



FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

SEPTEMBER 2007

PURPOSE

Clearwater's tropical environment provides many opportunities for festive activities and amenities for the downtown area. The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is promoting the improvement of the physical environment within the CRA district so Clearwater will sparkle.

The CRA offers a Facade/Storefront Improvement Grant to attract new businesses and to retain existing businesses within the district. This program provides an incentive to improve the outside storefront appearance. The premise is an attractive business facade will attract customers.

The facade improvement program is to encourage aesthetic improvements and retention of character in the urban design district. The program encourages the incorporation of the reuse or restoration of an older building's historic architectural elements to retain its character. The incorporation of these design principles in a newer building occurs when the facade improvement is sensitive to the character of neighboring buildings.

Please contact the City of Clearwater's Main Street Coordinator to obtain an application. The phone number is 562-4044 and the address is 112 S. Osceola Ave., Clearwater, FL 33756. Mailing address is P.O. Box 4748, Clearwater, FL 33758-4748.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Businesses within the designated CRA boundary are eligible to apply for the grant funds. (See attached map for boundary.) The grant offers up to a maximum cumulative amount of \$5,000 per building owner or tenant. The funds are not available for previously funded improvements or if the cumulative funding reached the maximum amount of \$5,000. The funding formula is 50/50 split between the applicant and CRA. The grant funds are available on first come, first serve basis for all eligible improvements. However, the CRA can initiate grant funding in specific areas by obtaining cooperation among the businesses. The premise is a coordinated facade improvement can achieve a true visual impact along a corridor or intersection. These identified areas may take funding precedence over other applications. Staff will annually evaluate the guidelines to refine the program. The disbursement of funds is upon completion of the work.

The business owner must hold a current Business Tax Receipt (BTR) to do business in Clearwater (proof of current BTR). The property owner(s) and tenant(s) is/are eligible for the Facade Improvement Grant. A property owner must provide evidence of ownership by submitting a current property tax statement with the application. A tenant is eligible to apply for a grant contingent upon a notarized letter of approval from the property owner.

There are incentives in completing the approved facade improvement, which are as follows:

100% of the awarded amount - within 60 days

90% of the awarded amount - between 61 days and 120 days

80% of the awarded amount - between 121 days and 180 days

70% of the awarded amount - between 181 days and 240 days

60% of the awarded amount - between 241 days and 300 days

50% of the awarded amount - between 301 days and 365 days

After one year, the grant award dollars are no longer available.

ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

Remodeling, installation and additions to the commercial facade are eligible for grant funds. These funds are for modification to the facade and not for normal maintenance and repair. Specific improvements the funds can be for are: new paint, signs, awnings and shutters, doors, windows, siding, fencing, driveway pavers, landscaping, exterior lighting and modifications, streetscaping which include brickwork, statues, fountains, and pedestrian features.

Paint and Color

New paint and a change of color can improve the facade. The paint color of the building should fit in with the tropical environment of the area. The Downtown Design Guidelines (Chapter 3A of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan) discusses the use of color for downtown buildings. **PLEASE NOTE: Repainting of a building with the same color as part of scheduled maintenance is not eligible.**

Signage

The grant encourages the removal of old inappropriate signs. The new signs are to be compatible with the building or storefront and meet the sign code.

Awnings and Shutters

The awning or shutters can be an addition or a replacement of an existing awning or shutters. The awning/shutters should be compatible with the building. Installation of awnings should be above a storefront opening or along the storefront to provide protection from the elements for the pedestrian. Also, the awning may be used as a sign when appropriate. The replacement of an existing awning is eligible only when it is a new color, style and modification in the awning design. It is not to replace an awning that otherwise is part of normal upkeep.

Doors and Windows

When door replacements are part of a storefront remodeling or restoration that incorporate the original historical appearance or a more traditional storefront appearance, it is an eligible activity. The CRA and Planning Department require the submittal of photographs on the existing door and drawings for the proposed door.

Window replacements should provide a more traditional storefront appearance by eliminating darkly tinted windows, opaque glass or mirrored and reflective glass in the ground level storefront windows.

Siding

Siding is an eligible improvement when it is compatible to the architectural character of the building.

Fencing

The incorporation of fencing provides character to a facade, a streetscape or the addition of a courtyard feature, as part of the rehabilitation of the building is eligible. Chain link fencing is not eligible.

Driveway Pavers

An upgrade of an existing asphalt driveway to pavers is an improvement that provides an attractive entryway to the business.

Landscaping

The introduction of landscaping materials to accentuate a building's features or add to the pedestrian environment is a recommended improvement. Some recommended improvements are the addition of at-grade, raised or portable planters. The addition of planters to a building's parking lot is eligible when the lot is visible and a focal point from the street. The grant funds are not available for paving or normal maintenance of a parking lot without streetscape improvements to the lot.

Exterior Lighting

The provision, improvement and addition of exterior lighting that enhances a building facade and improves the pedestrian environment by illuminating the sidewalk are eligible.

Streetscaping

The CRA suggests the introduction of streetscape elements such as brick and block pavers, planter and landscape materials, statues, fountains and pedestrian features to upgrade the attractiveness of the storefront promenade.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Complete, sign and return the application to the Economic Development Team. If the applicant is the owner of the building, please submit a copy of the property tax bill to verify ownership. A tenant needs a notarized letter of approval from the property owner.
2. Submit a detailed written description and scaled elevation drawing which depicts the size, dimension and location of improvements or modifications along with samples when applicable.
 - a color fabric or material sample for the awning
 - a shutter sample depicting the color and material
 - paint samples of the exterior paint and trim colors
 - sample of the paver style, color(s) and material
 - photographs of the doors and/or windows
 - sample or photograph of the new sign or signs
 - sample of the color and style of the fence or wall
 - sample of the color and material of the siding
 - photograph of the landscaping materials to be used and or planters to be installed and identify the location
3. Construction and cost estimates from **two** licensed contractors for each improvement project.
4. Evidence that the grantee has entered into a contract with a licensed contractor registered with the Pinellas County Licensing Board and the City of Clearwater.

