

Downtown Incentives

Program Guidelines

February 2018

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Program Guidelines

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Introduction

The City of Grande Prairie is dedicated to the revitalization of the downtown core and its vision for a vibrant city centre where people live, work, and play. The Downtown Incentives Program is designed to contribute to this vision by encouraging building improvements and new residential development in the City's core. On January 25th, 2016 City Council approved Policy 316, Downtown Incentives Program.

The program is comprised of three components:

The **Urban Residential Development Grant** is designed to encourage property owners within the Program Boundary to invest in new development and/or redevelopment of their properties for Mixed-Use or multi-unit residential use. Meanwhile, the **Façade Improvement Grant** rewards downtown building owners and tenants for making improvements to the fronts of their buildings that enhance aesthetic appeal, pedestrian access and public safety. The **Patio Grant** provides a financial incentive for business owners to develop an outdoor patio space and encourage an increased public presence on the streets of downtown. Finally, the **Demolition Grant** rewards property owners for removing under utilized buildings within the downtown core.

For more information:

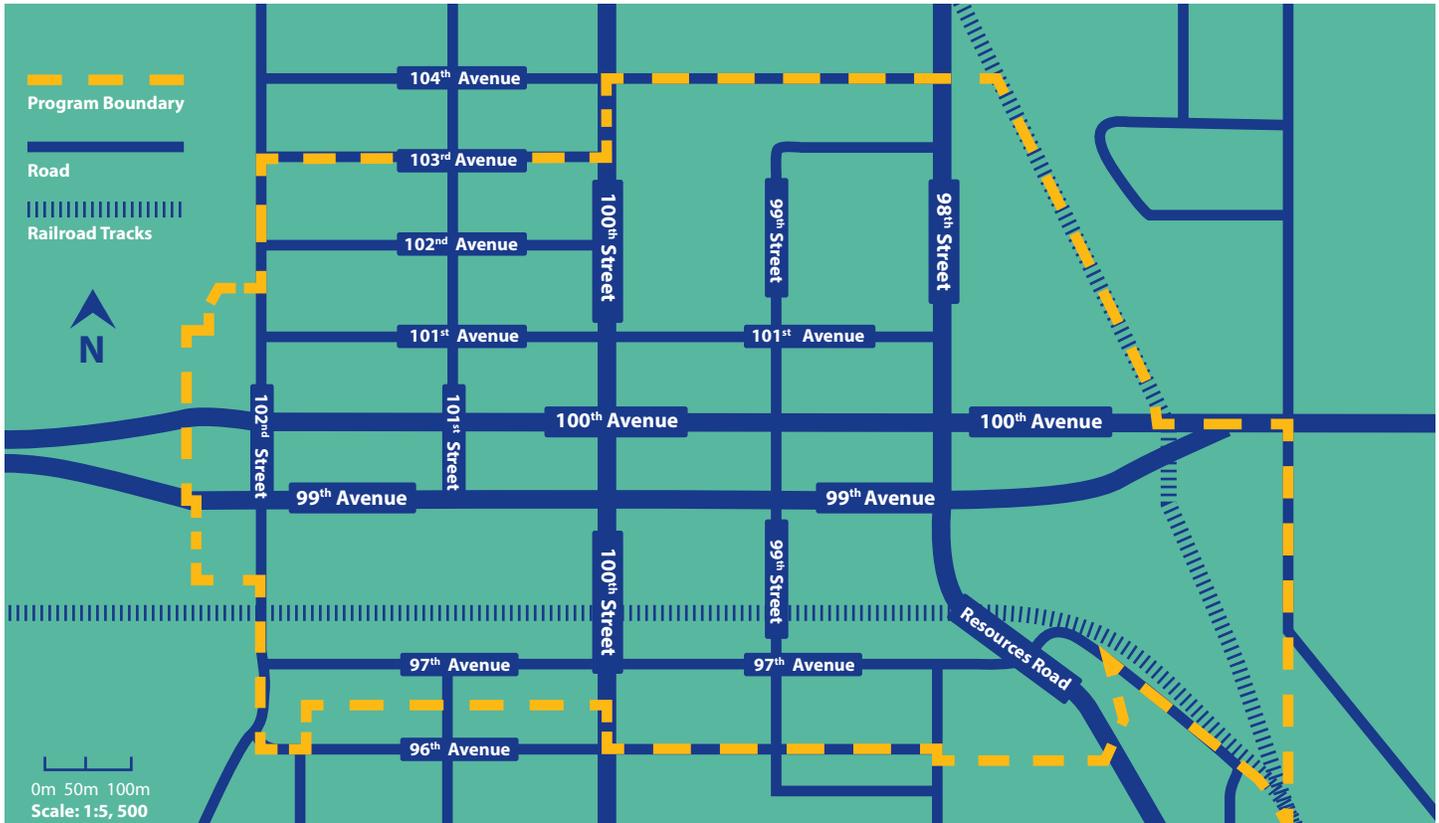
Program Coordinator

downtownincentives@cityofgp.com



Program Area

The Program applies to projects within the designated Downtown Incentives Program Boundary as defined by City



Why Downtown Grande Prairie?

Strengthening our core is a major component of Council's Strategic Plan. To achieve this, the City of Grande Prairie is investing heavily in its Downtown. The Downtown Infrastructure Assessment, Streetscape Enhancement & Rehabilitation Project and the South Montrose Master Plan are leading to key investments in the public realm. These investments include improved streetscapes, the creation of new public spaces and upgraded infrastructure to accommodate increased density.

The Downtown Incentives Program contributes to this vision by engaging the local business community in the redevelopment of their downtown businesses. The Urban Residential Development Grant will help encourage the development of higher density housing options to bring

more residents into the area. The Façade Improvement Grant will allow business owners to enhance the appearance and impact of their building's frontage and the Patio Grant will help businesses add outdoor amenities, bringing a greater public presence to the streets of downtown and creating a more vibrant core. Finally the Demolition Grant will help property owners remove underutilized buildings.

