

# **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**

---

## **INCENTIVES PROGRAM**

**PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR THE  
BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS & MURALS GRANT  
Phase 2 (April 2021 to March 2022)**



**REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF WOOD BUFFALO**

## Beautification Projects and Murals Grant

### GRANT AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Beautification Projects and Murals Grant supports property and business owners in making relatively quick improvements that add vibrancy to their businesses and buildings. There are two grants streams available:

- Beautification projects (storefront improvements)
- Mural projects

Respondents to a 2019 downtown revitalization survey identified beautification projects and mural projects as ways to make the downtown more attractive and build community pride.

#### *Beautification Projects*

**Beautification projects** not only support downtown revitalization but improve the curb appeal of downtown businesses and enhance the pedestrian experience. Some studies show that beautification may increase sales by 15 to 35 per cent, while 70 per cent of new visitor sales to retail stores, restaurants and hotels may be attributed to curb appeal.

This grant is intended to help business operators create attractive storefronts and frontages. Beautification projects can take several forms, including window displays to better showcase products and services, seasonal displays and lighting, planters, decorative window decals and similar features. For more information and project ideas, see page 6.



To support Applicants with their beautification projects, Phase 2 of the program considers the cost of eligible expenses purchased on/after April 1, 2021 for reimbursement (at the Applicant's risk).

#### *Mural Projects*

The grant supports **mural projects** on building exteriors. A mural is any painting, mosaic or graphic art (big and small) which is applied professionally to all or a portion of an exterior wall of a building for the purposes of decoration or artistic expression. Murals may depict a scene or event of natural, social, cultural or historic significance and may be used to celebrate local history, Indigenous heritage and multiculturalism.



Murals should be completed with involvement of a local artist. Community involvement in the mural project is also encouraged. All murals must be applied professionally, including appropriate wall preparation and material selection, to ensure murals last.

For more information on murals, see page 9.

## GRANT VALUE

The Beautification Projects and Murals Grant is a matching reimbursement grant.

The grant provides 50 per cent of eligible costs, to a maximum of:

- \$1,500 **per business** with a ground-level storefront for beautification projects.

The grant provides 75 per cent of eligible costs, to a maximum of:

- \$30,000 **per building** for murals by a local artist.

A “matching” grant means that the Municipality will pay for a portion (to either 50 or 75 per cent) of eligible costs to the maximum allowed by the grant. A “reimbursement” grant means that applicants receive funding after their projects are complete and verified by the Municipality. Each eligible building may also benefit from more than one type of grant. For example, a commercial building owner may apply to upgrade the façade, make exterior premises improvements and carry out interior improvements. Separate applications are required.

## ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

### *Important things to know if your building received this grant in Phase 1 (2020)*

Work that is subject to an executed agreement (signed by the recipient and the Municipality) is not eligible for further reimbursement or new applications. For example, bicycle racks funded through Phase 1 cannot receive additional funding.

### *Important things to know about the eligibility of flood-related projects*

While the program is intended to spur downtown revitalization, costs pertaining to the restoration of damage caused by the recent flooding are not eligible. Assistance may be available through the Government of Alberta’s Disaster Recovery Program. For more information, see page 10.

The following must be met to be eligible:

#### **The building or business must:**

- Be located within the downtown, as shown on the Program Area Map on page 17.
- Be an existing commercial, institutional or mixed-use (commercial portions only) building. Home businesses or occupations are not eligible. In the case of government buildings (municipal, provincial, federal), be a ground-level commercial space.

#### **The beautification project must:**

- Be for a business that has a ground-level storefront, including windows and/or entrances.
- Be intended to create attractive storefronts and frontages.
- Be visible to the public and intended for their visual enjoyment or use.
- Be installed on the exterior of buildings, except for interior storefront window displays.
- Provide transparent window treatments. Projects may include window graphics, such as adhesive stickers and decals. However, window treatments that obscure street-level windows, are not eligible. Vinyl wraps, security bars and rolling shutters are not eligible for reimbursement under all grants in the program.

