

# Storefront Improvement Program (Round 3) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Last updated July 2, 2024

## **Applicants/Tenant Small Businesses:**

*What do I need to apply?*

Businesses applying to the Storefront Improvement Program (Round 3) must submit estimates from contractors for the projects they are proposing. Applicants only need one estimate to apply. (But a good practice is to collect three quotes to ensure businesses are getting the best price and maximizing their award value.) Businesses must have landlord approval before the project starts.

*When do I need to apply by?*

Businesses are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Applications will be processed in the order in which they are received. If you delay submitting your application, funding might not be available. The application will close July 5, at 5pm CST.

*What if I cannot front the money to pay the vendor "out of pocket" for the improvement?*

Approved businesses may assign their eligible reimbursement payments to their third-party banking or lending institutions used to finance the approved improvement projects. Contact the Alliance if you are interested.

*Who chooses the project vendors for the Storefront Improvement Program?*

The business selects and directly pays the vendor(s) for the Storefront Improvement Program.

*How is the vendor/contractor paid for the services they render to me?*

The business is responsible for all payments to the vendor(s) or contractors. The business will be reimbursed for qualified expenses upon completion of the project.

*Do I receive the money before or after the improvement is complete?*

The business must complete the project, submit photos demonstrating the project is complete, turn in copies of paid invoices to receive reimbursement, and fill out a W9 form. Based on the nature of the project, program staff may request a certificate of completion, inspection, or site visit to confirm the project is complete.

*Can I be reimbursed for work that is already started?*

Yes, as long as the expense is eligible, and the work was begun after March 3, 2021.

*How long do I have to finish the project?*

The project must be completed at least 4 months from the date of applicant qualification or until October 31, 2024, whichever is sooner.

*If I have received funding from the OKC Rescue Program or SNI Storefront Improvement Program, do I still qualify for this program?*

No. Businesses that have previously received funding from the OKC Rescue Program for Façade and Storefront Improvements or the SNI Storefront Improvement Program do not qualify for this program. The expense cannot have been previously paid for with any form of federal, state or local funding.

*If I only occupy a portion of my building, can I apply for the Storefront Improvement Program?*

Yes, as long as all eligibility requirements are met, the applicant business gets landlord approval for the proposed improvement, and the improvement request is proportional to the space occupied in the entire building in which they occupy.

*Once I submit my paid invoices and pictures, how fast until I am reimbursed?*

The Alliance will endeavor to reimburse eligible expenses within 30 to 45 days of receipt.

*Do I need to receive a permit from the City Development Center?*

Yes. You are still required to obtain approval, signage or construction permits, or inspections from the City Development Center. Businesses in Special Zoning Districts (e.g., Urban Design Overlay Districts or Scenic River Overlay Design Districts) may be required to obtain additional approvals, permits, or inspections.

*What do you mean when you say a business location cannot be zoned residential?*

That means that your business cannot have a zoning designation of: AA, RA2, RA, R-1, R1ZL, R-2, R-3, R-3M, R-4M, R-4, R-MH-1, R-MH-2. Look at [The City's zoning map](#) to see if how your business location is zoned. PUDs and SPUDs will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

*What's a Qualified Census Tract?*

A Qualified Census Tract or QCT is a federally designated low-income area. Use [this map \(click here\)](#) to determine if your business is within a qualified census tract or see Appendix A: 2024 QCT Map.

*Who do I contact if I have additional questions?*

If you have questions, contact [okcsmallbizhelp@theallianceokc.org](mailto:okcsmallbizhelp@theallianceokc.org) or 405-6041-6780 ext 116. Applicants and program participants are strongly encouraged to proactively ask questions. For example, if you are wondering if an expense is eligible, ask before making the purchase.

