



City of Rio Dell

Humboldt County California

Facade Improvement Program Round No. 4 Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Program Description

The Facade Improvement Program (FIP) is a reimbursement grant program provided to a business and/or property owner for the improvement of existing commercial buildings throughout the City of Rio Dell. The program provides a matching grant of 50% of the facade improvement cost to the business and/or owner up to a maximum dollar amount \$15,000 per approved project.

The purpose of the FIP is to induce private investment that results in quality improvements and enhancements to business-use properties. The City's intention is that the FIP serve public-private incentive for significant aesthetic improvements to the commercial area in which the property is located.

The private investment will need to be equal to or greater than the grant funds awarded.

The Community Development Department will administer the grant program (Project Administrator) in conjunction with the City's Planning Commission and Department of Finance. The Community Development Department will handle project approval, processing and permitting. No commitment of funds will be made until the Planning Division has evaluated the project for code compliance, received a complete project application and received approval from the City's Planning Commission / Design Review that the project is appropriate to proceed.



Project applications must be complete and collateral information must be provided to the Program Administrator before a grant will be processed for funding; no advances will be made of grant funds.

Projects must make an exterior improvement easily visible from public view. Grants will be given only for improvements done in a professional manner and approved through the City's Design Review process. A final inspection will be conducted by the City to confirm the work has been completed and conforms to the approved plans, colors and/or materials.

As part of the approval process, a Letter of Commitment will be issued by the Program Administrator.

Applicants are expected to complete projects in the timeframe outlined in the Letter of Commitment. The City aims to fund as many projects as possible and will not tie up funds with applicants who are not completing their projects. The City will hold stringently to the time frame specified in the Letter of Commitment.

Round No. 4 of the program will focus on commercial areas. Further areas of focus may be added or refined in future rounds if the program is successful.

Definition of Significant Facade Improvements or Renovations

“Improvements or renovations of existing buildings that are ten years of age or older, when a combination of two or more of the following are included: structural facade improvements, paint, awnings, signs, addition of architectural detail to facade, facade tile or stone accents, decorative entry walkway area, outside dining with decorative fencing, outside decorative lighting and new windows. Mural art projects can be considered as a significant façade improvement with or without other improvements.”

Eligibility & Processing

The property must meet the following criteria:

- Be located within Rio Dell city limits.
- Be a retail or commercial project (except for those listed under the section titled "Ineligible for Grants.").



- Proposed project must be in conformance with all applicable City codes and design standards.
- Must submit a completed grant application, with all requested collateral materials, to the Program Administrator.
- Must be a permitted or conditionally permitted use; legal non-conforming uses are not eligible (example: improvements to a legal non-conforming sign, structure, or a structure housing a non-conforming use will not be eligible).
- Must receive all necessary approvals before any work is started for which grant funds are being requested.
- Must submit original invoices stamped paid or accompanied by copies of cancelled checks, or proof of payment for materials, or for work performed by others before receiving the grant.

Grants

All grants are up to 50% of the cost of the approved improvements up to a maximum reimbursement of \$15,000.

At this time, properties having a building with multiple businesses/suites qualify for one grant only. Unoccupied commercial buildings are also eligible for the grant.

Work must be completed within a specified time period stated in the Letter of Commitment; if work is not completed in the time frame, the applicant can still receive a grant only if funds are available when they complete the work.

Applicants will not be compensated for labor they perform themselves. Only materials used, and/or the work of a contractor will be eligible and the work must be done in a professional manner. The property owner assumes all risk. All work must be in conformance with applicable building codes.

Proof of property owner acknowledgement is required as part of the application process.

Design Standards and Requirements

- Applicants requesting grants must propose and complete projects that meet the standards set through the design review process and the Planning



commission. Projects must meet or exceed design standards (where applicable).

- Formulation of color pallets, renderings and building plans will, in most cases, require professional design assistance that may be provided by the City.
- If repainting is involved, the entirety of the building, including portions of the building not visible from the street frontage, must be painted in the same color scheme.
- High quality "before" photos of the property must accompany the application. "After" photos will be required to be submitted with receipts or paid invoices before receiving the grant when the project is complete.