#### **The mural project must:**

- Be installed on an exterior wall of a building.
- Be completed by a local artist.
- Be suitable for a culturally diverse audience and for all ages.

If you are unsure about the eligibility of your project or building, please contact [incentives@rmwb.ca](mailto:incentives@rmwb.ca) to request a pre-application meeting.

- Contain no advertising, logos or offensive content.

All designs and artwork are subject to final approval by the Municipality.

**The following requirements also apply to all projects in the program:**

- Property taxes must not be overdue.
- Municipal utility bills must not be overdue.
- The property must not be subject to an unresolved enforcement order, such as a Stop Order.
- The applicant must not be a party to a legal dispute with the Municipality.
- All municipal permits and permissions have been received, closed and without deficiencies.

These will be confirmed at the time the applicant requests reimbursement for their project.

## **ELIGIBLE COSTS**

Grants shall be solely used for the project as described in the grant agreement.

**The following costs are eligible:**

- Project management, design, engineering and other professional fees, including fees for professional drawings, to a maximum of 15 per cent of project costs. (Professional artist fees for mural projects are not included in this limit).
  - Professional fees paid before there is an executed agreement are eligible if incurred after June 29, 2020, necessary to obtain contractor estimates or permits, and directly related to the project. This is done at the applicant's risk.
- Direct project labour costs.
- Materials and supplies including shipping, freight and the rental of tools and equipment.
- Municipal planning permit fees (development permits, building permits and trades permits).
- Goods and Service Tax (GST).

**For beautification projects, the following costs are also eligible:**

- Storefront merchandise displays, structures and platforms.
- Storefront treatments to window glass, including window graphics (note: window graphics or decals may include the business name and logo and should be largely transparent).
- Storefront lighting, including temporary seasonal lights, string lights and storefront feature lighting.
- Temporary artwork and installations in storefronts.
- Seasonal planters, hanging baskets and similar items.
- A bench or similar seating.
- A-Board signs ("sandwich" board signs)
- Replacement panel for an existing fascia sign.
- Bicycle rack.

**For mural projects, the following costs are also eligible:**

- Mural artwork, including materials and supplies.
- Artist fees including design, installation, labour, travel and accommodation.
- Site preparation, including rubbish removal.

**The following costs are not eligible:**

- Costs associated with time and/or labour performed directly by the applicant.
- Work considered to be routine maintenance and cleaning.
- Incidental costs, such as gas, tools (purchases) or other consumables.

- Insurance and warranty.
- Non-specific costs, including profit and contingencies.
- Cost overruns or changes to the project scope that have not been pre-approved.
- Waste removal that is not part of a beautification or mural project.
- Vinyl wraps, security bars and rolling shutters.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: STOREFRONT BEAUTIFICATION

Looking for ideas? Storefront beautification projects could include:



### Create a storefront window display

Window displays help showcase goods and services and increase the vibrancy of surrounding areas. This may include feature lighting and the removal of tall displays, wraps and posters that obscure windows.



### Showcase food products

Marketing studies find that people are more inclined to visit restaurants and food establishment if food is visible. Window displays may feature prepared foods in display cases and food stalls may feature produce, flowers and other items.



**Extend the storefront outside the building**

Extending a storefront outdoors helps draw customers and visitors into shops. Extensions may include decorative planters and flowers and thoughtful merchandise displays. Businesses should ensure they leave enough room for pedestrian to walk by without having to step into the road.



**Use window graphics creatively**

Activating your storefront using graphics and transparent films can encourage people to visit. Window graphics or decals may include the business name and logo and should be largely transparent (not obscure the storefront).



**Add flowers and planters**

Flowers are an easy way to add colour and increase curb appeal. Urban design studies demonstrate that people are drawn to greenery, flowers and natural elements. In the winter, live plants can be replaced with woody materials and other decorations (e.g., pumpkins).



**Showcase your business during the holidays**

A decorated storefront promotes a positive business image, while brightening the surrounding area and attracting new customers. String lighting, window displays, garlands and pumpkins are easy ideas.



