

Lac La Biche County *Policy*

TITLE: Business Improvement Program

POLICY NO: ED-10-001

RESOLUTION: 25.382

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 23, 2025

DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE: Grants & Community
Development

NEXT REVIEW DATE: September 23, 2028

POLICY STATEMENT:

The downtown and corridor areas of a community serve as the focal point for business development and tourist visitation. The appearance and accessibility of these areas contributes to the appeal of the community in this respect. Likewise, access to businesses throughout the County plays an important part in the overall economic viability of the community. It is important that businesses are easily accessible and clearly identified.

This policy establishes financial incentives aimed to revitalize the downtown areas of the Hamlets of Plamondon and Lac La Biche through:

- Aesthetic improvements to external building features; and/or
- Improvements that enhance customer accessibility (e.g. wheelchair ramps); and/or
- Improvements that directly provide opportunities for increased customer utilization of downtown area businesses (patios, decks, etc.)
- Increase business visibility throughout Lac La Biche County with new or enhanced Business Specific Signage.

PRINCIPLES:

- i. The Business Improvement Program will be divided into two streams:
 - a. **Business Specific Signage** throughout Lac La Biche County, which is available exclusively to businesses; and
 - b. **Exterior Improvements** for properties zoned as defined in this policy.
- ii. Applicants to the Business Improvement Program must apply separately to each program stream, and each application must meet the criteria of the program stream. Some applicants will meet the criteria of both streams, other applicants will only meet the criteria of one stream.

Business Specific Signage

1. Business Specific Signage refers to signage that is permanently affixed to the external building façade, is visible from the public right-of-way, and pertains specifically to the business which has applied for the funding. This is the type of signage which would belong to the business operating on the property and would be changed/removed if/when that business no longer operates at this location.
 - a. Permanent exterior signage, visible from public areas, tied directly to the business.
 - b. Funding: 50% cost-share, up to \$10,000 per business (lifetime maximum).
 - c. Applies to:
 - i. Owner-operated businesses.
 - ii. Tenant businesses (with landlord authorization).

- iii. Multiple eligible businesses in the same building.
 - iv. Prior signage grants count toward the \$10,000 cap.
2. Ineligible Sign Projects include:
- a. New Development.
 - b. Replacement signage with no significant improvement.

Exterior Improvements

3. Exterior Improvements refers to façade improvements to structures, as well as any other improvement to a property that is generally visible from the public right of way. Exterior Improvements does not include signage which is erected with the intended purpose of identifying the business located at/within a certain property (see the “Business Specific Signage” stream).
4. The property must be zoned one of the following:
- a. Central Commercial;
 - b. Arterial Commercial;
 - c. Highway Commercial;
 - d. Neighborhood Commercial; or
 - e. Light Industrial;
5. Funding for Exterior Improvements is awarded on a “per parcel” basis, regardless of the number of businesses situated on that individual property. Multiple businesses operating from a single building/property will not increase the maximum amount of funding that the project is eligible to receive.
6. Funding will not exceed more than 50% of eligible expenses (based on a 50% cost-share) up to a \$20,000 (lifetime maximum). Properties which receive less funding than the maximum permitted for that property, may reapply for the remaining eligible amount.
7. Tenant businesses may apply for funding for Exterior Improvements for the building in which they are situated, subject to the eligibility of that property, and the property owner’s approval to apply to the program.
8. In instances where the costs for the different project components cannot be clearly identified, the County reserves the right to impute a value it believes is a fair approximation of the costs.
9. Ineligible Exterior Improvements include the following:
- a. Interior work, new builds/developments, soft landscaping, parking lot paving, cleanup, studies, shutters, roof work.
 - b. Movable features (e.g., planters, bike racks, portable furniture).

Intake Period

10. The County will put forth a call for applications with a specific intake deadline at the beginning of each calendar year. If funding is not fully expended, Administration may offer additional application intakes.

Application Evaluation and Funding Decisions

11. The following requirements must be met at the time of the application submission. If one or more of these requirements is not met, but the applicant remedies them prior to the evaluation of applications, their application may be considered.
 - a. Must have a valid business license
 - b. Must normally be a registered corporation (exceptions possible). Societies and religious/charitable organizations are not eligible.
 - c. If tenant, must provide property owner's approval.
 - d. Applicant must have no outstanding taxes, utilities, legal disputes, or bylaw issues.

Applicants must use prescribed application and budget forms, before and after photos and renderings submitted by email. Preliminary discussions with Administration are encouraged.

General

12. Neither the Business Specific Signage stream nor the Exterior Improvements stream is available for new developments. However, tenant businesses which move into an existing, developed property may still apply under the Business Specific Signage stream.
13. Eligible Costs include the following:
 - a. Third-party design, labor, materials, construction.
 - b. Transportation, installation, permit fees, façade prep, debris removal, and equipment rental.
14. Ineligible costs include the following:
 - a. Costs before application deadline, GST, insurance, tools, applicant/relative labor, or owner-supplied materials.
 - b. Incidental consumables (e.g., fuel, small tools).
 - c. Other costs as deemed ineligible by Administration.
15. All exterior improvements must comply with Lac La Biche County's Land Use Bylaw.
16. Successful applicants must enter into an agreement pertaining to the approved incentive. The agreement will:
 - a. Refer to the requirements of the program, as established in this policy.
 - b. Include standard provisions such as indemnity clauses, and conflict of interest provisions, etc.
 - c. Identify which project components were approved (if the project was not approved in full)
 - d. Specify a project completion date and project reporting date.
17. Administration is authorized to amend the funding agreement, if it does not change the approved amount of funding awarded or change the general nature of the project.
18. Funding for both Business Signage and Exterior Improvements will be based on the costs submitted at the time of the application, and as approved in the grant agreement. Applicants are responsible for all cost overruns. The grant will not be increased if costs are higher than initially projected.

19. All recipients will be required to submit a final report, which will include:
- a. Photos of the completed project elements.
 - b. Copies of the approved invoices. The invoices must show the billed prices for the different project components as identified in the application.
 - c. Proof of payment information, to the satisfaction of the County.
 - d. A completed project reporting form, as prescribed by the County.
 - e. Permit numbers for County development/construction permits issued for the project, if applicable.
20. Approved funding will only be issued following the completion of the work and when the required documentation is provided and reviewed. No advances will be provided.

Program Budget

21. Lac La Biche County may earmark funding available for applications for each of the two streams, the Business Specific-Signage Stream, and the Exterior Improvements Stream.
22. The County will offer one intake per year, subject to available funding. If funding is not entirely expended in the first round of approvals, the County, at its discretion, may offer an additional intake in that year, or in a subsequent year. In the event that the available budget for a given intake period is insufficient to fund every recommended request Administration will bring a request to Council for additional funding.

"Original Signed"

Mayor

September 29, 2025

Date

"Original Signed"

Chief Administrative Officer

September 29, 2025

Date

SPECIAL NOTES/CROSS REFERENCE:

AMENDMENT DATE: