



# Storefront Improvement Program

## Introduction

The City of Fairbanks is pleased to announce the expansion of the Storefront Improvement Program (SIP). The SIP is aimed at revitalizing and enhancing the downtown area between 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue to 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Cowles Street to Noble Street. This program is designed to support business owners in improving the exterior appearance of their buildings, thereby contributing to the overall aesthetic appeal and economic vibrancy of the downtown area.

## Program Objectives

- Enhance the visual appeal of downtown Fairbanks
- Encourage private investment in the beautification of commercial properties
- Preserve and celebrate the historic character of the area
- Increase foot traffic and support local businesses
- Foster a sense of community and pride among residents and business owners

## Program Area

The program area is from 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue to 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Cowles Street to Noble Street.



Figure 1: Program Area

## **Eligibility Criteria**

- Buildings proposed for façade improvements must have commercial activity as their primary purpose such as retail and specialty stores, services, restaurants, bars, cultural venues, professional offices, manufacturing business/industrial use.
- Buildings used by non-profit organizations for non-commercial public use may be eligible if the project is determined to add to the economic revitalization of downtown.
- Vacant buildings may be eligible, but applicants must have a clear plan to reactivate the site.
- Applicants must be property owners or tenants with written consent from property owners.
- Properties must be located within the designated program area.
- Eligible projects include exterior improvements such as painting, signage, lighting, awnings, windows, and door replacements.
- Projects must comply with local building / landscaping codes and any applicable historic preservation guidelines.
- Applicants must be current on property taxes, appropriate business licenses, and sales tax if applicable.

## **Ineligible Projects**

- Predominately interior renovations unless the storefront is inside a larger building.
- Roof replacements, unless creating rooftop dining or similar activities.
- Art featuring explicit or vulgar content.
- Government offices and agencies (non-governmental tenants are eligible).

## **Application Process**

- Complete the Storefront Improvement Program Application Form available at: [www.fairbanks.gov](http://www.fairbanks.gov)
- Submit a project proposal including concept plans, color schemes, and materials.
- Provide a budget breakdown and timeline for project completion.
- Applications will be reviewed by the Storefront Improvement Program Committee.
- Approved projects will receive grant funding on a reimbursement basis upon project completion and inspection.
- Applicants must obtain all required permits prior to beginning work.

## **Evaluation Criteria**

- Amount of improvement to the area.
- Anticipated positive economic impact.
- The type and level of attraction the site will draw from locals and guests.
- Project's amount of aesthetic transformation.
- Prominence of the location.
- The long-term durability and sustainability of the project.
- Any contribution to public safety derived from the project.
- Alignment with Downtown 2040 plan.
- Collaboration with other downtown activities.
- Year around vitality of enhancement

## **Funding and Reimbursement**

- The grant program will reimburse up to \$50,000 per project.
- Requests must have a minimum of a dollar-for-dollar match.
- Reimbursement will be provided upon submission of paid invoices and successful completion of a final inspection by City officials.
- Projects must be completed within 12 months of signing the grant agreement. A single six-month extension may be awarded on a case-by-case basis.
- Applicants may only have one project at a time.

## **Design Guidelines**

- Projects should enhance the appeal and historic character of the building.
- Use of high-quality, durable materials is encouraged.
- Signage should be attractive, appropriately scaled, and comply with local ordinances.
- Lighting should be energy-efficient and enhance the building's façade without causing glare or light pollution.

## **Reporting and Accountability**

- Grantees must submit a final report including before and after photographs of the project.
- Receipts and proof of payment for all grant funded expenses must be provided.
- The City reserves the right to inspect the project at any time during and after completion.

**General Contractor Requirement:**

- A licensed general contractor must be utilized for all projects costing over \$10,000.

**Partnering Organizations**

- Downtown Association of Fairbanks
- Explore Fairbanks
- Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation Planning
- Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation
- Fairbanks North Star Borough
- Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce

**2026 Timeline**

- January 30, 2026 – Application process goes live
- April 1, 2026 – First round of applications due
- April 15, 2026 – First round awarded
- June 1, 2026 – Second round of applications due (funding dependent)
- July 1, 2026 – Second round awarded (funding dependent)

**Contact Information**

For more information or assistance with the application process, please contact:

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