



REQUEST FOR DECISION

File # 1855-03, 0360-20

Report To: Mayor and Council
From: Director of Planning and Engineering
Presenter: Stephanie Peters
Subject: Administration Report No. 0124/23
Northern Development Initiative Trust - 2024 Business Façade
Improvement Grant
Meeting: Regular Council
Meeting Date: 11 Dec 2023

RECOMMENDATION:

"THAT, Council supports the Mayor's Standing Committee on Community Economic Recovery's application for a grant of up to \$20,000 for the 2024 Downtown Façade Program through the Northern Development Initiative Trust,

AND FURTHER THAT, Council approves an additional \$20,000 in matching funds provided by the Mayor's Standing Committee on Community Economic Recovery's Account."

CAO'S COMMENTS:

NDIT's Façade Improvement Grant is a valuable resource for communities that supports small changes which make big differences to businesses throughout Northern BC.

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATION:"THAT, Council received Administration Report 0124/23 - Northern Development Initiative Trust - 2024 Business Façade Improvement Grant for information."

KEY ISSUES(S)/ CONCEPTS DEFINED:

Northern Development Initiative Trust provides flow through grants to local governments to support economic development by encouraging private sector investment in business façade improvements.

These funds will be used to advance the Downtown Action Plan and façade improvements will adhere to the provisions of the Downtown Development Permit Area.

This report is to obtain the Council's approval to apply for the Northern Development Initiative Trust Façade Business Improvement grant.

RELEVANT POLICY:

Downtown Action Plan

Official Community Plan 2388, 2017

Zoning Bylaw 2470, 2019

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION

COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC PILLARS:

Vibrant Community – Invest in community safety, social, cultural, and recreational programs.

Relationships & Advocacy – Initiate and foster relationships and advocate to decision makers on the issues that impact our community and our neighbours.

Economic Development – Enhance community economic development to provide opportunities and sustainability for Fort St. John.

COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: City beautification, Downtown Action Plan, Economic Development Strategy

GENERAL:

2023 Update

The 2023 Façade Program received 14 pre-online applications and approved 7 businesses to complete the Façade projects. The deadline for project completion is December 31, 2023, and 3 business have

submitted their reporting information. The completed businesses include Thelma and Marcella's, Salvation Army and Merwin Optical. **We look forward to a few more businesses completing the project requirements by the end of the month.**

2024 Program

The Northern Development Initiative Trust's Business Façade Improvement Program provides annual grant funding for local governments to enhance economic development by encouraging private sector investment in business façade improvements. The City of Fort St. John's Economic Development staff will manage the program with support from the Mayor's Standing Committee on Economic Recovery to assist local businesses with renovating, signage, and improving the aesthetics of commercial and building areas.

Funding Terms

Up to \$20,000 in grant funding (50% to a maximum of \$5,000 per façade improvement project).

An additional \$20,000 in matching funds will be provided from the Mayor's Standing Committee on Community Economic Recovery.

New for 2024 - The City of Fort St. John has expanded the grant funding area for the following small and medium-sized businesses: C2, C3 and C4, located in the Downtown Permit Area, General Commercial Development Permit Area and Major Corridor Development Permit Area.

Criteria:

- | **Each building is eligible for a one-time grant up to a maximum of \$5,000**
- | **Buildings located on a corner are eligible for up to a maximum total of \$10,000**
- | **Projects must have a minimum total cost of \$1,000**
- | **The application deadline is April 30, 2024**
- | **Approved projects to be completed by December 31, 2024**

The Project Review Committee will consist of 2-3 members from the Mayor's Standing Committee and 2 City staff members.

The application process will launch on the City of Fort St. John website March 4, 2024

ORGANIZATIONAL: This program will be managed through the Economic Development Department .

FINANCIAL: The funds for the Mayor Standing Committee are taken from the business licence revenue.

FOLLOW UP ACTION: Staff will follow up with NDIT and proceed with the implementation of the program once Council approval is received.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION:

COMMUNICATION: A communications plan, marketing and online application will be developed prior to the launch of the program.

