

Port Alberni Revitalization

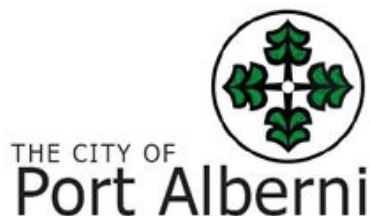


Business Façade Improvement Program 2020

**APPLICANT INFORMATION AND APPLICATION
APPLY BY MAY 22, 2020**



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A report in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Dollar & Sense series found that:

- Commercial building improvements resulted in an increase in sales in the year after the improvements were made,
- Sales improvements were sustained for several years,
- Sales increases exceeded increases in local taxes,
- The improvements attracted new businesses and shoppers to the target area,
- Participants were often motivated to make additional improvements (such as to interior spaces or product lines), and
- Owners/tenants of properties and businesses in surrounding areas were motivated to make improvements

Façade programs are popular in part because they provide immediate and substantial impact that is visible to the public. As effective as these programs are, the field is littered with façade programs that are poorly designed and therefore underused. The literature suggests that effective façade improvement programs include some or all of the following characteristics:

RESEARCH SUGGESTS:

- A formal purpose statement is needed.
- A well defined target area is required.
- Be sure you are providing at least a 50 - 75% match - the higher match is necessary in districts where business owners are struggling and may lack the capital necessary to meet their match requirements.
- Because most public programs are set up as reimbursements - it can sometimes be difficult to get facade money out the door. Property owners simply do not have the capital necessary to front the entire cost of the renovation and then wait to be reimbursed after the fact. In cases like this, patient capital is critical. A bridge loan or revolving loan program can help to address the lack of capital for property owners unable to front renovation costs. Non-profit lenders and community development intermediaries might be good partners in exploring these kinds of loan products.
- If there are significant reporting requirements that cannot be simplified, the match has to be significant enough to make the application and paperwork worth it. Otherwise, most business owners won't want to deal with the hassle. The amount considered significant will differ by community, but the literature suggests anything from \$25 – 50k is generally sufficient. And the smaller the individual grant, the easier they should be to use (read: minimal paperwork!)
- If there are vague or no design guidelines, the program should include pro-bono or low-bono design services. When improvements go unsupervised or lack some sort of quality review, it can be difficult to determine when and where façade improvement dollars were used, rendering the overall impact on the shopping district negligible.
- If funding is limited, consider micro-loan programs for signage only. For \$2,500 - \$5,000, you can fund attractive signs that make a significant difference to the overall look and feel of the district.
- Project Review Committees are sometimes a blended team made up of local government, an institution such as a college and a non profit community or economic development organization.
- Eligibility criteria, terms for participation, along with the application and selection process need to be clear.

PORT ALBERNI'S APPROACH:

- ⇒ The objective of this program is to make significant improvements to the appearance of our community streetscape, even if it is just one building at a time.
- ⇒ The Façade Improvement Area compliments the City of Port Alberni's Commercial Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaws areas.
- ⇒ A higher financial match will be provided to the businesses within the Façade Improvement Area fronting the main travel corridors of Upper 3rd Ave., Lower Argyle St. and Lower Johnston.
- ⇒ Community Futures Alberni Clayoquot has established a Façade Loan Program to support businesses making improvements through the Façade Improvement Program.
- ⇒ We have adopted a very simple process. Many communities in British Columbia have successfully processed applications with comprehensive yet simple procedures. We will not reinvent the process but rather copy a process used elsewhere and further simplify the process where possible.
- ⇒ Business facades and design services are provided by an accredited architectural firm.
- ⇒ 2020 funding will be utilized to maximize the visual Façade Improvement Program ROI. Applicants looking for support towards relatively small improvements may be considered closer to the end of the term if funding remains.
- ⇒ The financial partners in the Façade Improvement Program, will have representatives from the City of Port Alberni along with Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot as the committee.
- ⇒ This is demonstrated through the application which follows.

Port Alberni

Business Façade Improvement Program 2020

Purpose

The physical environment in which we live and work has a great effect on us. A community that is more appealing to the eye gives its citizens a greater sense of place and welcomes visitors, and for a city's commercial areas, one of the strongest determinants of the character and quality is its building frontages.

The City of Port Alberni in partnership with Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot are pleased to provide this program to give monetary assistance and design services as an incentive to building/business owners, to improve the character and physical appearance of their buildings. The program guidelines are intended to set a quality standard for the types of improvements, and act as a guide for application review by the Project Review Committee (PRC).

Project Review Committee

The PRC consists of 3 to 5 representatives from the City of Port Alberni and Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot.

The objective of this program is to make significant improvements to the appearance of our streetscapes, even if it is just one building at a time. Should the PRC deem that the proposed project does not have a positive impact on the streetscape the application may be denied.

Program

Each retail and commercial building within the City of Port Alberni is eligible to apply for the one time grant and each project must have a minimum total renovation cost of \$5,000 in order to apply.

The Business Façade Improvement Program (BFIP) will provide grant funding and design services to BFIP approved applicants.

Grant Funding will provide 50% reimbursement grant up to a maximum of:

- \$5,000 per building / project for single face improvement
- \$7,500 per building / project - corner lot, two face improvement
- Additional \$1,000 to buildings facing upper 3rd Ave., lower Argyle St. and lower Johnston Rd. (still within 50% maximum)

Approved BFIP businesses are required to complete façade improvement by December 31, 2020.

