

## POLICY C216C - STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM POLICY UPDATES

### Recommendation

That Executive Committee recommend to City Council:

That the revised Storefront Improvement Policy C216D, as set out in Attachment 1 of the January 21, 2026, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE03042, be approved.

<b>Requested Action</b>	Decision required
<b>ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle</b>	<b>ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals</b>
<b>CONNECTED</b> This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	<b>Urban Places</b>
<b>City Plan Values</b>	THRIVE.
<b>Corporate Business Plan</b>	Transforming for the future
<b>Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C216C - Storefront Improvement Program Policy</li> <li>• Storefront Improvement Program</li> </ul>
<b>Related Council Discussions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• August 19, 2014, Sustainable Development report CR_139, Amendments to City Policy C216A</li> <li>• November 28, 2017, Regional and Economic Development report CR_5179, Incentive Programs Supporting Commercial Reinvestment</li> <li>• June 18, 2018, Regional and Economic Development report CR_5478, Facade Improvement Program/Development Incentive Program Review</li> <li>• May 23, 2019, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development report CR_6414, Policy Amendments for the Facade Improvement Program and Development Incentive Program</li> <li>• March 5, 2025, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02251, Development Incentive Program</li> </ul>

## **POLICY C216C - STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM POLICY UPDATES**

### **Previous Council/Committee Action**

At the March 31, 2025, Special Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration prepare amendments to Policy C216C - Storefront Improvement Program Policy to allow projects to be eligible for funding once every 10 years.

### **Executive Summary**

- The Storefront Improvement Program is a matching reimbursement grant program that supports storefront renovations to commercial buildings within the City's 13 Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) and two Target Areas: Little Italy and Norwood Boulevard.
- This report recommends two policy updates to the Storefront Improvement Program.
  - Eligible commercial buildings should be permitted to reapply to the program after 10 years.
  - The piloted Storefront Refresh grant should be added to the policy.

## **REPORT**

The Storefront Improvement Program is a matching reimbursement grant program that supports storefront renovations to commercial buildings within the City's 13 Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) and two Target Areas: Little Italy and Norwood Boulevard.

The Storefront Improvement Program's intended outcome is to support the enhancement and maintenance of walkable, vibrant, thriving and attractive commercial main streets. The program contributes to The City Plan outcome that "Edmonton's commercial areas support a diverse economy by attracting skills, talent and investment while supporting small business."

The language of the program's policy statement has been updated to improve the program's alignment with The City Plan. The intent of the policy statement remains the same.

This report recommends that the revised policy be approved as presented in Attachment 1. The current C216C Storefront Improvement Program Policy was approved at the May 23, 2019, City Council meeting (Attachment 2). Attachment 3 is an overview of the Storefront Improvement Program to date, including success measures.

Administration has proposed changes to the program to allow projects to be eligible for funding once every 10 years. Since the Storefront Improvement Program's launch in 2002 as the Downtown Retail and Commercial Complex Reinvestment Policy, the program has supported a total of 310 projects. This proposed policy change will allow 153 buildings that received the grant between 2002 and 2015 to be eligible for grant funding again to support storefront renovations. Administration anticipates an additional one or two grant applications per year as a result of this change, which can be accommodated through the current \$500,000 per year program budget.

Administration also recommends adding the Storefront Refresh Grant to the policy. This grant was piloted in 2019 using Storefront Improvement Program funding to support smaller projects that have an impact on the street but might not be large enough in scope to apply for a Storefront Improvement Program grant.

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Since 2015, approximately 90 per cent of the grant funding has gone to property owners while 10 per cent has gone to business tenants. Property owners tend to be the ones financially responsible for large exterior building repairs and improvements that are supported through the program, such as window upgrades or new cladding, while the business tenants are responsible for ongoing maintenance, repairs, signage and interior renovations/improvements.

The Storefront Refresh Grant will be accessed more by business tenants than property owners since the renovation support is more within a business tenant's responsibility. Examples include installing a new fascia sign or repainting door and window frames.

### **Community Insight**

No structured community engagement was undertaken for this policy change; however, Administration receives a small number of inquiries per year from business tenants or the property owners of buildings that have received a grant in the past who wish to reapply for a second grant.

The Business Improvement Area Executive Directors have expressed support for this policy change based on feedback they have received from their members. Administration has also engaged with past program participants, who have indicated support for the proposed changes.

### **GBA+**

Demographic data on program participants is not currently collected. Some demographic data will be requested on a voluntary basis starting in 2026.

Anecdotally, Administration has heard from Business Improvement Area Executive Directors that some business tenants or property owners find participating in the program challenging due to language barriers. Work is ongoing and iterative in an attempt to simplify the program process and the language used in program guides and application forms. While the program's scale, budget and limited eligible participants<sup>1</sup> means that translating all program materials into multiple languages is impractical, solutions employed include on-site meetings with potential participants to discuss the program face-to-face, administrative help to fill out application forms, translation support by family members and encouraging the use of free translation services such as Google Translate.

### **Environment and Climate Review**

This report was reviewed for environment and climate risks. Based on the review completed no significant interactions with the City's environmental and climate goals were identified within the scope of this report.

### **Attachments**

1. Revised Policy C216D - Storefront Improvement Program
2. Policy C216C Storefront Improvement Program (current)

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<sup>1</sup> Business and property owners within Business Improvement Areas and Special Areas, versus all business or property owners within the City.

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### 3. Storefront Improvement Program Summary