Together, these programs are designed to capitalize on the existing strengths of our Downtown, including more than 500 businesses and several cultural facilities. The downtown enhancement project and the South Montrose Master Plan will enable visitors and residents to enjoy these many amenities while the Downtown Incentives Program will help local businesses continue to invest in their downtown.



About the Grants

The Urban Residential Development Grant

The Urban Residential Development Grant is intended to encourage residential and Mixed-Use development in the Downtown. Infill development and redevelopment within the program area is eligible for incentive grants of \$10,000 per Dwelling Unit for apartment buildings and \$15,000 per Dwelling Unit for Mixed-Use Apartment Buildings. Minimum Dwelling units are required as per Land Use Bylaw C-1260. In addition to the per unit grant, residential projects are eligible for two other funding opportunities. Applicable projects may qualify for a three year tax deferral. The tax deferral applies to the municipal portion of the Incremental Assessment Value and needs to be approved each year by Council. Projects may also receive a grant to cover half of the cost of upsizing water and wastewater connections to a maximum of \$50,000.

The Façade Improvement Grant

The Façade Improvement Grant is meant to help people improve the face of their business by providing funds for building upgrades. In addition to improving the appearance of the building, these upgrades should provide benefits to the pedestrian realm. The Façade Improvement Grant is a matching grant that will provide 50% of the project cost up to the lesser of \$750 per Front Foot or a total of \$50,000.

The Patio Grant

Patios help to create a vibrant downtown by placing activities outside and connecting businesses to the streets. In order to encourage their development, the City of Grande Prairie is offering a matching grant to assist with the cost of construction. The matching grant provides business owners with 50% of the patio's cost, up to \$5,000.

The Demolition Grant

According to CPTED principles, vacant and unmaintained buildings have been linked to increased crime, risk to public health and welfare, by creating the impression the space is not cared for. The Demolition Grant is a matching grant that provides business owners with 50% of the Hard Costs of demolition, up to a maximum of \$50,000.

