



SMITHERS STOREFRONT SPRUCE UP

2026 Guidelines

For Business Building Façades in
Downtown Smithers

Town of Smithers
Development Services Department
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PROGRAM PURPOSE AND GOALS

This program provides grants to property and business owners to renovate, restore or redesign retail and commercial building façades and storefronts in downtown Smithers. The goal of this program is to encourage owners or commercial tenants to invest in

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building façade upgrades that create a more interesting and appealing streetscape, attracting locals and visitors to the commercial downtown core.

This initiative will contribute towards:

- Making Smithers ever more inviting as a place to walk, bike, shop, and play;
- Promoting the marketability of retail, commercial businesses and non-profit organizations;
- Helping building owners to create value and attract and retain tenants;
- Enhancing the quality of life for residents, workers, and visitors in the downtown core;
- Building civic pride among the business community and Smithers' citizens;
- Maintaining downtown Smithers' Mountain Theme and its reputation of having the best downtown of any northern BC community.

Funding for the Smithers Storefront Spruce Up is provided by Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT).

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Business Façade Improvement Program primarily addresses the physical appearance of the buildings in the downtown core area. The character and design of the buildings plus the appeal of the businesses within, attract shoppers both for the goods and services they provide and for the experience of walking around an interesting downtown space.

The Town of Smithers' Form & Character Development Permit Guide, the Form & Character Development Permit Areas, and the Smithers Official Community Plan are comprehensive guides to the community's vision of desirable planning for the downtown. As a joint venture between property owners and the municipality, the Business Façade Improvement Program is an aid to beautifying our streetscape for the benefit of local citizens and visitors.

In order to be eligible for this grant, the applicant must submit designs and costs for the project. Designs need not be done by a professional architect or designer but it is strongly encouraged that the tenant/property owner seeks professional help, keeping in mind that grants will be awarded based on merit of design and visual impact to the streetscape. Designs need to clearly outline the proposed improvements to allow the review committee to evaluate the project and clearly see that the finished product looks like what was intended during the application process. Major revisions to project design that may occur during construction must be approved by Town Staff to retain eligibility for funding.

It is in the downtown that the Business Façade Improvement Program applies and is supported by the objectives of Form & Character Development which are to:

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- Build on the existing pedestrian scale of development;
- Ensure that the commercial core remains the focal point of the community;
- Contribute to the existing character and identity of Smithers; and
- Preserve or restore views to the mountains and of prominent buildings.

The attached excerpts from the Official Community Plan describe Form & Character guidelines.

ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES

The eligible properties are the ones designated as Downtown Smithers in the Town of Smithers Official Community Plan and are within the Form & Character Development Permit areas.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

To be eligible to apply:

- You must be the property owner, business owner, or a non-profit organization occupying commercial storefronts (tenants).
- 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.
- Home-based business owners (eligible for wayfinding signage only).
- All Town of Smithers property taxes and business license fees pertaining to the property are fully paid and current.
- Subject building has not received a previous grant under this program for the proposed improvements.
- No outstanding building permits, stop work orders, or development permit condition requirements outstanding.

INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

- Properties outside the specified area (as defined in the Eligible Properties above) and
Non-operating business (the business must be in operation).
- Residential homes located in the commercial area
- Apartment Buildings
- Government owned buildings (municipal, provincial or federal; even if they have business tenants)
- 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).

THE PROGRAM

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The Town of Smithers will provide a reimbursement grant up to 50% of the cost of eligible improvements, to a maximum of \$5,000 per project to improve the façades of commercial buildings.

Each building is eligible for an annual grant to a maximum of \$5,000. Each year, a building may access the Business Façade Improvement program for new/incremental façade improvements, provided the work does not involve previously funded components of the façade. Businesses are no longer held to a \$5,000 lifetime maximum.

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

You must start your improvement project after the Smithers Storefront Spruce Up application is approved.

Application deadline is June 1st, 2026. Work completed by **December 31, 2026** will be used in calculation of eligible costs of improvements.

ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible costs:

- Direct project labour costs
- Rental of tools and equipment
- Design, Architectural or Engineering fees (related to façade only)
- PST
- Contractor fees
- Project materials and supplies
- Wayfinding signage for Home-based businesses at 50% to a maximum of \$500
- Shipping costs/and or freight

Ineligible costs:

- Staff wages and/or benefits
- Purchasing construction tools or equipment
- Main Street tree signs
- Expenses related to improvements to the building façade not visible from the public right of way
- GST, duties
- Permit fees
- Utilities (hydro, gas, etc.)
- Façade improvement expenses start prior to application approval
- Roofs

ELIGIBLE FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

Building façade and storefront features eligible to be renovated, restored, or redesigned with grant dollars include 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 improvements, no stand-alone window replacements)
- New siding

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- Façade painting
- Entrances and doorways (only if part of larger improvements), no stand-alone entrance/doorway replacement
- Awnings
- Signage affixed to the building (not freestanding signs)
- Wayfinding signage (signs located on the business property, i.e. at the bottom of a driveway, are eligible for 50% to a maximum of \$500 and must adhere to the Smithers Sign Bylaw)
- Accessibility improvements (ramps, wider doors, auto openers etc.) to the outside of the building only

INELIGIBLE FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

- Routine Maintenance
- Roofs
- Paving
- Fencing
- Non-permanent fixtures (benches, planters, patio heaters etc.)
- Any improvements not visible from the public right of way
- Structural repairs
- Patios
- Landscaping
- Interior Improvements/renovations
- Construction of additions, accessory buildings or new buildings
- Any improvements started prior to application approval

BUSINESS APPLICATION PROCESS

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.

- Pick up Program Guide and Application Package at Town Hall front desk or online at www.smithers.ca. (Grant Application Form attached)
- Owner/tenant submits application with designs.
- Staff reviews application and proposed façade improvements to ensure compliance with the Town of Smithers Form & Character Development guidelines and the Façade Improvement Program guidelines.
- Applications must be submitted and approved prior to the start of façade improvement project in order to be eligible for funding.
- For successful applications, the applicant and a Town of Smithers representative must sign a Terms and Conditions letter.
- **Applications are accepted until the deadline of June 1st, 2026.**

Please note:

Approved projects must be completed by December 31, 2026.

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EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

- Approval or rejection of application is sent to the applicant by email or letter within 30 days after the application deadline.

Applications will be evaluated by Development Services Staff from the Town of Smithers unless the program is oversubscribed, in which case it will go to an Advisory Committee.

The Committee membership shall consist of 7 members:

Mayor as chair – non-voting

- 4 voting members representing the Chamber of Commerce
- 2 voting members representing the Downtown business owners
- 1 voting member representing the Town of Smithers Advisory Planning Commission
- Staff advisory members as required

Quorum shall consist of a minimum 4 voting members.

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

1. Quality of Design
2. Age and condition of building
3. Impact on the Streetscape
4. Private vs. public expense ratio
5. Mountain theme, visual impact and contrast of before and after photos.
6. Those that most fully meet the criteria will receive the funding.

PROJECT COMPLETION

- Business owner acquires building permit, if applicable, and completes renovation.
- Business owner provides verification of expenses: receipts and confirmation of payment forwarded.
- Business owners may provide an optional written testimonial of the Façade improvement impact on the Towns' streetscape.
- Town Staff verifies that completed renovations meet grant requirements, approves reimbursement, and issues cheque.

Grant Application

Applicant Information

Applicant Name:

Mailing Address:

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

Building Address:

Email: _____

If you are applying as the tenant of a building, please provide the following information and attach a letter of consent from the owners stating that you are allowed to make these changes to the building.

Owner's Name:

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

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Project Description

1. Describe the proposed project: (attach any extra sheets, photos, designs, samples)

2. Planned Start Date: _____
3. Planned Completion Date: _____
4. Estimated Total Project Cost: _____

Applicant Checklist:

- Property taxes paid
- Utility taxes paid
- License fees paid
- Required permit applications completed
- Building owner authorization

Attach to Application:

- Photos of existing conditions
- Detailed specifications
- Contractor's cost estimates
- Drawings
- Material & colour samples

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Terms and Conditions

I, _____, of _____ have

(Applicant)

(Business/Building)

read the complete application and concur with and give my consent to the work proposed in the application.

I assume all responsibility for obtaining appropriate drawings, building permits and inspections, and hiring of contractors as necessary.

I agree not to involve the Town of Smithers or the Business Façade Improvement Program in any legal action between myself and any contractors, estimators, employees, workers, or agents arising from or out of the Façade Improvement Program.

I give my consent to the Town to make all inspections necessary to confirm that the approved plans are implemented in accordance with expected standards. While minor changes may occur during construction, major alterations to the project design must be approved by the Town to retain eligibility for funding.

Payment of approved grants will be made upon the applicant providing the Town of Smithers proof of final completion of the proposed improvements along with verification of expenditures and proof of final inspection.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Application received by: _____

Date: _____