



# **Business Façade Improvement Program**

## **2025 Guidelines**

## Program Purpose and Goals

To support economic development through leveraged private sector investment in local business façade improvements and to support small business development; improvement and post-pandemic recovery on the rural North Coast. Funding for the Business Façade Improvement Program is provided by Northern Development Initiative Trust.

## Program Benefits

- Enhance economic viability and vibrancy of rural communities on the North Coast and Haida Gwaii by supporting visual improvements such as patio development, facades, signage, murals, architectural features, siding, lighting and awnings
- Private sector investment in local business improvement
- Increased assessed values and tax base as a result of improved properties
- Attractiveness of community to enhance community pride as well as tourism experience
- Improved community appearance to support recruitment of new businesses and/or residents

## The Program

These program guidelines are intended to maximize the program benefit for improving aesthetics of commercial areas and help subsidize the cost of outdoor patio development; and to assist business owners in maintaining the value of their façade.

The North Coast Regional District will provide a 50% reimbursement grant up to a maximum of \$5,000 per building/project to improve the facades of commercial buildings.

Business owners may apply for the rebate for new improvements, even if they have received Business Façade Improvement rebates for other expenses in previous years.

Projects must have a minimum total cost of \$1,000.

Application deadline is September 26, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.

The Business Façade Improvement program is offered by the North Coast Regional District with funding provided by Northern Development Initiative Trust.

## Eligible Properties

Eligible properties for this program are located within the North Coast Regional District Electoral Areas A, C, D, or E.

## 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)
- Non-profit and enterprising non-profit organizations (tenants)
- Home based businesses which are zoned commercial, have a storefront and are within the specified area
- Home based businesses without a commercial storefront (eligible for wayfinding signage only)
- Property taxes pertaining to the property are fully paid and current
- Current, valid business licenses for the property (unless otherwise exempt)
- No outstanding building permits, stop work orders, or development permit condition requirements outstanding

## Ineligible Applicants

- Residential homes located in the commercial 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)

## Eligible Façade Improvements

Eligible improvements may consist of but are not limited to:

- Exterior lighting (new but 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
- Signage (permanent on applicant's property)
- Wayfinding signage (sign located on the business property i.e. at the bottom of a driveway).
  - Signs are eligible for 50% to a maximum of \$500 and must adhere to any signage bylaws and regulations
- Accessibility improvements (ramps, wider doors etc.) to the outside of the building only AND are part of a larger façade improvement project
- Patio development: Structural improvements which will be continually used for their complete life cycle, such as patio stones; gazebos or other outdoor shelters, decks, retaining walls, accessibility features

## Ineligible Façade Improvements

The following improvements are ineligible:

- Improvements which have already received funding under the Business Façade Improvement Program
- Routine maintenance
- Structural repairs
- Roofs
- Non-permanent fixtures (benches, planters, patio furniture, 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 facade only)
- Contractor fees
- Rental of tools and equipment
- Project related materials and supplies

- Shipping and/or freight
- PST

## **Ineligible Costs/Expenses**

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

## **Design Guidelines**

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

Applications will be adjudicated by the North Coast Regional District and grants will be awarded to applicants based on merit until funding has been depleted.

Designs need to clearly outline the proposed improvements to allow the review committee to accurately evaluate the project, and clearly see that the finished product looks like what was intended during the application process.

As far as possible, projects must be consistent with the general form and character of the design guidelines set out for the area.

Building, sign and/or other permits may be required based on the extent of the improvements to be completed. These requirements are not waived by approval for the Business Façade Improvement Program and should be applied for prior to or concurrently with application for this program.

## **Business Application Process**

Applications will be accepted by the office of the North Coast Regional District via mail, fax or email prior to the deadline of September 30 at 4:30 p.m.

Submitting an application does not necessarily 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.

Generally, the application, approval and reimbursement process is as follows:

1. Owner/Tenant contacts the North Coast Regional District to determine if the building qualifies for the Façade Improvement Program, discuss your project, and obtain the Program Guide and Application.
2. Owner/Tenant submit a complete application with designs. All required supporting materials and documents (including owner authorization) must be received prior to be considered complete.
3. Staff reviews the application and proposed façade improvements to ensure that improvements meet the applicable Design Guidelines and Business Façade Improvement Program Guidelines.
4. Applications are reviewed and a decision to accept or reject the application is made.
5. Applicant is advised of the decision by email and mailed letter.
6. For successful applications, a Letter of Understanding is sent to the applicant which must be signed by the owner/tenant and a representative of the North Coast Regional District.
7. Owner/Tenant acquires any required permits and completes the renovations.
8. Owner/Tenant provides verification of expenses (including invoices or other confirmations of payment) and submits their totals on the provided expense tracking sheet.
9. Owner/Tenant provides a Certification of Completion signed by the applicant or contractor, indicating that all work described in the application/approval and has been paid in full, as well as before and after photos, a business testimonial, and any other supporting documentation.
10. Owner/Tenant provides proof that the improvements have passes final inspection for municipal permits (where required) and meet all building standards and codes (where required).
11. Staff verifies that the renovations meet the Letter of Understanding requirements and approves reimbursement.
12. Applicant is issued a cheque.

### **Please note:**

Approved projects should be completed by year end (December 31, 2025).

## **Evaluation/Selection Process**

Applications will be evaluated by staff and the Electoral Area Advisory Committee of the North Coast Regional District.

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?
- Will the renovation offer a noticeable improvement on the streetscape?
- Will the renovation offer improved outdoor seating space?
- Was a professional designer or architect used?

## **Additional Information**

Further questions or comments on the Business Façade Improvement Program and Guidelines can be obtained through contact the office of the North Coast Regional District at 250-624-2002 or via email at [info@ncrdbc.com](mailto:info@ncrdbc.com).