



KENAI

Program Guide: Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Grant



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PROGRAM GUIDE for STOREFRONT AND STREETScape IMPROVEMENT GRANT

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This document provides information on the program, how it works, and how to qualify.

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Program Overview

Improved storefront and streetscapes have a measurable impact on business sales and ability to attract new customers as well as improves community pride, and is an investment that provides benefits to businesses, residents, and visitors. The City of Kenai encourages property owners and tenants to invest in exterior renovations to commercial storefronts and streetscapes by providing matching funds to cover a portion of the eligible costs.

The Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program makes matching funds available to local businesses to improve the appearance of commercial buildings, parking, landscaping, and signage by providing a 50% reimbursement, up to \$10,000 for each approved project for eligible expenses on eligible projects to businesses located in the City of Kenai.

Program Objectives

To encourage and motivate local business improvements and reinvestments in the City of Kenai by sharing the costs of storefront and streetscape improvement projects to strengthen the business activity and enhance economic vitality in Kenai.

The Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program meets several goals and objectives of City of Kenai's *Imagine Kenai 2030 Comprehensive Plan*, including:

- Implement business-friendly regulations, taxation and incentives to create a stable positive climate for private investment
- Promote adaptive reuse of vacant commercial buildings in the city center and along Kenai Spur Highway
- Support development at emerging community centers that lie outside the major employment centers but provide a mix of retail, service, and residential uses



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Eligibility

To apply to the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Grant, you must be the property owner(s) or business lessee (with written property owner authorization).

Eligible applications must answer YES to **all** of the following:

- Business(es) is/are locally owned and/or operated local franchises in City of Kenai
- Project is located within a commercial or mixed-use zoning district
- Project will support an existing commercial structure(s) (e.g., home-based businesses do not qualify) that was/were constructed at least five (5) years ago
- Project includes at least one eligible improvement (see Eligible Improvements)
- Storefront must be visible from a public street (i.e., street-facing)
- Construction work has not started
- Building(s) with existing or proposed window(s) will have clear, unobscured street-facing window(s) once construction is complete and for the five (5) year maintenance period
 - Window tints, vinyl wraps, tinted or frosted glass, large window decals, and window perforations that obscure views in and out of the building may not cover more than 50% of any one window panel and no more than 10% of the square footage of windows on the street-facing façade(s).
- Grant the City permission to use any image (photographs and/or video) for use in media publications including, but not limited to, email blasts, newsletters, magazines, general publications, website and/or affiliates, or videos.
- Be current on all financial obligations to the City of Kenai and Kenai Peninsula Borough.

You may apply more than once as long as the building or property site does not exceed the maximum grant amount in a 5-year period. If a property is sold and the new owner wishes to apply for the grant, the 5-year time frame still applies. The 5-year time frame starts on the project completion date.

Contact the Program Administrator if you are unsure whether or not your project meets the eligibility criteria. Contact information is on page 14.



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Eligible Improvements

An eligible project includes any of the following improvements that are visible from a public street or right-of-way:

- Exterior façade improvements or repairs include, but are not limited to windows/doors, painting, architectural details, cladding/siding, awnings/canopies, outdoor lighting, art and permanent signage
- Installing landscaping or other streetscape improvements. Standalone streetscape improvement projects such as parking lot resurfacing/restriping must provide landscaping that meets the requirements of KMC Chapter 14.25 *Landscaping/Site Plan Regulations*
- Installing new accessibility features such as ramps or handrails
- Improvements/Repairs to bring nonconforming signage, site plan/landscaping into conformance with current Kenai Municipal Code

Other eligible work that may be reimbursed through the program includes construction, materials and labor. Work must be performed or overseen by a licensed general or specialty contractor with a valid State of Alaska business license and Kenai Peninsula Borough Sales Tax Certificate. If you wish to do the work yourself (no contractor) then only the cost of the materials is eligible for the grant. Eligible work may include, but is not limited to the following:

- contracted labor
- new paint
- adding new or replacing existing windows or doors
- electrical and light fixtures
- directional signage
- permanent outdoor dining area
- paving with landscaping (A minimum of 20% grant reimbursement must be allocated to landscaping improvements)
- hardscaping
- canopies, awning and/or shade structures
- bike racks and/or benches
- planter boxes



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Ineligible Costs and Projects

Examples of ineligible costs include permit fees, insurance, gas, tools, consumables, cell phone fees and other incidental costs.