BFIP Design Services will provide an architect to create a design in consideration of the applicant's budget.

This service is provided at no charge to the applicant and is a requirement of the BFIP.

A BFIP Loan Program with competitive terms will be made available through Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot for approved proponents requiring a loan to participate. Some conditions may apply.

General Guidelines

The BFIP is primarily focused on the physical appearance of the buildings and their relationship to the street. Facades and storefronts of retail and commercial buildings are to be considered.

As limited funds are available, projects will be considered on anticipated results to the Program and community.

Buildings that have previously received the façade improvement grant shall not be eligible to receive a subsequent BFIP grant. This is a one-time grant only.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

- You must be either the property or business owner (if the applicant is the business owner, the property owner must approve the application in writing confirming all improvements are to be paid for by the applicant);
- There must currently be an operating business in the building or one must be in place prior to the receipt of funding;
- All property taxes pertaining to the property are fully paid and current;
- There must be a current, valid business license for the property (unless otherwise exempt);
- The business / building must be in compliance with all codes or requirements requested by the City;
- There must be no outstanding building permits, stop work orders, or development permit condition requirements outstanding;
- You have not received a previous grant under this program for the subject property; and
- Must be within City boundaries

Ineligible Applicants

- Residential homes located in the designated commercial area are not eligible;
- Municipally owned buildings (even if they have business tenants);
- Properties outside the specified area (as defined in the community's program guidelines);

Ineligible improvements include:

- Roofs
- Routine maintenance
- Structural repairs
- Interior window coverings
- Ramps
- Non-permanent fixtures (benches, planters, patios, patio heaters etc.)
- Landscaping, paving & fencing
- Any improvements not visible from the public right-of-way
- Construction of additions, accessory buildings or new buildings
- Any improvements deemed inconsistent with redevelopment purposes and objectives.

Eligible Costs

- Direct project labour costs
- Contractor fees
- Rental of tools and equipment for construction work
- Project related materials and supplies

Ineligible Costs

- Staff wages and/or benefits
- Expenses related to building façade improvements not visible from the public right of way
- Utilities (hydro, gas etc.)
- Equipment purchased
- GST/PST
- Shipping cost & duties
- Purchase of construction equipment and tools
- Building permits, development permits or other municipal fees
- Façade improvements expenses started prior to application approval
- Design and architectural fees (related to the façade) as this is covered as part of the program

PROCESS

Timing and Time Frame

Applications must be submitted by May 22, 2020 to:

Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot

Email: info@cfac.ca

Fax: 250-724-1028

If you have questions please phone 250-724-1241

Note: Submitting an Expression of Interest does not guarantee acceptance to the BFIP

Applications will be reviewed, decisions made and applicants advised by May 29, 2020.

Approved applicants will need to demonstrate that they have access to the necessary funds to complete anticipated improvements. Once this is demonstrated, approved applicants will be connected to an architect to begin design work.

Project Review Committee/Selection Process

The PRC will consist of 3 to 5 members from the City of Port Alberni and Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot and its primary responsibility is to review all applications, determine eligibility of projects and make recommendations and decisions. The PRC will also be responsible for verifying expenditures and completion in accordance with original design plans.

In the event that there are more eligible applicants than funds available to award, the PRC will prioritize projects based on the following ranked criteria:

1. Anticipated results of the Program and community which may include location in relation to main travel corridors.
2. Impact on curb appeal.
3. Age and condition of building i.e. buildings in poor condition may have greater likelihood of project approval.

Contractors and Local Contractors

Improvements must be completed by qualified contractors. Projects using local contractors may be given priority.

Appeal Process

In the event that an application is declined, the project proponent may request a meeting with the PRC to discuss the application with the purpose of:

- a) Seeking input on the proposal in order to modify the application and meet the program guidelines.
- b) Provide additional information to the committee in order to seek reversal of the decision to decline the application.

Appeals must be received within two (2) weeks of the decision date.

INSTRUCTIONS

Process (Prior to any renovation)

NOTE: If the Applicant is the tenant, he / she must produce a written approval from Owner(s) prior to submitting an Expression of Interest and again at the time of applying for the BFIP.

Application

1. Applicant completes and submits an Application no later than May 22, 2020.
2. Project Review Committee will review Applications and advise applicants of decisions by May 29, 2020.

Approved Applicants

1. Approved applicants will be connected with an architect. This service is provided at no charge to the applicant and is a requirement of the Program.
2. The architect will work with the proponent to create a design with consideration of the applicants budget.
3. When the proponent and the architect are satisfied with the design, the Tenant / Owner may proceed with renovations.
4. BFIP renovations must be completed by December 31, 2020

Following Renovations:

Tenant/Owner provides :

1. Cleared Cheque/Bank Statement confirming payment or Visa Statement confirming payment.
2. A certificate of completion signed by the tenant/owner and the general contractor or architect/designer.
3. Proof that the improvements have passed final inspection (when required), before and after pictures.
4. Testimony on the Business Facade Improvement Program.

Committee Process:

1. Verifies through architect that renovations are completed properly.
2. Approves reimbursement.
3. Prepares letter confirming acceptance of project completion and requests a cheque be issued to the project proponent or Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot if the proponent utilised the Façade Loan Program.

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