Any project approved under the Downtown Incentives Program is eligible to have the City portion of any applicable building and development permit fees waived. Amounts remitted to other levels of government remain payable.



Design Goals

The Design Goals are intended to provide designers with direction on what the program is trying to achieve. The goals are not meant to dictate style, but to indicate what the City is hoping the designs will accomplish. The Design Goals should be considered in the development of projects for the Urban Residential Development Grant and the Patio Grant.

Projects being considered for the Façade Improvement Grant must achieve at least five of the following design goals to be eligible for a grant. Preference will be given to designs that include a goal from each of the categories, though any combination of the goals will be accepted.

Pedestrian Realm

Building has a Connection to the Pedestrian Realm

The building frontage is adjacent to the sidewalk and access is at ground-level. Pedestrians are able to easily access the building. There are no obstructions to the entrance, such as parking or stairs.

In this example, the building has a strong connection to the pedestrian realm. The entrance has unobstructed access from the sidewalk and there are benches built into the façade.

"Temple Bar, Dublin, Nov 2010" by Flickr user M. King. CC Attribution 2.0 License



Human Scale Design

The design features improve how the building is experienced from a pedestrian's perspective. The façade includes stylistic variation, rather than large blank walls. The signage is designed to be appealing to people on the street, rather than super-sized for vehicles passing by.

This streetscape exemplifies human scale design. The first level of the buildings has a distinct appearance to create a distinct pedestrian level appearance. There is stylistic variation and no long monotonous faces. Further, the signage is designed to address pedestrians.



Accessibility

The design improves accessibility, such as by providing a ramp for access, providing an entrance wide enough to accommodate people with mobility devices or installing handrails. Some typical standards are: doors 915mm (3') or wider accommodate people with mobility aids, mats level with floor using mat sinkages to reduce tripping hazards and thresholds that are bevelled and no higher than 13mm (1/2") to allow wheelchairs to pass more easily. Refer to the Barrier-Free Design Guide at: www.safetycodes.ab.ca

The entrance to this shop is easily accessible. There is a ramp with a very gently slope to address the slight change in grade and the entrance is large enough to accommodate mobility aids.

"kiwanja_brighton_shops_10" by Flickr user Ken Banks. CC Attribution 2.0 License



Colourful Greenery

The design incorporates greenery to add visual interest and colour. This can be achieved by using planters or by having planting beds, if there is sufficient space. Planters can provide a seasonal element, such as the added colour of flowers in the summer.

The planters on the building above provide a variety of colour and create visual interest.

"P80500311-Westminster" by Flickr user Gail Frederick. CC Attribution 2.0 License



Public Safety

Natural Surveillance

The design improves natural surveillance by allowing for a clear view from the interior to the exterior of the building. This can be achieved by incorporating larger windows and reducing obstructions to the line-of-sight. This discourages crimes by increasing the likelihood that someone will be able to see what is happening.

The large windows on the front of this shop allow people in the store to easily see out onto the sidewalk and allows people outside to see in. This discourages criminal activity as it increases the likelihood of witnesses.

"Bookmarc" by Flickr user Mike G. CC Attribution 2.0 License



Lighting

The design features improved lighting, which eliminates dark areas where people could hide. This discourages crime by eliminating dark areas with poor visibility.

The restaurant in this photo utilizes lighting to improve public safety. The outdoor lighting illuminates the public realm and the increased visibility discourages crime. Further, lighting on the stairs reduces tripping hazards.



Territoriality

Territoriality means using features to clearly differentiate between public, private and semi-private spaces. This discourages trespassers. It is more appropriate for uses with specific user groups, such as offices and residences. This can be achieved by using a different ground treatment to indicate private/semi-private space, using low fencing or vegetation to frame the space without obstructing visibility or by using a sign to indicate appropriate users.

The shop pictured utilizes low fencing and vegetation to keep people from the display window. This reduces opportunities for vandalism by indicating a space where people aren't supposed to be. Appropriate user space is marked by the seating to the left of the entrance.