EVALUATION OF APPLICATION

The evaluation of a grant application is a two step process. Submit the application to the City of Clearwater's Economic Development Department to determine if proposed work is eligible for grant funds. The application package is given to the City's

Planning Department to evaluate its compliance with the Land Development Regulations. The facade improvements requiring the Planning Department approval are awnings, shutters, pavers, streetscaping, signage and additions to buildings.

Notification of grant fund approval or disapproval and permitting requirements will be sent within 48 hours after administrative review. Upon notification, the contractor can pull the permits and begin the work.

PLEASE DO NOT BEGIN ANY WORK PRIOR TO A “NOTICE TO PROCEED” ORDER OR IT WILL VOID THE GRANT APPLICATION.

DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

1. Submit proof that the City inspectors signed off on all permits.
2. Submit paid invoices from the contractor(s) for all work.
3. Submit how and what name is to appear on the check.

APPEALS PROCEDURES - FACADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

The following procedures shall govern appeals to the Community Redevelopment Agency from final denial of an application for Facade Improvement Grant Program funds.

1. An applicant whose grant submission has been denied must file a written Notice of Appeal, stating the grounds upon which the applicant contests the denial decision, with the Clerk of the Community Redevelopment Agency within ten days of the date on which the denial occurred. Failure to timely file a Notice of Appeal shall be deemed a waiver of the right to appeal.
2. The Clerk of the Community Redevelopment Agency shall notify staff of receipt of a Notice of Appeal. The clerk shall schedule the appeal hearing on the agenda for the next available Agency meeting. The meeting notice is mailed to the applicant by certified return receipt requested mail. Members of the public shall not deem appeal hearings "public hearings" for purposes of advertising requirements and appearances.
3. The appeal hearing procedures are:
 - a. The hearing shall be conducted in an informal manner; the Florida Evidence Code shall not apply.
 - b. The applicant shall have the right to appear and to be represented by an attorney, architect, or other designated person.
 - c. The applicant may present such factual evidence, exhibits and witnesses and make such legal argument as the applicant deems necessary and relevant to appeal issues; however, the applicant will be limited to a maximum time period of one-half hour for such presentation.
 - d. Following the applicant's presentation, staff may present such factual evidence, exhibits, and witnesses and make legal argument it deems necessary and relevant to the appeal issues; staff is limited to one-half hour for such presentation.
 - e. No persons other than the applicant or representative for the applicant shall have the right to appear or be heard at the appeal hearing.
 - f. Members of the Agency may ask questions of the applicant and staff during and after the presentation. The Agency may allow the applicant to ask questions of or seek clarification from staff, and may allow staff to ask questions of or seek clarification from the applicant.
 - g. The agency may hold discussion of the appeal after the applicant and staff presentations and shall then vote; the Agency may uphold the appeal, uphold the appeal with conditions, or deny the appeal. Any such action taken shall be approved by a majority vote of those members present and voting. A tie vote shall be deemed a denial of the appeal. Alternatively, in the event that the Agency needs further information to properly determine the merits of the appeal, the Agency may continue the matter to a subsequent meeting date.
4. The decision of the Agency shall be final, and there shall be no right of further appeal to any court or administrative agency for said decision.



FACADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION

This information is necessary to process a request for a grant within the CRA district. Please fill in all the blanks, using “None” or “Not applicable” where necessary. Please attach a separate sheet if you require additional space.

I. **SUMMARY** (Please provide a brief description of the proposed improvements)

Check all appropriate items that the project will include:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Landscaping _____ | Painting _____ |
| Siding _____ | Signage _____ |
| Doors _____ | Fencing _____ |
| Windows _____ | Lighting _____ |
| Awnings _____ | Streetscaping _____ |
| Shutters _____ | Driveway Pavers _____ |
| Other _____ | |

II. APPLICANT INFORMATION

APPLICANT: _____

CONTACT PERSON (Name and Title): _____

BUSINESS ADDRESS: _____

BUSINESS TELEPHONE: _____ FAX: _____

EMPLOYER TAX ID #: _____

OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE #: _____

TYPE OF BUSINESS: _____

FORM OF OWNERSHIP:

Sole Proprietorship _____ Partnership _____ Corporation _____
Subchapter S _____ Other _____

Is property owner a United States Citizen? Yes _____ No _____

III. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Estimated Value of Improvement: _____

Property Tax ID #: _____

Present Owner of Building (Name and Address) _____

IV. TYPE OF IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE AND COSTS

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
	\$ _____
	\$ _____
	\$ _____
	\$ _____
	\$ _____
TOTAL PROJECT COST:	\$ _____

The undersigned warrants that the information contained in this application (and any supplemental information) is, to the best of my knowledge, true and correct. The undersigned further understands that the use of this information is only for consideration of the Facade Improvement Grant application. I acknowledge that I have received, read and will comply with the CRA guidelines on this program and will use the matching fund grant for purposes intended. The undersigned grants authorization to verify any answers contained herein.

Signature Date _____

Print Name Title _____

This application form will not be considered complete until the items requested on the attached sheet, "Information for the processing of a Facade Improvement Grant Application," are submitted.

