

POLICY MANUAL



TITLE:	Façade Improvement Grant Program
DATE:	May 4, 2020
AUTHORITY:	Council
DEPARTMENT:	Administration

Policy Title: Façade Improvement Grant Program

Section 1 Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 The Façade Improvement Grant Program seeks to stimulate private sector investment for the revitalization of existing commercial and mixed-use buildings in Fox Creek’s Downtown Revitalization Area.

Section 2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Downtown Fox Creek is of strategic importance to the Town, as identified by both the Municipal Development Plan (2016) and Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (2016). The main focus of this program is on improvements to the building streetscape but also encourage structural and weather/water proofing repairs that may be required to maintain overall building integrity. Improvement of original building features including windows is strongly encouraged.

Benefits of the program include increased business exposure, more attractive streetscape, more inviting places to walk and shop, better first impressions for businesses, enhanced property values, and improved marketability of the local business area.

The Town grant is intended to apply to construction costs to improve (and/or restore) the visual appearance and integrity of the building fabric or exterior façade(s). Funding may cover signage and landscaping costs at the discretion of the Town.

Section 3 Definitions

- 3.1 **Application Requirements** - means the information required to render an application complete and a candidate for a possible Program Grant according to the terms and processes of this and other Policies.
- 3.2 **Building Façade** - means the physical exterior portion of a Retail and/or Commercial Building that is abutting an adjacent public road right-of-way (excluding a lane), typically rises one to three storeys, and features a functional and aesthetic orientation toward the street and pedestrian environment. Additional details describing the building façade

are set out in the Façade Improvement Design Guidelines or other relevant guidelines established for the Revitalization Area.

- 3.3 **Certificate of Completion** - means a document signed by an architect or engineer professionally certified in the Province of Alberta or by a licensed building contractor indicating the completion of construction.
- 3.4 **Commercial Buildings** – means Commercial buildings located in the Downtown Revitalization Area which:
 - a) Are zoned for commercial use at ground level;
 - b) Have direct street level exposure including a continuous street edge on less than two block faces; and
 - c) Feature an existing or potential functional orientation toward the street and pedestrian environment.
- 3.5 **Downtown Revitalization Area** – means the area identified on Schedule A, an area designated by Council upon recommendation of the Chief Administrative Officer to which the Façade Improvement Grant Program Policy apply.
- 3.6 **Façade Improvements** - means structural or non-structural renovations carried out on:
 - a) The exterior façade of an existing retail or commercial building to enhance existing building aesthetics and functionality with regard for the interface between public pedestrian space and street oriented Commercial activities; and
 - b) Improvements to the storefront which improve the functionality of the interface between public pedestrian space and street oriented Commercial activities. Storefront improvements may include limited permanent interior improvements which improve the view of the retail space from the street and have regard for the functionality of the retail space to the pedestrian environment.
- 3.7 **Façade Improvement Design Guidelines** – means the guidelines approved by the Chief Administrative Officer which are used by the Town to promote the intended effect of the Façade Improvement Grant Program Policy. The guidelines are physically separate from this document, reference the type of permitted improvements for which a Façade Improvement Grant may be provided, provide design principles for consideration by applicants, are used to assess applicants received under these procedures, and determine the basis for a Reimbursement Agreement and a Façade Improvement Grant. These Guidelines may be amended from time to time upon the direction of the Chief Administrative Officer or his/her delegate.
- 3.8 **Façade Improvement Grant** – means the financial assistance available under this program for reimbursement of up to 50% to a maximum of \$10,000 per Building Façade for the cost of eligible Façade and Storefront Improvements as specified in a Reimbursement Agreement.
- 3.9 **Pre-Construction Inspection** – means the inspection by the Town of Fox Creek prior to the onset of construction activities to renovate the exterior Building Façade and/or

Storefront of Commercial buildings pursuant to an application filed under these procedures.

- 3.10 **Post Construction Inspection** – means the inspection by the Town of Fox Creek following completion of construction activities intended to:
- a) Determine an applicant’s qualification to receive a façade improvement grant; and
 - b) Evaluate the completed façade improvements against the reimbursement agreement and approved application to the program.
- 3.11 **Reimbursement Agreement** – means the contract between Town of Fox Creek and the building owner, which sets out project characteristics and the improvements for which the applicant may seek reimbursement in the form of a Façade Improvement Grant upon successful project completion.
- 3.12 **Storefront** – means the lower portion of a Building Façade that is the focus of activity, often the area contained within the first storey and articulated with various architectural details, that provides visual interest and physical access to the business located within and the area in which the individuality and identity of a business is expressed.

Section 4 Area of Application and Effective Date

- 4.1 These procedures apply to Façade Improvement projects undertaken on existing Commercial Buildings located only within the Downtown Revitalization Area subject to recommendation from the Town Administration and any conditions of these procedures.
- 4.2 Once approved, and a budget approved, these procedures are applicable to the Downtown Revitalization Area based on annual renewal by Council or for such time as otherwise prescribed.