**Install temporary displays in vacant storefronts**

Artwork and temporary displays can add vibrancy to empty storefronts.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: MURALS

The program supports the creation of murals on private property. These murals are commissioned, installed and maintained by property owners or business operators.

Artwork, including murals that is located in the public realm, is known as “public art”. These installations form part of a collection of artworks owned and maintained by the Municipality. The Municipality is currently creating a Public Art Plan, which will create a framework for a new Public Art Wood Buffalo program. The Plan may provide ideas and inspiration and encourage collaboration and/or sponsorship for private projects.

### *Preliminary approval*

To support applicants, the Municipality may provide a preliminary approval letter prior to the submission of a complete application. This may assist applicants in obtaining other funding or sponsorship. Applicants must submit a complete application for review once an artist is identified and the mural concept is developed. Final approval of the application and artwork is subject to municipal review.

### *Selecting an artist*

Applicants are responsible for selecting an artist. General advice on selecting an artist and commissioning a design is available from the Community and Protective Services Department at [public.art@rmwb.ca](mailto:public.art@rmwb.ca).

All murals must be applied professionally, including appropriate wall preparation and material selection, to ensure murals last.



**Mural Ideas**

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The following information applies to all grants in the program:

- Funding is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Grants are not retroactive (costs incurred prior to signing the agreement with the Municipality are not eligible), with the following exceptions:
  - Professional fees, as per page 4.
  - Eligible Expenses for Beautification Projects purchased on/after April 1, 2021 (excluding labour costs).
  - This is done at the applicant's risk.
- Recipients will enter into an agreement with the Municipality that sets out the terms and conditions of participation in the program.
- Recipients may use the contractor of their choice. Contractors must hold a valid municipal business licence and insurance.
- Reimbursement is based on the lowest prices submitted and/or the final invoice (if lower).
- Recipients are responsible for all payments to contractors or suppliers.
- Recipients are expected to maintain their projects, display program recognition (e.g., certificate), and participate in program monitoring activities such as surveys.
- The Municipality reserves the right to determine applicant eligibility on a case-by-case basis.

### **Important information about flood-impacted buildings**

- The program is not intended to replace personal insurance or provincial disaster recovery assistance, or cover losses or damages caused by the 2020 Spring Flood. For example, the costs for clean-up, demolition, landfill tipping fees, and returning buildings to pre-existing conditions.
- Where buildings have been damaged:
  - Applicants must demonstrate that projects constitute an improvement from pre-flood conditions.
  - Applicants shall not submit an application for improvements they know will be, or likely to be, recovered entirely by personal insurance proceeds, provincial disaster recovery assistance or similar recovery funding.
  - Applicants shall advise the Municipality if they receive personal insurance proceeds, provincial disaster recovery assistance or similar recovery funding that would render the grant redundant.
- The Municipality reserves the right to reimburse 50 per cent for beautification projects or 75 per cent for murals, or the balance of project costs, whichever is less, where an applicant confirms that they received insurance proceeds, provincial disaster recovery assistance or similar funding that renders the grant or a portion of the grant redundant.

### **Community Futures**

The Municipality has partnered with Community Futures Wood Buffalo. Community Futures is a non-profit organization that provides business supports to small businesses. Applicants who need project financing but do not qualify for funding from a financial institution are encouraged to contact Community Futures at 780.791.0330 or <http://woodbuffalo.albertacf.com>.

## KEY DATES AND TIMELINES

- Complete applications must be received on or before **4:30 PM on March 31, 2022**.
- Projects must complete construction within 12 months of the date on the executed agreement.
- The Municipality may consider extensions to the above timeframes if recipients demonstrate that delays are due to circumstances beyond their control and/or seasonal construction limitations. Recipient must submit requests for extensions prior to the deadline.
- Recipients must notify the Community Partnerships and Initiatives (CPI) Branch when their project is complete.
- Recipients must provide documentation to begin the reimbursement process within three months of completing construction.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For questions, pre-application meetings or to apply, please contact:

### **Community Partnerships and Initiatives (CPI) Branch**

Community and Protective Services Department

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

9909 Franklin Avenue

Fort McMurray, AB, T9H 2K4

[incentives@rmwb.ca](mailto:incentives@rmwb.ca)