"Ottolenghi" by Flickr user THOR. CC Attribution 2.0 License



Winter Conditions

Maximizes Sun Exposure

The design reduces shadows on the pedestrian realm providing greater sun exposure. This can be achieved by removing large overhanging elements, such as awnings. This can also be done by reducing the height of the cornice line to allow for more sunlight on the opposite side of the street.

This business maximizes sun exposure by limiting obstructions that would block sunlight from the sidewalk. It also allows more natural light into the shop through the high windows.

"salonred kids" by Flickr user Lee Coursey. CC Attribution 2.0 License



Provides Protection from Wind and Snow

The design features an alcove or space where pedestrians can take shelter from wind and snow temporarily. This will allow visitors to prepare for entering or leaving the business by knocking snow off their shoes, closing or opening an umbrella or similar activities. This can be achieved by providing alcoves or wind breaks. They should be designed in a way that does not obstruct visibility.

This storefront features an alcove where visitors can seek temporary refuge from the elements.

"Nelsons - 21 Staithe Street, Wells-next-the-sea - Nelsons Coffee Shop Ltd" by Flickr user Elliott Brown. CC Attribution 2.0 License



Provides Landscaping that has Colour and Texture in the Winter

The design incorporates vegetation that maintains its form and colour in the winter months. This can be achieved by using evergreens, rather than deciduous plants.

The planters in this picture contain shrubs that hold their colour in the winter months, adding to the façade's appearance all year round.

"34.Snow2.Downtown.WDC.9dec05" by Flickr user Elvert Barnes. CC Attribution 2.0 License

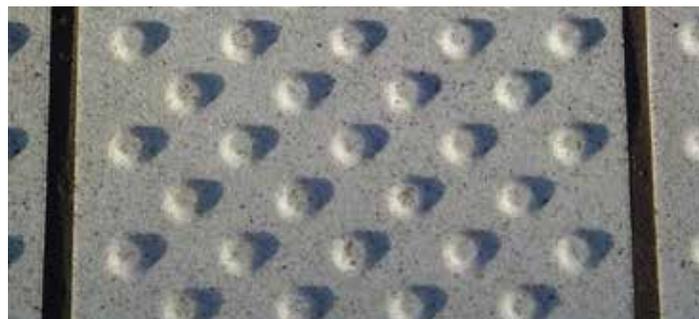


Uses Slip-Resistant Materials

The design utilizes slip-resistant materials to reduce hazards during wet or icy conditions. There are several non-slip options such as specially designed metal grating, ceramic tiles or concrete finishes. Many options are designed to withstand snow removal equipment.

This image shows a slip-resistant tile that could be used to make an entrance safer in the winter conditions.

"Non-Slip Sidewalk Tile" by Flickr user born1945. CC Attribution 2.0 License



Innovative and Artistic Design

Features Unique Architectural Elements

The design has elements that are distinct and set the building apart from typical designs. This can be done in a variety of ways such as a unique cornice line or distinctive trim.

The bakery pictured features unique architectural features such as its distinct cornice line and trim. The features work together to create an aesthetic theme of old-time America that matches the business' brand.



Utilizes Sustainable Building Design

The design incorporates sustainable practices to reduce the building's environmental impact. This can be achieved in a variety of ways. One example, is to use low impact materials. Another, is to incorporate a green-wall or a solar-wall. Businesses can also accommodate active transportation by providing bike racks.

This building features a green wall. It provides the environmental benefits of vegetation while helping to insulate the building and create visual interest.



Incorporates Texture, Pattern, Shapes, Colours and Materials to Create a Unique Design

The design utilizes texture, pattern, colour or material to create a distinct appearance. This can be done by using a combination of colour and pattern that creates visual interest, or by using materials in a creative way to create a distinct appearance. This can also be done by simply using several colours or materials.

The shopfront in this picture uses a variety of colours to highlight architectural features and make the façade more interesting.