DEPARTMENTS CONSULTED ON THIS REPORT:

Economic Development Department

Planning and Engineering

Attachments:

Facade-Grant-Guidelines2024

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Stephanie Peters, Economic Development Coordinator

03 Nov 2023



Investing in our Downtown

Business Façade Improvement Program

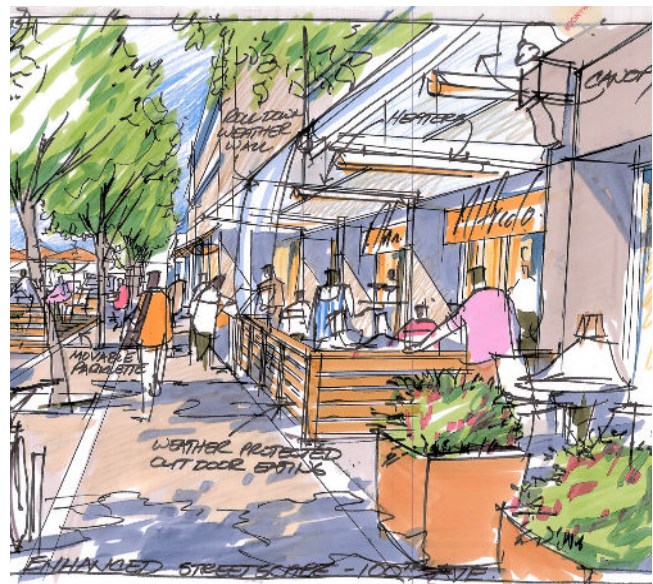
The City of Fort St. John Business Façade Improvement Program is funded through the Northern Development Initiative Trust. This program will run through the City of Fort St. John with support from the Mayor’s Standing Committee on Community Economic Recovery, to assist local businesses with renovating, signage, and improving aesthetics of commercial and building areas.

- The City of Fort St. John will provide a one time 50% reimbursement grant of up to \$5,000 maximum per commercial building and up to \$10,000 maximum per commercial building located on a corner. *Additional funding for corner properties is provided by the Mayor’s Standing Committee on Community Economic Recovery.*
- Projects must have a minimum total cost of \$1000

Application Deadline April 30, 2024

The program is intended to:

- Boost the economic viability and vibrancy of the downtown by supporting visual improvements such as façades, signage, murals, architectural features, siding, lighting and awnings
- Stimulate private sector investment in local business improvements
- Enhance the quality of life for citizens, workers and visitors to the community
- Increase the attractiveness of the community to enhance community pride and visitor experience
- Improve community appearance to support recruitment of new businesses and residents



✓ Eligible Applicants

- You must be either the property owner or business owner (if the applicant is the business owner, the property owner must approve the application in writing and confirm that all improvements are to be paid for by the applicant)
- The business must be located in the approved Development Permit Area (see page 3 for updated information)
- Property taxes pertaining to the property must be fully paid and current
- You must have current, valid, business licenses for the property (unless otherwise exempt)
- There must be no outstanding building permits, stop work orders, or development permit requirement outstanding
- The subject property must not have received a previous grant under this program

✓ Eligible Façade Improvements

Eligible improvements may consist of but are not limited to:

- Exterior lighting (new, not replacement)
- Exterior architectural features
- Exterior surfaces and details (decorative details, moldings, trims etc.)
- Windows (only if part of larger enhancements, no stand-alone window replacement)
- New siding
- Façade painting
- Entrances and doorways (only if part of larger enhancements, no stand-alone entrance doorway replacement)
- Awnings and canopies
- Signage (affixed to the building)
- Accessibility improvements (ramps, wider doors etc.) to the outside of the building only, and are part of a larger façade improvement project

✗ Ineligible Applicants

- Residential homes located in the Downtown Development Permit Area
- Apartment buildings
- Government owned buildings (municipal, provincial or federal; even if they have business tenants)
- Properties outside the specified area (as defined in Eligible Properties)
- Empty buildings or businesses that are not operating (exception if the business is renovating or doing improvements to the building in anticipation of re-opening)
- New construction. Must be an older building needing new façade

✗ Ineligible Façade Improvements

The following improvements are ineligible:

- Routine maintenance
- Structural repairs
- Roofs
- Non-permanent fixtures (benches, planters, patios, patio heaters etc.)
- Landscaping
- Paving
- Fencing
- Interior/internal improvements
- Any improvements not visible from the public right of way
- Construction of additions, accessory buildings or new buildings
- Any improvements that have been started prior to application approval
- Any improvements deemed inconsistent with redevelopment purposes and design guidelines

✓ Eligible Costs / Expenses

- Direct project labour costs
- Design, architectural or engineering fees (related to façade only)
- Contractor fees
- Rental of tools and equipment
- Project related material and supplies
- Shipping and/or freight
- PST

✗ Ineligible Costs / Expenses

- Staff wages and/or benefits
- Purchase of construction tools or equipment
- Operational cost including utilities (Hydro, gas etc.)
- Duties
- Permit fees
- Expenses related to improvement of the building façade, not visible from the public right of way
- Façade improvement expenses started prior to application approval
- GST

✓ Eligible Properties

NEW FOR 2024! The City of Fort St. John has expanded the grant funding area for the following small and medium size business C2, C3 and C4 located in Downtown Permit Area, General Commercial Development Permit Area and Major Corridor Development Permit Area. Eligible Properties are visible on our [Development Permit Area Map](#).