780.743.7000 (PULSE LINE)

For permitting inquiries, please contact:

### **Community Development Planning Branch**

Planning and Development Department

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

309 Powder Drive

Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 0M3

[current.planning@rmwb.ca](mailto:current.planning@rmwb.ca)

780.799.8695

# APPLICATION PROCESS

## STEP 1: PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

- Before applying, please contact the CPI Branch to confirm project eligibility.
- Applicants are **strongly encouraged** to participate in a pre-application meeting to obtain early advice on the eligibility of their projects. Virtual meeting options are available.

To schedule a pre-application meeting, please contact [incentives@rmwb.ca](mailto:incentives@rmwb.ca)

### *Important things to know*

- Applicants (property owner or tenants with authorization) may authorize a designated contact to manage their applications.
- Allocate time to plan your project. Expect delays in obtaining contractor estimates around holiday times.
- 75 per cent of approved applications in 2020 involved a pre-application meeting. Nearly half of refused applications did not involve a pre-application meeting.

## STEP 2: APPLYING

- Only complete applications will be accepted by the CPI Branch. A complete application contains all the documents listed on the application form.
- See the ***Beautification Projects and Murals Grant Application Form*** for the application checklist.
- Email the application form and supporting information to: [incentives@rmwb.ca](mailto:incentives@rmwb.ca).

### *Important things to know*

- For beautification projects that do not require a contractor, recipients who directly purchase materials and supplies for their projects may submit a budget with product information and pricing.
- For mural projects, a detailed project budget must be provided. Requirements are described on the ***Beautification Projects and Murals Grant Application Form***.

## STEP 3: APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

- The CPI Branch will review your application for general completeness and quality. Applications will then be referred to Planning and Development for detailed review.
- Planning and Development will contact applicants if revisions or additional information is required.
- The final decision to award or refuse an application is made by the Manager of Planning and Development.
- The CPI Branch will inform applicants of the decision. Applicants who are awarded a grant will be provided with an agreement that sets out the terms and conditions of participating in the program. Applicants must sign and return the agreement to the CPI Branch within 20 business days. Extensions may be granted if recipients require more time to secure financing.

### *Important things to know*

- All decisions are final. There are no appeals.
- Application acceptance by the CPI Branch does not guarantee that the project will receive municipal permits at the construction stage.
- Artwork and mural designs are subject to final approval by the Municipality.
- Applicants with projects on municipal land may be required to carry Commercial General Liability Insurance. Insurance policies must name the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo as “an additional insured” and be maintained for the lifespan of the project.

## STEP 4: OBTAINING YOUR PERMITS

- Before construction may begin, applicants must obtain all necessary permits and authorizations.
- Applicants may apply for permits before, during or after applying for a grant.
- The following permits and authorizations may be required:
  - ❑ **Development Permit** – A development permit may be required. Permitting will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Development permits are issued by the Community Development Planning Branch in Planning and Development.  
Note: All development must adhere to the *Land Use Bylaw*, even if permits are not required.
  - ❑ **Building Permits and Trades Permits** – Building permits and trades permits may be required. Permits are required for most major construction projects, including renovations, alterations, repairs, relocations, demolitions or the change of use in an existing building. Trades permits are required for electrical, plumbing or venting work. Permits are issued by the Safety Codes Services Branch in Planning and Development.
  - ❑ **Authorization to occupy public land** – A letter/agreement authorizing a development, including a temporary installation, flower planters and product displays, on or above a municipal sidewalk or road. Authorizations are issued on a case-by-case basis by the Land Administration Branch of Planning and Development Department.
  - ❑ **Business Licence** – All businesses operating in the Municipality require a valid municipal business licence, unless exempt. Business Licences are issued by the Community Development Planning Branch in Planning and Development.

### *Important things to know*

- Applicants must contact the CPI Branch if their project changes as a result of permitting or construction. A revised agreement may be required.