Section 5 Eligibility

- 5.1 The applicant must meet the following minimum requirements to be eligible to apply for a Façade Improvement Grant under these procedures:
- a) The applicant must be the building owner(s) or their designate;
 - b) The proposed project must involve existing buildings used for primarily retail or commercial purpose, located within the boundaries of the Downtown Revitalization area. Some limited discretion may be exercised in extending program eligibility to institutional and non – profit projects or non-commercial uses adjacent to commercial activity with a street level function and aesthetic which are consistent with the intent and effect of these procedures;
 - c) The proposed project must be referenced to a building defined by a separate land title, physical construction and ownership;
 - d) The amount of Town funding potentially available for the project must not exceed 50% of eligible costs approved by the Council in the Reimbursement Agreement. No building may receive more than \$10,000 in project grants;
 - e) Reimbursement for architectural fees may not exceed 20% of eligible costs of \$2,000 (20% of Maximum Grant Amount) per façade, whichever is less;

- f) The proposed project must involve eligible Façade and Storefront Improvements and have regard, as specified in the Policy and the associated processes, for any Façade Improvement Design Guidelines approved by the Chief Administrative Officer for implementation of these procedures and/or application;
- g) The applicant must meet additional Application Requirements as specified; and
- h) Funds allocated are subject to the conditions of the Façade Improvement Grant Program Policy and these procedures which include both a designation of a maximum eligible amount per building upon the nature and scope of the project and a review of proposed improvement for eligible reimbursement.

Section 6 Application Requirements

6.1 Applications submitted under the Facade Improvement Grant Program Policy and these procedures must include the following components:

- a) Application form;
- b) Detailed explanation, written and graphic, of the improvements to be made;
- c) Photographs of the current state of the building and renderings of the expected result;
- d) Statement indicating how the project reflects the principles of the Façade Improvement Design Guidelines approved by the Chief Administrative Officer for implementation of these procedures and/or application to the Downtown Revitalization Area;
- e) Explanation of the elements for which the applicant is seeking reimbursement;
- f) A cost summary listing the itemized breakdown of the improvements and the correspondence specific costs, the selected vendor(s)/contractor(s), and the Town of Fox Creek business license number of the contactors(s);
- g) Current Land Title Certificate and Corporate Registry Search if the property owner is a company;
- h) A minimum of two contractor bids or quotes for all work proposed for the project;
- i) Program participants are required to comply with all Town of Fox Creek regulations including any relevant policy or statutory plans which apply to the Downtown Revitalization Area, the Town of Fox Creek Land Use Bylaw and other relevant Bylaws; and
- j) An approved Development Permit and/or approved Building Permit and/or Sign Permit.

6.2 Additional Information

6.2.1 The Facade Improvement Grant Program is only available to owners of existing Commercial buildings located in Downtown Revitalization Area.

6.2.2 Reimbursement is limited to labor and material for eligible cost items only. However, the Town 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:

- I. Property must be in compliance with all Bylaws;

II. Graffiti on all exterior surfaces covered, removed or painted over.

6.2.3 To be eligible for reimbursement, no work must be performed until a Reimbursement Agreement has been fully executed by the Town. Work that has commenced prior to a fully executed Reimbursement Agreement being in place is not eligible for reimbursement.

6.2.5 Upon receipt of the application by the Town of Fox Creek, the applicant will be required to schedule a Pre-Construction Inspection of the subject property to determine the Pre-Construction Inspection status of the Building Façade and specifically the areas to be improved.

Section 7 Application Process

7.1 Prior to filing an application the applicant shall review the Application Requirements and consult with the Development Department regarding the application process, requirements, criteria and rules of eligibility.

7.2 In order to ensure adequate, consistent review and evaluation, the project proposal shall be prepared in accordance with the format established by administration.

7.3 Project application will be received/reviewed, and reimbursement issued on a first come-first served basis until funds are depleted or the project term has ended.

7.4 Completed applications shall be submitted to the Chief Administrative Officer.

7.5 The Town reserves the right to accept, reject or modify any application and render decisions in regard to complete applications as approvals, approvals with conditions, and refusals.

Section 8 Construction Process

8.1 All projects assisted by this Program must be completed in a timely manner. The contract will allow a maximum of 12 months for completion. If it can be demonstrated that circumstances clearly beyond the applicant's control prohibit completion in 12 months, the Town may grant a one-time 6-month extension. Failure to complete the contract in a timely manner will result in a termination of the contract at the discretion of the Town.

8.2 The applicant will be responsible for securing all required construction permits from the Town of Fox Creek and must present all Certificates of Approval and an Occupancy Certificate, where required, prior to disbursement of program funds for work upon which a permit was required.

