



Barrier-Free Grant Program Guidelines

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Program Overview

Purpose

The Barrier-Free Grant is designed to support Commercial property owners through financial incentives for the removal of physical, architectural or technological barriers that prevent persons with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities from accessing or using public commercial spaces on an equal basis with others. Eligible Accessibility Improvement Projects include improvements to the interior or exterior of the building, including transitions from public to private land, from parking areas to the primary building entrance and ensuring unobstructed access to services for all visitors, patrons and employees.

About the Grants

The following Barrier-Free Grant incentives are available to any existing Commercial property owners within the City of Grande Prairie (“City”).

Matching Grant

The Barrier-Free Grant is designed to promote a business environment that is accessible to all residents, visitors and employees, through financial incentives for property and business owners to invest in Accessibility Improvement Projects. The Barrier-Free Grant is a matching grant that will provide 50% of project costs up to a maximum of \$10,000 for any Accessibility Improvement Project as identified within the program guidelines.

Waiver of City Fees

The City imposed portions of all Inspection Services Permit Fees, Engineering Services Fees and Planning & Development Fees will be waived for all Accessibility Improvement Projects that meet the criteria of this program.

Accessibility Improvement Projects that do not receive grant money due to funding limitations, but still meet the criteria and timeline of the program are eligible for the waiver of City Fees, subject to committee approval in writing.

Amounts remitted to other levels of government, charged as a result of a penalty or relating to construction not approved under this program remain payable.

Approval under the Barrier-Free Grant does not guarantee approval for relevant Inspection Services, Engineering Services and Planning & Development permits. Successful applicants will be required to meet all permitting requirements and must present a signed Reimbursement Agreement at the time of permit application in order to be eligible for the Waiver of City Fees.

Eligibility

Standards

All Accessibility Improvement Projects must conform to the [City's Land Use Bylaw C-1260](#), [Building Bylaw C-1328](#) and the National Building Code 2019 (AB) Edition.

Additional Resources for Design Guidelines

Projects should also consider resources such as:

- [CSA B651-18 Accessible Design for the Built Environment](#)
- [Alberta Safety Codes Council Barrier-Free Design Guide](#)
- [CNIB Design Needs Guide](#)

Commercial Purposes

Grant funding is available for all existing Commercial buildings within the City of Grande Prairie, as defined within Policy 356 Barrier-Free Grant Program.

Demonstrated Benefits and Eligible Accessibility Improvement Projects

Proposed Accessibility Improvement Projects must clearly demonstrate a benefit to persons with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities.

The following Accessibility Improvement Projects are eligible for grant funding under the Barrier-Free Grant Program:

Accessibility Ramp

A sloping walkway leading from one level to another, which has a slope not more than 1:12

Accessible Signage

The international symbol of accessibility is used in combination with other symbols or words to designate or direct persons with mobility difficulties.

Accessible Washroom

A washroom facility with adequate wheelchair turning radius and transfer space. The accessible toilet, sink, vanity, grab bars, door, and washroom accessories including signage are at the required height.

Audible and Visual Signaling Devices

In addition to the primary purpose of the fire alarm to warn occupants to evacuate a building, audible signals shall be accompanied with visual signals to ensure that people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who are blind receive notification of the alert and /or alarm in an emergency.

Barrier-Free Counter

A counter with a lowered portion that is adapted for a wheelchair. Every counter more than 2m long, at which the public is served, shall have at least one (1) barrier-free section.

Eligibility Con't

Barrier-Free Entranceway

A door with a minimum clear opening width of 850mm. The door includes hardware to use with a single fist with limited strength and does not need tight grasping or twisting of the wrist. The door could also include a power-assisted operator and push buttons if required. The transition of the finished floor between both areas is not more than 13 mm.

Braille Signage

A sign including braille. Braille is a system where raised dots represent letters and words. Unified English Braille is the braille standard for Canada.

Exterior Pedestrian Accessible Route

A designated path of travel for pedestrian access that is clearly marked and provides separation from vehicle traffic. This may utilize signage, ground markings, greenery or other landscaping and design features to create an unobstructed path for users. This includes sidewalk infrastructure transitions from public to private property. Connections must be a minimum 1.5 metres in width and provide unstructured access.

Guards

A protective barrier around openings in floors or at open sides of stairs, landings, balconies, mezzanines, galleries, raised walkways or other locations to prevent accidental falls from one level to another. Such a barrier may or may not have opening through it.

Handrails

A long narrow bar that you can hold onto for support, for example when you are going up or down stairs.

Parking Lot Improvements

Includes the creation of a new accessible parking stalls, installation of para-ramps and sidewalk improvements to ensure a barrier free path of travel from parking areas and pedestrian cross-walks to the primary building entrance.

Passenger Elevating Devices

Mechanical devices for moving people safely and efficiently from one level to another. This may also include lifts for persons with physical disabilities.