*What if my contractor puts in a change order and the project costs more than what was on my original estimates? Will the Alliance cover the difference?*

The Alliance will reimburse up to \$25,000. If the revised project amount is under the \$25,000 limit and all items on the change order are eligible project expenses, the Alliance will be able to reimburse the full (revised) amount of the project. However, if the change order causes the project cost to exceed \$25,000 and/or the items on the change order are not eligible program expenses, the applicant small business will need to cover the difference between the \$25,000 and the new (revised) amount and/or the cost for those ineligible items. The Alliance will only reimburse eligible expenses (e.g., signage, front windows, etc.).

*Are nonprofits eligible?*

Nonprofits are not eligible for this program.

*What if I need to change the scope of the project or change my contractor after approval?*

Be in communication with the Alliance about any changes to your scope or to any changes with contractors. Significant changes may require application re-approval. If in doubt, ask the Alliance.

*Can I use this program to open a new location or a new business?*

This program is not designed to open or start new businesses or new business locations. This program is not designed to help rehabilitate or make habitable currently unoccupied or uninhabitable buildings. Per above, the business must be formed before April 1, 2022. We expect businesses to be open and operating at the location(s) they are applying for no later than April 1, 2024.

*Can I apply for multiple locations or multiple businesses?*

If a business has multiple locations or multiple businesses, the business may split the award between all eligible businesses (each business will be evaluated separately for eligibility). For example, a business may use \$10,000 for signage at their north OKC location and \$15,000 for windows at their south OKC location. If there is a business or location that is not eligible, the funding cannot be used there (e.g., a location outside of Oklahoma City limits). We will only grant one award per business owner (business owner—for the evaluation of controlling interest—is defined as 50% or more controlling interest in a company). Business owners with multiple businesses may consolidate their eligible businesses into one application (again, each business will be evaluated individually) or choose to only apply for one of their businesses.

*Who makes the decisions about funding or eligibility?*

The City of Oklahoma City makes the final determinations about funding and eligibility, after review and recommendation from the Alliance.

## **Landlords (Building owners who do not occupy the space)**

*Are landlords eligible for the Storefront Improvement Program (Round 3)?*

No. Landlords who do not occupy the space in which the improvement is for are not eligible for funding under this program?

*Can landlords apply to the program on behalf of multiple tenants so the work can be coordinated?*

No. Landlords cannot apply to the program. Each tenant business would have to apply separately and organize the work/project among themselves.

*What if I do not want the improvements to be made to the building?*

Consent for the project is between the tenant business and the landlord. The two parties must mutually work out exactly what improvements can be made. It is common in commercial real estate to have commercial tenants pay for improvements made to the property; an example of this arrangement is the popular triple net lease (NNN).

## **Contractors and Sign Companies**

*Do I still need a sign permit from the City?*

Yes. You are still required to obtain approval, signage or construction permits, or inspections from the City Development Center. Businesses in Special Zoning Districts (e.g., Urban Design Overlay Districts or Scenic River Overlay Design Districts) may be required to obtain additional approvals, permits, or inspections.

*How do I get paid?*

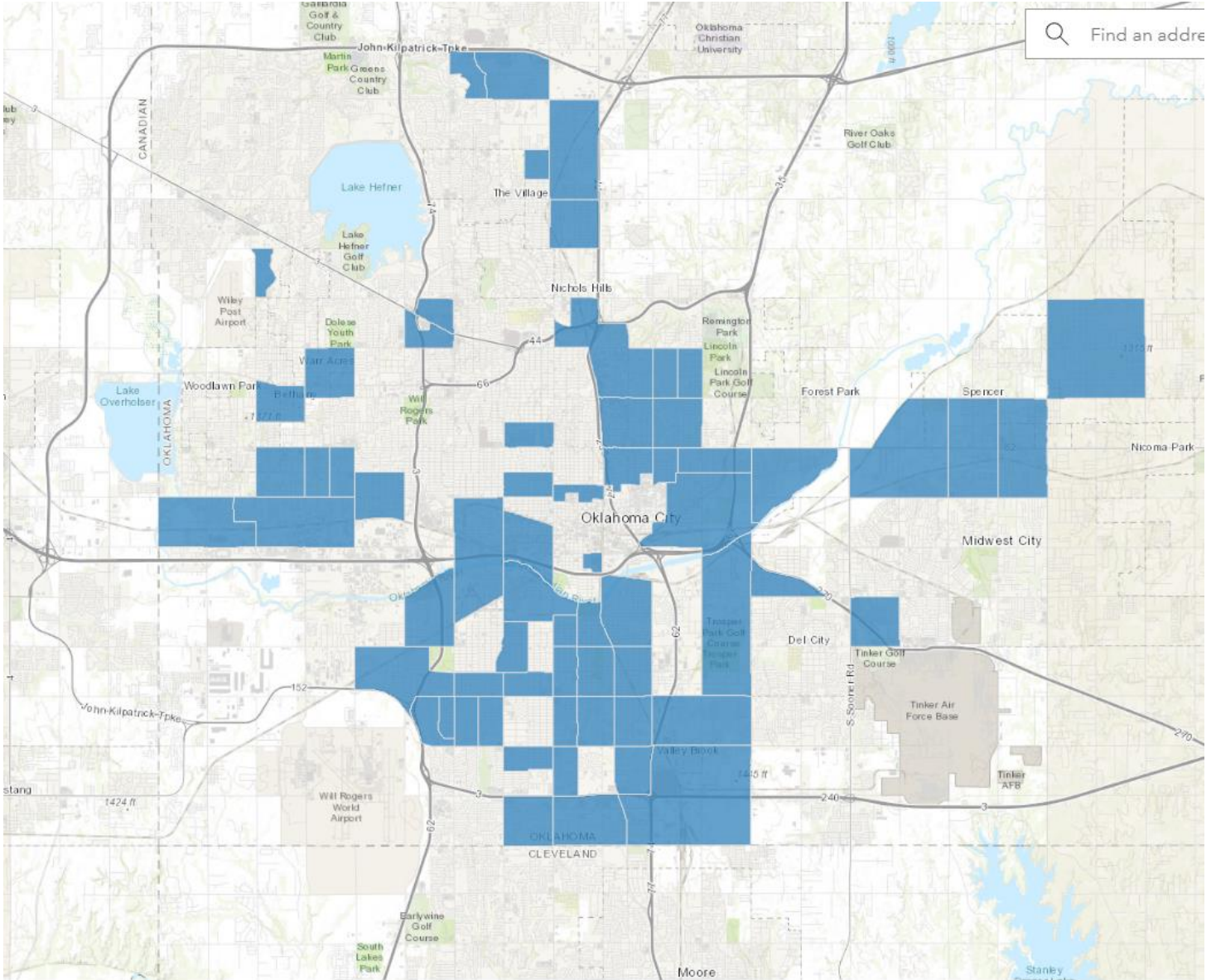
The Storefront Improvement Program is a reimbursement program. The Alliance will reimburse the applicant business for eligible expenses after the work is completed. This means that the applicant business is usually the one to pay you. Approved businesses, however, may assign their eligible reimbursement payments to their third-party banking or lending institutions used to finance the approved improvement projects. Have the applicant contract the Alliance if they are interested.

*What if costs on the project increase?*

Communicate that to the applicant business and the Alliance as soon as possible. The Alliance is not able to reimburse more than \$25,000 per project. If the revised cost is still within that \$25,000 limit, it may not be a problem. The applicant business needs to be the one to approve any cost increases.

## Appendix A: 2024 QCT Map

Below is a map of the Qualified Census Tracts in the OKC Metro Area for 2024. (Note: the map below includes both tracts within and outside of OKC limits. This program is limited to tracts within OKC limits.)



Retrieved March 4, 2024 from <https://hudgis-hud.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/HUD::qualified-census-tracts/explore?location=35.479278%2C-97.476923%2C11.80>.