Process

1. Applicant contacts the Program Administrator to arrange a pre-application concept meeting. No drawings or plans are required, but the applicant must be able to describe the plan in detail.
2. Upon tentative approval of the project, the Program Administrator will assign the applicant a licensed architect to work with on the development of a cost estimate and visual representation of the design, at no cost to the applicant. The cost of the licensed architect's work is not to exceed \$2,000.00.
3. The applicant completes and submits the formal application with appropriate permits, architect-developed cost estimates, architect-developed visual representation of the final design and if necessary owner approval of the project.
4. Project will be submitted to the Planning Commission for Design Review and approval.
5. Once the application has been approved, a Letter of Commitment & Project Agreement will be sent to the applicant from the Program Administrator. This material will specify the amount of the grant funds to be set aside and a time frame in which the work must be completed to receive a grant. The Program Administrator will hold funds within FIP budget.
6. Once the Project Agreement is signed by the applicant and Program Administrator, the applicant may then begin work on the proposed project. The project **must be completed** by the deadline listed in the Project Agreement to receive funds. Extensions can be approved by the Program Administrator on a case-by-case basis.



7. Upon completion of work on the proposed project, final inspection of the project is performed by the City.
8. The Building Inspector and/or Program Administrator will review the work for compliance with the Planning Commission approved application. If approved by the Program Administrator, the applicant will submit invoices to the City's Department of Finance to receive payment in accordance to the grant agreement within 30 days of submittal. If the Building Inspector and/or Program Administrator deems the final work to be in non-compliance with the approved design, or not in compliance with applicable building code, the matter will be automatically referred to the Planning Commission for review and ratification, within 60 days, at no cost to the applicant. Work performed, or modifications made that do not conform to the approved project plans, will not receive funds.

Projects Eligible for Grants

- Areas of eligibility: Must be commercially zoned. Must be on or visible from the following streets: Wildwood, Eeloa & Northwestern.
- Significant facade improvements and renovations (see above, “**Definition of Significant Facade Improvements or Renovations**”).
- Building additions, when the entire building is improved, that is, the addition does not appear to be an add-on but integrates with the building (ex: building addition of compatible architecture and repainting of entire building to match the addition).
- Security features integrated with a façade improvement (example: shatter resistant windows, door locks, lighting) only if part of an approved façade improvement or renovation and adds a visible improvement.
- New roof material only if part of a significant facade improvement or renovation and adds a visible improvement.
- Upgraded and uniform facade improvements in older commercial buildings with multiple spaces that enhance the entire building (if the facility has more than one individual property ownership, there must be a comprehensive signage plan, color pallet and/or architectural facade plan in place; improvements made must conform to the plans or color pallet).
- Front facing landscaping.
- Block walls and fencing only if part of a comprehensive landscaping project and approved by the Planning Commission.
- Signs, awnings and painting of structures if they meet City design requirements.



- Murals, if they have the appropriate approvals (Design Review).
- Screening of roof-top equipment only in conjunction with other exterior property improvements.
- Creation of fixed outdoor patio areas (non-fixed assets are not eligible. Example: removable patio furniture, mobile heaters, etc.).
- Creation of customer entrances from the alley, especially when parking is available in the rear of a building or the alley side is visible from a public street; this must be done in conjunction with an approved facade improvement.
- Other improvements can be considered on a case-by-case basis, but must make a significant improvement to the property appearance and not be one of the excluded items.

Ineligible for Grants:

- New buildings. Buildings ten (10) years of age or more recently constructed.
- Motion detected lighting.
- Internally illuminated "can" signs or otherwise non-permitted signs.
- Land clearing or tree removal costs.
- Parking area paving, resurfacing, repair or striping.
- Chain link fencing with or without slats.
- City permits or processing fees.
- Residential projects, apartments, day care facilities located in residential neighborhoods.
- Religious facilities (ex: churches), unless they have street frontage in a business area.
- Non-profit facilities, unless they have street frontage in a business area.
- Projects that are receiving any other public funds.