Tactile (and/or Contrasting Colour) Warning Strips or Indicator

Letters or graphics slightly raised above the surface in a barrier-free path of travel, when in a change in elevation. They can be detectable underfoot or by a long white cane. They assist persons with low vision, blindness, or cognitive disabilities navigate the space.

Other Accessibility Improvement Projects that have a demonstrated benefit to persons with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities may be considered upon application.

Ineligible Projects

The Barrier-Free Grant program is designed to assist in the renovation of existing buildings that require upgrades in order to become more barrier-free. The program does not allow for the replacement or maintenance of existing installations or make provisions for barrier-free installations that are associated with the construction of a new building.

Process

How to Apply

1. Meet with a member of the Inspection Services Team to verbally review project plans, permit and Barrier-Free Design requirements
2. Prepare a design that meets all legal requirements and considers the program's Design Goals.
3. Submit a Completed Application Form to the Program Coordinator at economicrecovery@cityofgp.com. Applications will not be considered submitted until all application requirements have been received.

What to Submit

- **Completed Application Form**
- **Pre-Construction Photos** – Photos that show the current site, especially the areas considered for improvement and its context, including roadways, sidewalks, and any existing barriers to accessibility.
- **Project Description** – A complete description of the project, including the proposed improvements, the reasoning behind them, who will benefit from the improvements and what the impact will be to the building and its patrons.
- **Project Drawings** – Drawings that include notations suitable for construction. Drawings required for development permits are generally acceptable.
- **Project Quotes** – At least two separate quotes that indicate the estimated cost of the project. (Note: Reimbursement will be based on the project's actual Hard Costs to a predetermined maximum)

The Review Process

The Program Coordinator will bring completed applications to the Barrier-Free Grant Review Committee. The Committee will review each application and vote to approve, approve with conditions or deny the application. Approval with conditions will only 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. Applications will be reviewed in the order that they are received. All decisions of the Committee will be made according to Procedure 356 Barrier-Free Grant Program.

Funding

1. The funding available for an applicant's Accessibility Improvement Project will be determined based on 50% of the lowest quote provided. The reimbursement amount will be based on the actual Hard Costs to the predetermined maximum outlined in the Reimbursement Agreement.
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 fulfill any other requirements that apply to the Accessibility Improvement Project.
4. Construction must be completed within one-year of the signing date of the Reimbursement Agreement
5. Once construction is complete, the applicant must contact the Program Coordinator to arrange a post-construction inspection.
6. Upon agreement by the Program Coordinator that the Accessibility Improvement Project has been completed as outlined in the Reimbursement Agreement, the applicant must request reimbursement in writing, and submit proof of payment for all itemized expenses.
7. The Program Coordinator will process the request and prepare a reimbursement cheque consistent with the terms of the Reimbursement Agreement.

Examples

Images below are solely meant for illustration purposes and may not suit your project design. Please refer to the resources listed on page 2 to ensure projects meet building and accessibility standards.



Exterior Pedestrian Accessible Route - painted lines clearly marked and provides separation from vehicle traffic.



Accessibility Ramp and Handrail



Exterior Pedestrian Accessible Route & Parking Lot Improvements - accessible parking stall with painted lines to mark path of travel.



Tactile Warning Strips or Indicator - Raised surface that can be detectable underfoot to assist persons with low vision, blindness, or cognitive disabilities navigate the space.

Definitions

Accessibility Improvement Project – Renovations or improvements to private property that facilitate the removal of physical, architectural or technological barriers that prevent persons with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities from accessing or using public commercial spaces on an equal basis with others. Eligible Accessibility Improvement Projects include improvements to the interior or exterior of the building, including transitions from public to private land, from parking areas to the primary building entrance and ensuring unobstructed access to services for all visitors, patrons and employees.

Barrier - A physical, architectural or technological obstacle that makes it difficult for persons with disabilities to access or use public spaces on an equal basis with others.

Barrier-Free - Means that a building and its facilities can be approached, entered and used by persons with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities

Barrier-Free Grant - Means a grant to a business or property owner of an existing Commercial building for improvements made to the property or building that demonstrate a benefit to persons with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities.

Barrier-Free Grant Review Committee – Means a committee appointed by the City Manager with the responsibility for evaluating applications filed under this Program and its associated Policy and Procedure.

Commercial - Means a building or property used for or intended to be used for, in whole or in part, commercial, industrial or institutional purpose, excluding government-owned buildings and properties.

Engineering Services Fees - Means all fees relating to excavation permits and barricading or lot grading permits outlined in the Fees, Rates and Charges Bylaw C-1395, Schedule "A"

Hard Costs - Means labour and materials for the building structure.

Inspection Services Permit Fees - Means all fees relating to Commercial building, electrical, plumbing, or gas permits, occupancy certificate, or any miscellaneous permit fees outlined in the Fees, Rates and Charges Bylaw C-1395, Schedule "A".

Planning and Development Fees - Means all fees relating to all Commercial development and sign permits, compliance/zoning certificates, planning applications and miscellaneous fees outlined in the Fees, Rates and Charges Bylaw C-1395, Schedule "A".

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

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