

Investing in Our Downtowns

The Region 4 communities of Vergas and Pelican Rapids are seeing the impact of investing in their downtowns through successful Business Facade Improvement Programs.

Both communities used local matching funds to leverage \$25,000 in grant funding from Otter Tail County's Community Growth Partnership Grant, creating a pool of dollars that local businesses could access to make improvements to their buildings. The programs have provided an important opportunity for business owners to address needed maintenance while also investing in the appearance and long-term vitality of their downtowns.

The response has been strong, with more than 10 businesses in each community utilizing the programs in their first rounds of funding. Improvements have included projects that enhance storefronts, address aging building elements, and improve the overall appearance of downtown commercial areas. These programs have also created valuable opportunities for our CEDA representatives and EDA boards to connect with local business owners, better understand their needs, build lasting relationships, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to helping local businesses. The simple application process and 1:1 match requirement for projects makes the program effective and encourages private investment in our commercial spaces. These improvements do more than make buildings look better. Well-maintained, attractive downtowns create a welcoming environment for residents & visitors and contribute to a stronger sense of community pride.

The success of the facade programs in Vergas and Pelican Rapids is a great example of how small improvements, made one building at a time, can create a significant collective impact.

Before:



After:

