade of a Commercial Building that fronts onto a public road right-of-way or pedestrian-oriented City owned open space, contains a public entrance, supports commercial activity and is a primary visual focus. A Commercial Building may have more than one Storefront.
- 1.6 Post-Construction Inspection - a site visit by the Program Manager to determine whether the improvements identified in the Reimbursement Agreement have been completed.

- 1.7 Pre-Construction Inspection - a site visit by the Program Manager to determine the pre-construction status of a building, and to ensure that no work has begun before a Reimbursement Agreement is signed.
- 1.8 Project Review Committee - a committee approved by the Deputy City Manager with representation that may include City of Edmonton administration, the local Business Improvement Area, and/or other relevant organizations or individuals.
- 1.9 Reimbursement Agreement - the standard form contract identifying the maximum grant amount, the approved project design and the eligible improvements that the applicant may seek reimbursement for upon successful project completion. Reimbursement Agreements are between: the City of Edmonton and the building owner; or the City of Edmonton, building owner and building tenant.
- 1.10 Storefront - the first storey of the facade of a commercial building that: fronts onto a public road right-of-way or municipally owned open space, contains a public entrance, supports commercial activity and is a primary architectural design focus. A commercial building may have more than one storefront. Additional details describing a storefront are set out in the Storefront Improvement Program Guide.
- 1.11 Storefront Improvement - the structural or non-structural renovations carried out on the eligible façade(s) of an existing commercial building to enhance building aesthetics and functionality, and which conform to the specifications in the Storefront Improvement Program Guide. Eligible improvements can include the first two storeys of a building. Storefront Improvements may also include limited interior renovations which improve the view or accessibility of the main floor commercial space.
- 1.12 Storefront Improvement Program Guide - means the guide(s) issued by the City which is (are) used by the City to direct the intended effect of the Policy and these procedures. The guide(s) is (are) separate from these procedures.
- 1.13 Storefront Improvement Program Grant - the financial assistance available under this program for the cost of eligible Storefront Improvements as specified in a Reimbursement Agreement.
- 1.14 Street-oriented - means development that is designed with an emphasis on the street sidewalk and pedestrian access to the building, rather than auto access and parking areas. Buildings are generally sited close to the lot line bordering the street. Parking areas should not be emphasized by the design of the site.
- 1.15 Target Area - An area that is not within a Business Improvement Area which is designated by City Council to which the Storefront Improvement Program Policy and these procedures apply.

2. PROGRAM REGULATIONS

2.1 AREA OF APPLICATION AND EFFECTIVE DATE

- 2.6.1 These procedures apply to Storefront Improvement projects undertaken on existing Commercial Buildings located only within Business Improvement Areas and Council approved Target Areas subject to any conditions of these procedures.
- 2.6.2 These procedures are applicable to Business Improvement Areas and Council approved Target Areas based on the available budget for the program or for such time as otherwise prescribed.

2.2 ELIGIBILITY

- 2.2.1 The applicant, project and building must meet the following minimum requirements to be eligible for consideration for a Storefront Improvement Program Grant:
 - a) the applicant must be the building owner(s) or that person's designate;

- b) the building must be located within a Business Improvement Area or Council approved Target Area;
- c) the proposed project must be related to a Commercial Building with a Storefront facing onto a public road right-of-way, excluding an alley, and may have a Facade facing onto pedestrian-oriented, municipally-owned open space;
- d) the proposed project must be related to a Commercial Building that is commercial in use or mixed-use in nature with commercial on the main floor, or has a commercial function;
- e) the building must not have previously received a Facade Improvement Program or Storefront Improvement Program grant;
- f) the owner of the building must be current on municipal property tax payments;
- g) the project must contribute to a pedestrian-friendly streetscape;
- h) the Building Age must be 20 years or older; and
- i) the proposed project must be referenced to a building defined as one structure with a roof and walls;
- j) excluding design and engineering work, construction work done prior to an executed Reimbursement Agreement between the applicant and the City is not reimbursable;
- k) the proposed project must involve eligible Façade and Storefront Improvements and satisfy any Storefront Improvement Program design principles identified in the Program Guide for implementation of these procedures;
- l) the applicant must meet additional Application Requirements as specified in the program guide; and
- m) funds are allocated subject to the conditions of the Storefront Improvement Program Policy and these procedures.