✓ Downtown Permit Area (noted as orange on the Area Map)

The Downtown Development Permit Area is located around 100th Street and 100th Avenue. This area has recently seen the completion of a Downtown Action Plan, which strives to revitalize and bring a new sense of purpose and place to downtown Fort St. John. It is envisioned that the area will be redeveloped with a range of single and multiplefamily housing, small-scale commercial and community facilities such as public plazas and spaces in an area that encourages a pedestrian-friendly and walkable environment.

✓ General Commercial Development Permit Area (noted as red on the Area Map)

The General Commercial Development Permit Area is primarily located just off the Alaska Highway, although some parcels within this development permit area are found along 100th Avenue, around 100th Street and 105th Avenue and north of 100th Street and 114A Avenue. This development permit area is intended to ensure that commercial development within Fort St. John is undertaken to a high-quality, visually appealing standard that encourages local shopping and provides for a safe, accessible and attractive environment for residents and visitors.

✓ Major Corridor Development Permit Area (noted as purple on the Area Map)

The Major Corridor Development Permit areas are quite visible from the Alaska Highway and its frontage roads and other major corridors into Fort St. John, such as 100th Avenue and 100th Street. These areas often form the first impression of Fort St. John for tourists, as well as a continuing impression for citizens who regularly drive along these routes. This Development Permit Area is important for the tourism and highway commercial business in Fort St. John and encompasses properties that front major corridors in the City.

Unsure if your business is within the qualifying area?

We can help:

City of Fort St. John Economic Development

250 787 8150

economicdevelopment@fortstjohn.ca

Design Guidelines

In order to be eligible for this grant, the applicant must submit designs and costing for the project.

Designs need to be clearly outlined and show an example of final design to allow the review committee time to accurately evaluate the project.

The Business Façade Improvement application and guidelines can be found on the City of Fort St. John website located on the [Economic Development page](#).

Application Process

Applying does not mean your project or a specific grant amount will be approved. All project proposals are subject to a comprehensive review, must meet high quality standards, and must reflect the spirit and intent of the Business Façade Improvement Program Guidelines. Project proposals should align with the design guidelines of the Development Permit Area (Zoning Bylaw No. 2470, 2019).

1. Owner/Tenant fills out the online [application](#) on the City website for pre-approval.
2. Committee reviews the application and proposed façade improvements to ensure that improvements meet the applicable Development Permit Area and Business Façade Improvement Program Guidelines.
3. Applications are reviewed by the committee to accept or reject the application.
4. Successful applications will receive a Letter of Understanding which must be signed by the owner and/or tenant and a representative of the municipality.
5. Owner/Tenant acquires any required permits and completes the renovations.

Evaluation / Selection Process

The Project Review Committee will consist of two members from the Mayor Standing Committee and two City staff.

All Eligible Projects will be evaluated using the following ranked criteria:

- Does the project for which the funds are being sought meet the applicable design guidelines?
- Will the project, once complete, have a noticeable impact on the streetscape?
- Was a professional designer or architect used?

Additional Resources

1. [Downtown Action Plan](#)
2. [Zoning Bylaw](#)
3. [100 Street Corridor Plan](#)
4. [Official Community Plan](#)

6. Owner/Tenant provides:

- Verification of expenses (including invoices or other confirmations of payment) and submits their totals on the provided expense tracking sheet.
- Proof that your contractor(s) have been paid in full.
- Proof that the improvements have passed final inspection for municipal permits (where required) and meet all building standards and codes (where required).
- Before and after photos of the project.
- Any other supporting documentation.

7. Staff verify that the renovations meet the Letter of Understanding requirements and approve reimbursement.

8. Applicant is issued a cheque.

**Approved projects are to be completed by
Year End - December 31, 2024**

Contact Information

City of Fort St. John
Economic Development

10631 100 Street
Fort St. John, BC, V1J 3Z5

250 787 8150
economicdevelopment@fortstjohn.ca

Online application form
fortstjohn.ca/facade-grant