8.3 All contractors must hold a valid business license issued by the Town of Fox Creek. All construction contracts will be between the applicant and the contractor.

- 8.4 Final determination of qualification for a Façade Improvement Grant is not made until the construction is substantially complete and a review has been undertaken assessing the project improvements against the approved application to the Program.
- 8.5 Applicants are required to enter into a Reimbursement Agreement with the Town of Fox Creek which specifies work to be completed, the costs of the project and the amount and conditions under which the Town will provide a reimbursement. Detailed requirements of the Reimbursement Agreement are stipulated therein and include such variables as the general upkeep and maintenance of improvements including the functionality of any structural improvements particularly those relating to accessibility, permeability and visual interest such as doors and display windows.

Section 9 Reimbursement of Project Costs

- 9.1 Maximum assistance allowed under the Façade Improvement Grant Program is 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$10,000 per Building Façade.
- 9.2 At the time a reimbursement request is made, no individual or business will be eligible for reimbursement under the Façade Improvement Grant Program if such entity is in default of taxes owing or an obligation funded by any other municipal program. Demonstration of good standing must be provided.
- 9.3 Town funds will be disbursed in conjunction with the private match funds and only for work as specified in the contract which has been satisfactorily completed. At no time will the Town pay more than 50% of the eligible costs or the maximum grant per building.
- 9.4 The applicant is responsible for payment of all contractors. The Town will not pay the contractors directly.
- 9.5 Program funds are to be directed only towards approved improvements to a building façade according to the terms of the Reimbursement Agreement.
- 9.6 The matching grant is paid only upon completion of pre-approved applicant paid work.

Section 10 Special Considerations

- 10.1 The Chief Administrative Officer has the sole authority to determine eligibility of proposed work and confirmation of completed work. Certain work may be required or precluded as a condition of funding.
- 10.2 Participants will be responsible for obtaining necessary approvals including but not limited to Town of Fox Creek Development and Building Permits. All work must comply with Town, Provincial and Federal regulations.

- 10.3 Submitting an application does not commit the Town to enter into an agreement to pay any costs incurred in its preparation, to participate in subsequent negotiation or to enter into a contract for the project. Further, the acceptance of an application does not constitute an agreement by the Town that any contract will actually be entered into by the Town.

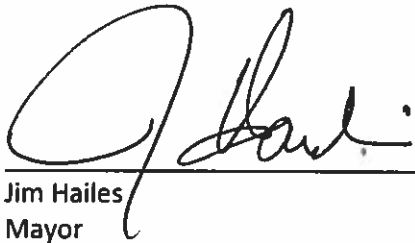
Section 11 Municipal Control

- 11.1 The Town of Fox Creek shall be protected in the delivery of a Façade Improvement Grant contributing to the Program projects because:
- a) The Town Council can close the program to new applications at any time;
 - b) Any delivery of Program Funding is found by the terms of a Reimbursement Agreement;
 - c) Submitting an application does not commit the Town to enter into an agreement to pay any costs incurred in its preparation, to participate in subsequent negotiations or to contract for the project. Further, the acceptance of an application does not constitute an agreement by the Town that any contract will actually be entered into by the Town;
 - d) The program period during which applicants may qualify for Program Funding is limited by Town Council; and
 - e) The total amount of program funding is limited to \$10,000 per Building Façade.

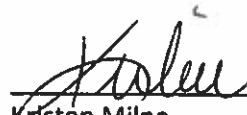
Section 12 Responsibilities

- 12.1 Council:
- a) Approves changes to the Façade Improvement Grant Program Policy;
 - b) Approves program funding for implementation of the Façade Improvement Programs;
 - c) Evaluates the program upon completion.
 - d) Carries out the evaluation of applications, approves and refuses projects, and establishes implementation of the program.
- 12.2 Chief Administrative Officer (CAO):
- a) Recommends changes to the Façade Improvement Grant Program Policy to Council;
 - b) Recommends a program funding source to the Council;
 - c) Evaluates the program upon completion and makes appropriate recommendations to Council;
- 12.3 The Development Department:
- a) Recommends changes to the Façade Improvement Grant Program Policy to CAO;
 - b) Recommends a program funding source in consultation with the Director of Corporate Services to the CAO;
 - c) Provides an administrative evaluation of the program upon its completion;
 - d) Establishes detailed application requirements and the Guidelines for Façade and Storefront;

- e) Delegates authority as required to the Development Officer in regards to program implementation.
- f) Evaluates the program annually, and provides a report to the Chief Administrative Officer regarding its performance and makes the appropriate recommendations regarding its ongoing implementation.
- g) Coordinates the administrative review of applications throughout the period between submission of the application and project completion.
- h) Evaluates applications for their completeness.
- i) Conducts pre-construction inspections and post-construction inspections.



Jim Hailes
Mayor



Kristen Milne
Chief Administrative Officer