The following businesses and projects are **ineligible** for the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program.

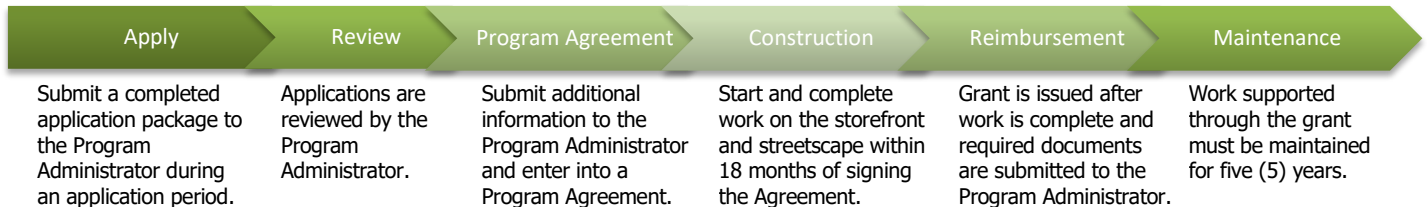
- Improvements for a national food chain, C Corporation traded on a U.S. stock exchange, or a corporate-equivalent entity traded on a foreign stock exchange, and owned in whole or majority-owned by such a publicly traded corporation
- New construction, residential renovations/alterations, re-roofing, structural foundations, temporary signage, security systems, interior improvements, personal property and equipment, in-kind labor or business operation costs
- Digital screens or flashing signage
- Building alterations that would alter the contributing status of properties identified in the *Kenai Townsite Historic District Survey Report*.
- Removing ramps, curb cuts or other accessibility features



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Program Process

There are six (6) steps in the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program process:



Step 1: Apply to the Program

The property owner or someone authorized by the property owner to act on their behalf may apply for the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program.

1. Contact the Program Administrator to confirm eligibility. The Program Administrator will visit your site to discuss your plans and help you plan for a successful project.
2. Complete an application package and submit it to the Program Administrator during an application period:
 - a. Application form
 - b. Building elevations showing design and materials
 - c. Conceptual drawings or renderings to support the building elevations
 - d. Site plan that shows the entire parcel(s) with existing structures, existing parking spaces, existing landscaping, and proposed scope of work.

Step 2: Application Review

Completed applications received during an application period are reviewed by the Program Administrator against the design principles and intent of the program. (see [page 10](#) for the design principles) This review may take up to four (4) weeks.

Applications will be approved, approved with conditions, or refused.

- If an application is **approved**, the applicant may enter into a Program Agreement.
- If an application is **approved with conditions**, the applicant must change the design to meet the conditions in order to be eligible for funding.
- If an application is **refused**, the applicant may change the design and re-apply during the next application period.



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Key things to know about the review process:

- Decisions by the Program Administrator are final and cannot be appealed.
- Due to limited funding, not all projects that apply to the program and meet the eligibility criteria and design principles will receive a grant, or the maximum grant amount.
- If the demand for grants exceed the City's available funds, the City reserves the right to reject, prorate, or prioritize projects based on the following criteria:
 - The value of the work and transformative impact of the project on the surrounding area
 - The number and type of specific improvements proposed
 - The degree to which the project furthers the goals and objectives of the current City of Kenai Comprehensive Plan
- Approval by the Program Administrator **is not** a formal plans review and does not guarantee that projects will be approved for development or building permits without alterations to the design. If you have questions about permitting, please visit the Building Official or Planning & Zoning Department for a preliminary review of the proposal.