2.2.2 Projects that cannot achieve a Storefront with transparent glass or less than 10% of the total glazing obscured by the end of the project are not eligible for the Program.

2.2.3 Rehabilitation or improvements that affect historic properties must be consistent with the City of Edmonton's Historic Resources Management Program and are subject to review by a Heritage Planner. No funds will be allocated for projects that prevent or detract from future possible designation as a heritage resource.

2.2.4 Buildings that are built to specifically accommodate auto oriented uses, such as gas stations, are not eligible to apply to the Program.

2.3 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- 2.3.1 Applications submitted under the Storefront Improvement Program Policy and these procedures are completed in two stages. The first stage must include the following components:
- a. a completed application form;
 - b. photographs of the current state of the building;
 - c. elevations, site plans, and/or any other drawings or materials identified in the Application form and/or requested by the Program Manager that show the improvements to be made; and

The second stage is completed after a successful review by the Project Review Committee. Stage two applications must be submitted in a timely manner, and must include the following components:

- d. a minimum of two contractor bids or quotes for all work proposed for the project;
- e. a cost summary listing the itemized breakdown of the improvements and corresponding specific costs, the selected vendor(s)/contractor(s), and the City of Edmonton business license number of the selected contractor(s); and
- f. a copy of the submitted Development Permit application and/or submitted Building Permit application and/or submitted Sign Permit application.

To confirm property ownership, the City will pull a Land Title Certificate, and if the property owner is a company, a Corporate Registry Search.

2.3.2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 2.3.2.1 Reimbursement is limited to eligible work performed on a Commercial Building Facade. The first storey of a Commercial Building must always be improved in order to receive a Program Grant.
- 2.3.2.2 Reimbursement is limited to labor and material for eligible cost items only. The City may require that non-eligible work be performed as a precondition for reimbursement of eligible cost items. The following improvements are always required, even where such improvements may not be eligible for reimbursement:
 - Improvements which places the property in compliance with all City Bylaws including but not limited to the Minimum Maintenance Standards Bylaw.
 - Graffiti on all exterior surfaces covered, removed or painted over.

2.4 APPLICATION PROCESS

- 2.4.1 Prior to submitting an application the applicant shall consult with the Program Manager regarding the application process, requirements, criteria, rules of eligibility and project design.
- 2.4.2 Completed applications shall be submitted to the Storefront Improvement Program Manager.
- 2.4.3 In order to ensure adequate, consistent review and evaluation, the project application shall be prepared in accordance with the format established by the City.
- 2.4.4 Project applications will be received and reviewed at regular application periods identified by program administration until funds are depleted or the program has ended.
- 2.4.5 After the project is reviewed by the Project Review Committee and before an applicant may enter into a Reimbursement Agreement with the City, the Storefront Improvement Program Manager will conduct a Pre-Construction Inspection of the subject property to determine the pre-construction status of the building and to confirm that construction has not yet commenced.
- 2.4.6 To be eligible for reimbursement, no work, excluding design and engineering work, may be performed until a Reimbursement Agreement has been signed by all parties and fully executed by the City. Projects that have commenced prior to a fully executed Reimbursement Agreement being in place are not eligible for reimbursement.
- 2.4.7 Submitting an application does not commit the City to enter into a Reimbursement Agreement to pay any costs incurred in its preparation, to participate in subsequent negotiations or to enter into a Reimbursement Agreement for the project. Further, the acceptance of an application does not constitute an agreement by the City that any Reimbursement Agreement will actually be entered into by the City.
- 2.4.8 The City reserves the right to accept, reject or modify any application and render decisions in regards to complete applications as approvals, approvals with conditions and refusals.

2.5 COMMITTEE REVIEW

- 2.5.1 Complete applications are reviewed by the Project Review Committee.
- 2.5.2 The Project Review Committee meets as required to evaluate applications.

- 2.5.3 The Project Review Committee will recommend to the Deputy City Manager approval, approval with conditions, or refusal regarding the decision to enter into Reimbursement Agreements regarding any applications reviewed by the Committee.
- 2.5.4 The City's decision to approve an application involves reviewing the applications and allocating funding (according to the Policy) based on alignment with the program guide, project eligibility, eligibility of proposed improvements and the availability of program funding. Maximum grant amounts are not guaranteed, and lesser amounts may be allocated at the discretion of the City.
- 2.5.5 A recommendation from the Project Review Committee for approval does not commit the City to enter into an agreement to pay any costs incurred in its preparation, to participate in subsequent negotiations or to enter into a Reimbursement Agreement for the project. Further, approval of an application does not constitute an agreement by the City that any contract will actually be entered into by the City.
- 2.5.6 All decisions made by the City regarding whether to approve or reject an application are final. No appeal lies from the decision of the City.

