



Storefront Improvement Program FAQ

The City of Fairbanks is offering funds to private businesses, what's the catch?

There isn't a catch. Communities all over the country, including Alaskan communities, have had identical programs for decades. These programs are shown to spur economic development, reduce crime, and generally make the community a better place to live.

How does the Explore Fairbanks Downtown Enhancement Fund fit into this?

The Explore Fairbanks Downtown Enhancement Fund is designed to complement the City of Fairbanks' Storefront Improvement Program by:

- Supporting smaller-scale or lower-cost projects that may not meet the City's match requirements.
- Providing supplemental funding to projects with exceptional alignment with tourism and visitor industry goals.
- Enhancing the visitor experience and aesthetic appeal of downtown Fairbanks, reinforcing its identity as a welcoming destination.

Are the Storefront Improvement Program and the Downtown Enhancement Fund separate grants?

Technically yes, but you can apply for both at the same time by selecting a box on the application.

Is this "just for tourism"?

While tourism is very important to the local economy and the Downtown Enhancement Fund encourages projects that enhance the visitors' experience, the overall goal is much bigger. Both of these grant programs are also designed to remind local community members that downtown has great shops, restaurants, bars, and activities.

Why is this program limited to downtown?

The best practice with these programs is to target specific areas. The program may expand or jump to other areas in the future.

My storefront is predominantly inside another building, may I still apply?

Yes. If your property has a storefront inside another building you may be eligible. For example, if the public facing property you are wanting to renovate is in the Co Op Plaza Downtown, your project may be eligible.

How can improving the aesthetics of an area spur economic development and reduce crime?

Economic development from this program is spurred in two primary ways. Initially, the private/public partnership will directly impact to the local economy through the increased construction activities. Then the freshly renovated storefronts will create a more welcoming environment for residents and guests to shop, dine, and visit downtown.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) shapes behaviors and the public tolerances for inappropriate behaviors for an area by showing that a “location is cared for and is inhospitable to crime.” (Downtown 2040, p.53) Increased foot traffic from law abiding citizens, will help detect and deter people who are considering criminal activities.

Why is there a match requirement for this grant?

Through decades of similar programs, it has been determined that the match requirement has yielded better overall projects with increased owner buy-in.

May I use an “in-kind” match?

Donated labor from a licensed contractor or donated materials may count toward the match requirement. This will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

I have a big project but can't front the entire costs at once. Is it possible to get reimbursed in phases?

Yes. When you apply, break your project into distinct phases. The 50% match will be applied per phase up to the total match max of \$50,000.

What is the timeline for this program?

- 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)

How long will I have to complete the project?

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.

I heard other organizations are championing this program. Who are the 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

If I am using this program, will I still need building permits?

Yes. You will need to comply with all permitting and inspection requirements.

Contact Information

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

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