

Targeted to Neighbourhood Commercial Areas

The Exterior Corner Store Light Grant is targeted towards Neighbourhood Commercial Areas which are defined as an area of commercial development, within a residential neighbourhood, intended to meet the commercial needs of local residents. These areas can contain up to 10 commercial buildings that contain commercial uses on the ground floor and may contain residential, commercial, or professional uses on the upper floors. For the purposes of the Corner Store Program Policy, Neighbourhood Commercial Areas may be:

- one commercial property containing a low rise building with at least three commercial retail units at ground level, on a property of no more than 1 hectare in area (Small Commercial Centre);
- 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.

may not be part of a Business Improvement Area, a commercial corridor generally longer than one full blockface, or a commercial centre larger than one hectare.

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The Exterior Corner Store Light Grant

- A reimbursement grant of up to 50% of eligible construction costs for exterior and/or interior improvements to active storefronts or ground floor underutilized or vacant commercial interiors to a maximum amount of \$15,000

A titled lot can only receive this grant once. Common areas such as foyers or hallways are not eligible unless they are improved along with a commercial unit and are part of the same titled lot.

*See the **Interior Corner Store Light Grant Program Guide** and Application for information on accessing the interior portion of this grant.

Eligibility

To apply to the Storefront Improvement 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
- Construction work has not started
- Project includes at least one critical improvement (see below for critical improvements)
- Building will have clear, unobstructed street-level windows once construction is complete and for the 5 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
 - ❑ No security bars or rolling shutters are permitted over windows or doors once construction is complete and for the 5 year maintenance period. Encourage the use of shatterproof clear glass or security films on windows instead.

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

Eligible Costs

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

- 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
- Installing new permanent patios or other active streetfront 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 license. 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

Ineligible costs include, but not limited to:

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

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Some improvements are **not permitted** by the Corner Store Program. If your building has any of these elements or that are included in your proposed design, they must be addressed through the project in order to be 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 Process



Apply to the program

The property owner or someone approved by the property owner to act on their behalf may apply for the Exterior Corner Store 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 plan for a successful project.
2. Complete an application package and submit it to the Program Manager during an application period:
 - Application form
 - Conceptual drawings
 - Building elevations showing design and materials
 - A site plan that clearly shows the property line

Application review

Completed applications received during an application period 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 3 to 4 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

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

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 license number of the general contractor, or subcontractors if there is no general contractor
- An overall budget summary of the project
- 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 during the next

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application period provided no construction has begun and with the understanding that funding is not guaranteed.

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.

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 issued.

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 license 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 3 to 6 weeks to issue a reimbursement cheque.

Maintenance

All renovations supported by the Exterior Corner Store Grant must be maintained for 5 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 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/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,
- 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 Business Improvement Area,
- Improved signage for the tenants,
- Adding adaptable signage infrastructure should businesses change,
- Improving the useability of the building by adding entrances or adding/widening 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, and/or
- 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/repairing awnings/canopies, and/or
- Use 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:

- Ramps in front of doorways,
- Handrails,
- Large address numbers,
- adding automated doors, and/or
- 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, and/or

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, and/or
- Curb cuts or other improvements to support universal accessibility.

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 Storefront Improvement 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 Business Improvement Area?

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.

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 Storefront Improvement 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.

Contact the Corner Store Light Program

- Phone: (780) 442-7148
- Email: cornerstore@edmonton.ca
- Website: edmonton.ca/cornerstore