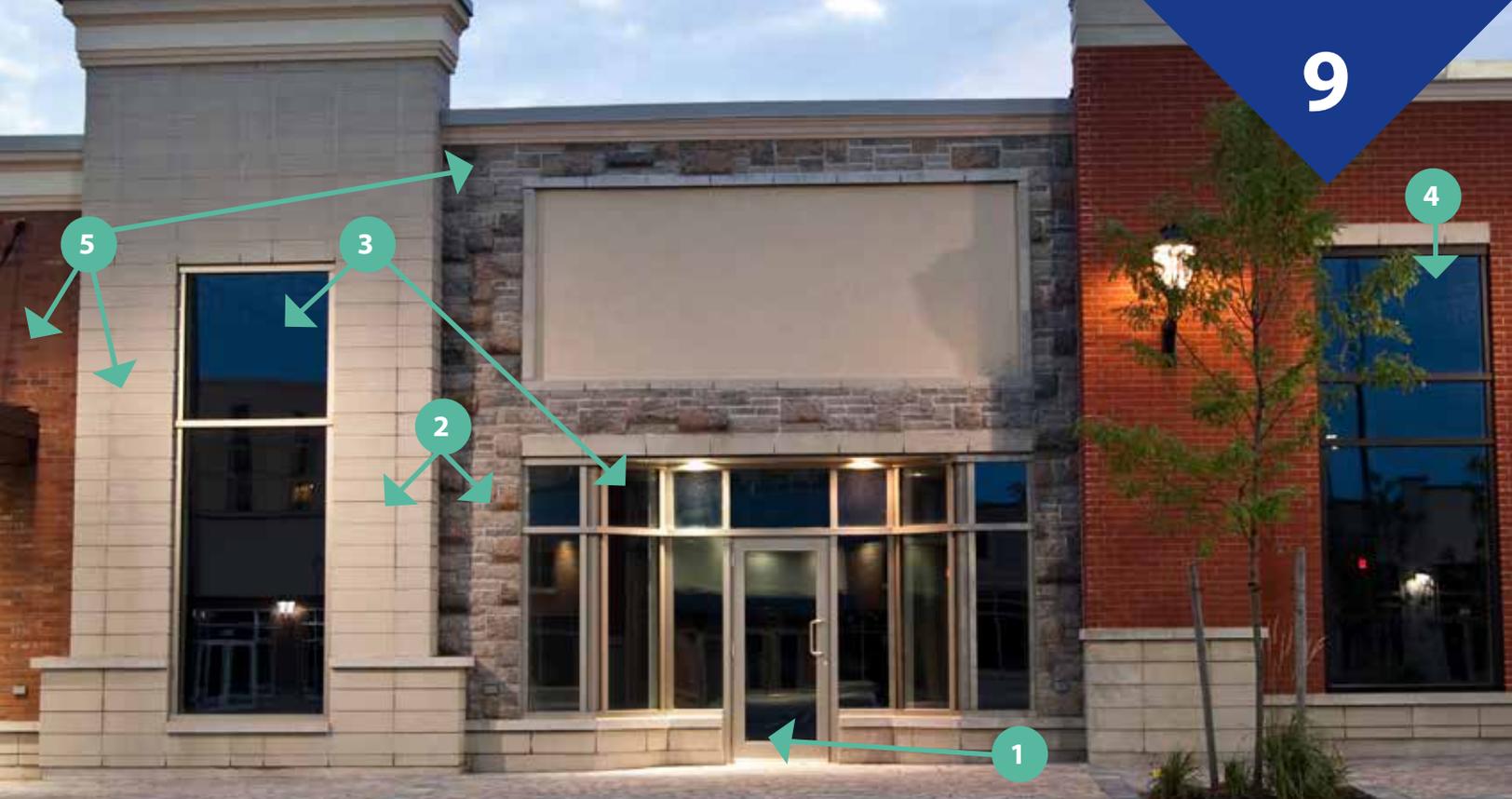
Features a Public Art Element

The project incorporates an element of public art such as a mural or sculpture. This is useful for creating visual interest on an otherwise blank wall. A mural or sculptural element could have the added effect of indicating the type of business.

The mural on this coffee shop makes the building more interesting and also gives passersby an indication of the type of business inside.