## STEP 5: CONSTRUCTION

- Construction may begin once the agreement is executed (signed by the Municipality and recipient) and permits are received.
- Construction must be completed in a timely manner. For deadlines, see page 10.
- Once construction is complete (including any inspections), applicants must notify the CPI Branch.

## STEP 6: REIMBURSEMENT

- Applicants must contact the CPI Branch to initiate reimbursement within three months of project completion.
- Separate documentation is required for each grant application.
- Applicants must provide the following information to the CPI Branch:
  - 'After' photos,
  - Original detailed invoices,
  - Permit numbers, and
  - Any other documentation required by the agreement.
- The Municipality will:
  - Complete a site visit to confirm that the project is complete.
  - Verify that property taxes and utility bills are current and paid, that the property is not subject to an unresolved enforcement order, and that the applicant is not subject to a legal dispute with the Municipality, and
  - Verify that all necessary municipal permits were received and are closed and without deficiencies.
- The Municipality will reimburse applicants for eligible costs in accordance with the agreement once the terms and conditions of the agreement have been satisfied. The Municipality reserves the right to determine final qualification upon the final inspection of the completed project.

***Important things to know***

- Applicants are reimbursed for eligible costs based on the lowest estimate and/or final invoice.
- The Municipality will only reimburse applicants for eligible costs.

## DEFINITIONS

**Agreement** means the agreement between the Recipient and the Municipality that sets out the terms and conditions for participating in the Program.

**Applicant** means a property owner or a tenant (with the property owner's permission) who submits an application.

**Beautification** means the process of making visual improvements to the exterior of a building or its frontage to enhance its appearance and appeal.

**Commercial** means a building intended to accommodate the buying or selling of goods and services. Commercial developments include establishments used for the purposes of offices, retail stores, personal services, business services, food and beverage, and entertainment such as theatres and cinemas.

**CPI Branch** means the Community Partnerships and Initiatives Branch (Community Investment Program (CIP)) of the Community and Protective Services Department, which is responsible for the financial administration of the Program.

**Downtown** means the area identified on the Program Area Map on page 17.

**Downtown Revitalization Incentive Program ("the Program")** means a short-term grant program for property owners and businesses in Downtown. The Program is intended to encourage and support the Downtown's revitalization.

**Grant** means a transfer of monies from the Municipality to a Recipient for a project or purpose according to the requirements outlined in the Downtown Revitalization Incentives Program Administrative Procedure Phase 2 FIN-320-P01 ("Administrative Procedure").

**Institutional** means a building developed to serve a community's social, educational, health, cultural, faith and recreational needs.

**Mixed-use** means a building with Commercial uses at-grade and Residential uses above.

**Municipality** means the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

**Mural** means any painting, mosaic or graphic art which is applied professionally to all or a portion of an exterior wall of a building for the purposes of decoration or artistic expression, and which depict a scene or event of natural, social, cultural or historic significance.

**Phase 1** means the initial pilot project of the Program commencing June 29, 2020 with an end date of December 31, 2020.

**Phase 2** means the updated and extended Program commencing April 2021 with an end date of March 31, 2022.

**Program** means the Downtown Revitalization Incentives Program (Phase 2).

**Program Guidelines** means a document or documents that provides a detailed explanation of the Program to guide Applicants through the application process. The Program Guidelines provide an overview of the Program and Grants, and sets out eligibility, application and assessment processes, and design standards, where applicable.

**Public Road** means the right-of-way for a primary highway, secondary highway, street or lane that is registered at Land Titles and is used or intended to be used to accommodate vehicle traffic.

**Recipient** means an Applicant that is approved by the Municipality to receive a Grant.

**Residential** means a building that is regularly used by its occupants as a permanent place of abode, which is made one's home as opposed to one's place of business, and which has housekeeping and cooking facilities for its occupants only.

**Restricted Commercial** means a Commercial use that may involve alcohol, nudity or gambling. Restricted Commercial includes, but is not limited to, adult entertainment facilities, casinos, cannabis retail stores, drinking lounges and nightclubs.

**Storefront** means a business, potentially with large windows for displaying goods and services available inside.

# PROGRAM AREA MAP