2.6 CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

- 2.6.1 Applicants are required to enter into a Reimbursement Agreement with the City of Edmonton which specifies work to be completed, the costs of the project, the maximum amount of the grant and the conditions under which the City will provide a reimbursement.
- 2.6.2 All work must comply with City, Provincial and Federal regulations. The applicant is responsible for securing all required permits from the City of Edmonton and must present all Permit Service Reports prior to disbursement of program funds.
- 2.6.3 All contractors must hold a valid business license issued by the City of Edmonton. All construction contracts will be between the applicant and the contractor.
- 2.6.4 All projects assisted by this program must be completed, with relevant documentation submitted, in a timely manner. The Reimbursement Agreement will allow a maximum of 12 months for completion. If it can be demonstrated that circumstances clearly beyond the applicant's control prohibit the completion of construction and submission of all relevant documentation within 12 months, the City may, in its sole and unfettered discretion, grant up to a maximum of two 6-month extensions a one-time 6 month extension. A second 6 month extension may be granted if these circumstances prohibiting the completion of construction and submission of all relevant documentation are also impacted by COVID-19. Failure to complete the project in a timely manner will result in the termination of the Reimbursement Agreement at the discretion of the City.

2.7 REIMBURSEMENT OF PROJECT COSTS

- 2.7.1 Reimbursement for architectural and/or engineering fees may not exceed 20% of eligible costs.
- 2.7.2 Reimbursement for project management and administration costs may not exceed 10% of eligible costs.
- 2.7.3 At the time a reimbursement request is made, no individual or entity will be eligible for reimbursement under the Storefront Improvement Program if the individual or entity is in default of taxes owing or an obligation funded by any other municipal program. Demonstration of good standing must be provided.
- 2.7.4 The applicant is responsible for payment of all contractors. The City will not pay the contractors directly.

2.7.5 The Storefront Improvement Program grant is paid only when: all construction work associated with the project is completed and formal permit reports have been issued by the City; the work conforms to changes/improvements as outlined in the executed Reimbursement Agreement; the applicant provides a current tax notice showing all municipal property taxes are paid; and all invoices, proof of payments and cost summaries have been submitted and reviewed/approved by the City.

2.8 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Program funding, dispersal period and conditions of dispersal.

2.8.1 For a period of 5 years after reimbursement, the Storefront and/or Facade must be cleaned and maintained in accordance with the standard of care applicable to owners of valuable real estate in a large city.

2.8.2 The Deputy City Manager of the appropriate department or that person's designate may make minor exceptions to program procedures.

2.8.3 The Deputy City Manager has the sole authority to determine eligibility of proposed work and confirmation of completed work. Certain work may be required as a condition of funding.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 DEPUTY CITY MANAGER:

- a. Oversees the Storefront Improvement Program, including program evaluation and funding,
- b. Makes the final decision regarding approval or refusal of applications to the Storefront Improvement Program based on recommendations provided by the Project Review Committee;
- c. Varies Program Procedures from time to time, as required;
- d. Approves detailed application requirements and the Storefront Improvement Program Guide; and
- e. Delegates authority as required in regards to program implementation.

3.2 PROJECT REVIEW COMMITTEE:

- a. Evaluates applications and recommends approval, approval with conditions, or refusal to the Deputy City Manager or that person's delegate;
- b. Is governed by a Terms of Reference that is approved by the Deputy City Manager or that person's delegate; and
- c. Is chaired by the Storefront Improvement Program Manager.

3.3 PROGRAM MANAGER:

- a. Administers the Storefront Improvement Program, including program evaluation and monitoring, managing program funding, communication with applicants, site inspections, coordinating administrative review of applications, recommending Project Review Committee members, chairing the Project Review Committee, and other duties as required;
- b. Proposes amendments and recommends variances to the Program Guide from time to time, as required;
- c. Prepares recommendations and any proposed changes for the Deputy City Manager regarding the application requirements and Guide for the Storefront Improvement Program, as required.