Step 3: Program Agreement

Applicants must send the following documents to the Program Administrator within 60 days of the date on the approval letter.

- Two (2) quotes for the eligible scope of the work
- A cost breakdown from the chosen contractor(s)
- The State of Alaska business license number, contractor's license number and copy of the Kenai Peninsula Borough Sales Tax Certificate of the general contractor, or subcontractors if there is no general contractor
 - If you (the building owner or company) are doing the work yourself, only materials will be an eligible cost
- An overall budget summary of the project
- A copy of all permit applications
- Completed and Signed Form W-9 (Request for Taxpayer ID Number and Certification)

The Program Administrator or designee will pull the property owner(s) record on the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assessor's records and to confirm the legal address and property owner(s).

These documents are used to create a draft Program Agreement. The Program Agreement is a standard form contract identifying the maximum grant amount, the approved project design



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and the eligible improvements that the applicant may seek reimbursement for once construction is complete.

If this documentation is not provided within 60 days of the approval letter, the project file will be closed and the funding reallocated. You may reapply to the program during the next application period provided that no construction has begun, and with the understanding that funding is not guaranteed.

Step 4: Construction

Projects have 18 months from when the Program Agreement is executed to complete the project in order to be eligible to receive the grant. A time extension may be granted prior to the project completion deadline and that the City has the right to deny a time extension if the applicant has not demonstrated sufficient progress in completing the project. Changes may require reevaluation of the approved grant amount from the Program Administrator. Changes to the design during the construction phase must be approved by the Program Administrator.

As soon as the project is complete, provide a written notification via email or letter to the Program Administrator.

Step 5: Reimbursement

The Program Administrator will visit the site to ensure that the project complies with the terms of the Program Agreement. Deficiencies will be noted and must be addressed to the satisfaction of the City before the grant is issued. The City is not obligated to disburse the entire grant amount if the actual cost of the project does not exceed the grant amount.

Applicants must send the following documents to the Program Administrator:

- All invoices and proof of payment for eligible work identified in the Grant Program Agreement. All contractor invoices must be paid in full. Purchase orders will not be accepted as proof of payment.
- A cost summary for the work
- The most recent Kenai Peninsula Borough Tax Compliance certification showing the property is current on property and sale taxes

Documentation must be submitted in a timely manner. If documentation is not submitted within 30 days after completion of the project, the project file will be closed and grant funding reallocated. It may take up to six (6) weeks to issue a reimbursement check for the



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completion of the approved project or portion thereof.

The City of Kenai is not responsible for any taxes that may be imposed as a result of your receipt of this grant payment (directly or indirectly). Grants may be reported on IRS Form 1099).

Step 6: Maintenance

All storefront and streetscape renovations supported by the Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program must be maintained for five (5) years. If the owner fails to maintain the building or site improvements, they may be required to repay up to 50% of the grant.



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Important to Know

The Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program team is here to support you through the program process; however, there are some key things to understand about the program in order to be successful.

- If you start work before the Program Agreement is signed, the project will not receive a grant-- even if it was approved by the Program Administrator.
- It is your responsibility to manage contractor(s) and keep track of invoices.
- It is your responsibility to obtain all required permits (e.g., building permits, site plan/landscape approval, sign permits, right-of-way permit).
- It is your responsibility to request approval from the Program Administrator for any changes in design after the Program Agreement is fully executed. Changes may require reevaluation of the approved grant amount from the Program Administrator. Changes to the design during the construction phase must be approved by the Program Administrator.
- It is your responsibility to be aware of deadlines. If you miss the deadline to submit documentation, the program file will be closed and the grant funding reallocated.
- Grant amounts will not be increased due to changes in project scope or cost overruns.



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Design Principles

Customers prefer to spend time in places that are interesting and attractive. The Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program supports this by encouraging renovations to existing commercial buildings and properties that positively impact the overall community by assisting business owners who have struggled to keep up with costly repairs and improvements needed to their building(s) and business site.

The Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program **design principles** identify the features/characteristics of a building that will support more functional, attractive and accessible businesses in existing commercial buildings or properties. The principles should guide the design of a storefront and streetscape renovation and are used to review applications to the program.

Applications should strive to meet or exceed as many of the design principles as possible. We encourage you to explore ways to fulfil the design principles that go beyond the examples listed here. Be creative!

The design principles are:

Improvements contribute to a lively pedestrian experience.

Renovations to the building should improve how pedestrian friendly and lively the commercial corridor is by adding or improving things for shoppers or visitors to do. Ways to meet this principle could include:

- transparent, uncluttered windows for window shopping
- expanded or new windows or doors
- patios, walk-up counters or other commercial activities that creates an active urban design
- benches, bike parking, or other things for people to do or interact with

Improvements support the businesses, building and commercial corridors.

Building design should help to market the building to prospective tenants, or help communicate to customers what the business tenant offers. Ways to meet this principle could include:

- overall building design and/or colors that support business branding and the overall commercial character of the corridor
- improved signage for the tenants
- adding adaptable signage infrastructure should businesses change
- improving the usability of the building by adding entrances or adding/widening windows or adding space for window displays



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Improvements are focused on people, not cars.

Buildings should feel comfortable and interesting for people walking by. This means avoiding long, uninterrupted storefronts and walls, and making business entrances obvious.

- storefronts should create visual interest through regular entrances, varied articulation, and visual permeability
- making sure the main entrance(s) are easy to identify
- signage can be easily read from the sidewalk
- lighting plans should be attractive and avoid overspill/light pollution

Improvements address all four seasons.

Renovations should make the building more functional and attractive throughout the year, and should be comfortable for customers in all kinds of weather. Ways to address all seasons might include:

- using durable and weather resistance materials
- adding landscaping that looks great in summer and winter
- adding permanent patios in sunny locations
- adding/repairing awnings/canopies
- use lights and colors to make buildings stand out

Improvements support accessibility.

Some people use canes, crutches, wheelchairs, strollers and other aids to get around. The more people who can enter your building means more customers overall. Ways to support accessibility may include:

- ramps in front of doorways
- handrails
- large address numbers
- wide entrances
- adding automated doors
- easy to read signs

Improvements contribute to safe streets.

People feel safer when they can clearly see what is happening on the street and inside the building. Ways to meet this principle could include:

- lighting that illuminates alcoves and streetscape while minimizing light pollution



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- landscaping that clearly identifies where people should and should not go
- landscaping that supports clear sight lines
- encouraging the uses you want to see in front of your building
- see-through or low-height fencing

Properties with off-street front parking lots must improve the connection and safety for pedestrians between the building and the sidewalk.

The aim of the program is to encourage attractive, pedestrian-friendly connectors/paths to commercial areas through investment in existing commercial buildings. The program supports buildings to become as street oriented as they can be. Examples may include:

- new sidewalks, walkways or crosswalks connecting the building with the public sidewalk
- new patios in parking stalls
- adding traffic calming such as painted markings, bollards or speed bumps
- adding landscaping between the sidewalk and parking, including rain garden or bioswales
- curb cuts or other improvements to support universal accessibility



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Who Does What?

The Applicant is responsible for:	The Program Administrator is responsible for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and understanding this Program Guide • Completing the application package • Obtaining all Development Permits/Building Permits • Providing all required documentation to the Program Administrator in a timely manner • Completing the approved renovations as per the Program Agreement • Submitting all invoices and proof of payment in a timely manner • Ensuring all contractors have a valid state business license and sales tax certificate • Post-construction building maintenance for 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering questions • Identifying application periods • Provide advice for successful applications • Reviewing submitted applications for completeness • Performing site visits • Creating Program Agreements • Coordinating with the Finance Department on Program funds and issuing reimbursements • Ensuring that projects supported by the program contribute to program outcomes

Contact the Program Administrator

Contact us today to discuss your project.

Storefront and Streetscape Improvement Program

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<https://www.kenai.city/administration/page/storefront-streetscape-improvement-program>

REVISED APRIL 2024



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