"Coffee shop mural" by Flickr user Ruth Hartnup. CC Attribution 2.0 License



Example 1

This example achieves 5 of the Design Goals

1. Connection to the pedestrian realm. The business has unobstructed access from the sidewalk at ground level.
2. Human scale design. The façade employs materials to create stylistic breaks to create stylistic diversity along a long building frontage.
3. Natural surveillance. Windows across the front provide visibility.
4. Maximizes sun exposure. The high windows maximize natural light. Also, the façade does not have excessive protrusion that would block sunlight.
5. Incorporates materials to create a unique design. The façade features a variety of materials in an attractive way that creates a distinct appearance.





Example 2

This example achieves 7 of the Design Goals

1. Connection to the pedestrian realm. The business has unobstructed access to the pedestrian realm at ground level.
2. Human scale design. It has a unique character at ground-level, has visual interest and provides human scale signage.
3. Greenery. The building has vegetation growing on the façade that provides colour.
4. Natural surveillance. The large windows allows patrons to see out onto the street.
5. Lighting. The business provides exterior lighting.
6. Maximizes sun exposure. The higher windows allow natural light to enter the space.
7. Incorporates colour and materials to create a unique design.



Deadlines

Application deadlines for all four grants are established annually by the Program Coordinator. Check the program webpage for deadlines: cityofgp.com/downtownincentives

Requirements

Projects are required to meet all legal requirements including those in the Land Use Bylaw, the Downtown Enhancement Plan, Building Codes and any other applicable regulations. The Urban Residential Development Grant does not have additional requirements, but applicants are encouraged to consider the Design Goals in their design. Projects being considered for the Façade Improvement Grant must achieve at least five of the Design Goals. For the Patio Grant, the design must allow for an unobstructed pedestrian space that is at least 2m wide. If there is not enough space to achieve this, it can be provided with decking. The applicant is required to arrange any necessary agreements with Engineering Services and the Transportation Department.

Process

How to Apply

1. (Optional) Meet with the Program Coordinator to discuss your project and the application process.
2. Prepare a design that meets all legal requirements and considers the program's Design Goals.
3. Submit a completed application to the Program Coordinator via email to: downtownincentives@cityofgp.com

What to Submit

- Completed Application Form**
- Preconstruction Photos** – Photos shall show the current site and its context including adjacent structures, roadways, sidewalks, and landscaping. Preconstruction Photos are not required for the Urban Residential Development Grant.
- Site Plan** – The plan should indicate all structures and their context including adjacent structures, roadways, sidewalks, and landscaping. *A site plan is not required for the Façade Improvement Grant.*
- Project Description** – A complete description of the project. For the Urban Residential Development Grant this must include the proposed uses and number of residential units. For the Façade Improvement Grant this will include how the design achieves the required Design Goals. For the Patio Grant this will include the intended use of the space and intended user groups.
- Project Drawings** – Drawings should show the proposed design. Construction drawings are acceptable.
- Project Quotes** – At least two separate quotes that indicate the cost of the project. *This is not required for the Urban Residential Development Grant* (NOTE: Reimbursement will be based on the project's actual Hard Costs).
- Proof of Means** – Confirmation of project funding. May include a grant confirmation, bank statement or letter from lender or other funding source. *This is only required for the Urban Residential Development Grant.*



The Review Process

The Program Coordinator will bring completed applications to the Downtown Incentives Program Review Committee for review. The Committee will review each application and vote to approve with conditions or deny the application. Approval with conditions will be given in cases where the proposed project only requires minor changes to meet the program requirements. The Program Coordinator will notify applicants of the Committee's decision.

All decisions of the committee will be made according to Procedure 316.

Funding

1. The funding available for an applicant's project will be determined based on the quotes provided. The reimbursement amount will be based on actual Hard Costs.
2. The Program Coordinator will prepare a Reimbursement Agreement that will indicate the terms of the grant. The agreement will be signed by the applicant and the City of Grande Prairie. Only work commenced after the agreement has been signed is eligible for reimbursement.
3. The applicant is required to obtain all necessary building permits, development permits and any others that apply to the project.
4. Once construction is complete, contact the Project Coordinator to arrange a post-construction inspection. For the Urban Residential Development Grant, a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy is required, rather than a post-construction inspection.
5. Submit a letter requesting reimbursement including copies of all paid invoices.
6. The Program Coordinator will process the request and prepare a reimbursement cheque consistent with the terms of the Reimbursement Agreement.



Definitions

Apartment Building – means a three (3) storey or larger building having a minimum of 24 or more Dwelling units.

Application Requirements - means the information required to make an application complete and an eligible candidate for a Grant according to the terms and processes of this and other City Policies.

Building Permit – means the document authorizing a development issued by Inspection Services pursuant to the Alberta Building Code.

Demolition - the removal or partial removal of a building structure, requiring a demolition permit. This must conform to the City's Inspection Services' Demolition Permit requirements.

Development Permit – means a document authorizing the commencement of a development pursuant to the provisions of the City of Grande Prairie Land Use Bylaw C-1260.

Downtown Incentives Program Boundary – means the area defined by Council specifically for the purpose of the Downtown Incentives Program as indicated in Attachment A.

Downtown Incentives Program Grants - means the financial support available under the Downtown Incentives Program that includes the Urban Residential Development Grants, Façade Improvement Grants and/or Patio Grants.

Downtown Incentives Program Guidelines - means the guidelines approved by the City Manager which are used to direct the intended effect of this Policy.

Downtown Incentives Program Review Committee - means a committee appointed by the City Manager with the responsibility for evaluating applications filed under this Policy.

Dwelling - means a complete building or self-contained portion of a building used by a household, containing sleeping, cooking and sanitary facilities intended as a permanent residence and having independent entrance either directly from the outside of the building or through a common area inside the building.

Façade - any side of a building facing a public way or space, excluding lanes.

Façade Improvement Grant– means a grant to a business or property owner of a proposed or existing commercial building for improvements made to the Façade that meet the design goals set out in the Downtown Incentives Program Guidelines.

Front Foot – a linear measurement of the side of a building facing a public way or space, excluding lanes.

Hard Costs – means labour and materials for the building structure.

Incremental Assessed Value - means the increase in the assessed value of property located in the Downtown Incentives Program Boundary subsequent to improvements. For example, if preconstruction assessment was \$1,000,000 and post-construction assessment was \$5,000,000, the incremental assessed value would be \$4,000,000.

Mixed Use Apartment Building - means a vertical apartment-style building including commercial, retail, or institutional use(s) and three (3) or more Dwelling units (or "Dwelling unit, supported" if listed in the applicable district), and having:

1. the same land use district for all uses within the building;
2. only residential uses located above the second floor;
3. commercial, retail, or institutional uses located with street-side frontage (facing and visible from the street); and
4. Dwelling units and commercial, retail, and institutional uses which may have shared building entrance or access and facilities (e.g. service entrances, parking areas, ground floor hallways, elevators, stairwells, shared main building entry). However, Dwelling units' entry or access shall not be through a commercial, retail, or institutional development.

Occupancy Permit - means written approval to occupy a building once all construction is complete and meets the requirements as set out in the Safety Codes Act, the Regulations, and the City of Grande Prairie Building Bylaw.

Patio – means an outdoor amenity area constructed at grade.

Patio Grant – means a grant to a business or property owner of a commercial building for the addition of a patio area.

Post Construction Inspection - means the inspection by the Program Coordinator following completion of construction activities.

Program Coordinator - means a person, or persons, appointed by the City Manager to implement this Policy and related procedures.

Proof of Means - means confirmation of financial ability to complete the proposed project. May include a grant confirmation, bank statement or letter from lender or other funding source

Reimbursement Agreement - means the contract between the City of Grande Prairie and the business or property owner setting out the terms of reimbursement.

Urban Residential Development Grant– means a grant to a property owner for the development and/or conversion of a building for Mixed-use and/or multi-unit residential occupancy. Applications for this grant are subjected to Proof of Means.

