



**Program Guidelines for the
Greater Frenchtown Southside
Business Facility Improvement Program**

An annual program to help small businesses improve the exterior of existing commercial buildings and properties.

Program Description: The City of Tallahassee Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Business Facility Improvement Program provides CRA grant funds, matched by private investment, for improvements to the façade of commercial structures and properties located within the boundaries of the Greater Frenchtown Southside (GFS) Community Redevelopment Area. Only commercial properties with an estimated value, following completion of improvements, of less than \$2 million and located within the GFS redevelopment area are eligible to apply for grant funds under this program.

Purpose:

The goal of the CRA Business Facility Improvement Program is to assist small business, increase commercial occupancy rates and improve property values in the GFS redevelopment area. This program assists commercial property owners and tenants in renovating the façade of their buildings and properties, thereby reducing blighting influences, improving the area's physical characteristics and enhancing the visual quality and attractiveness of the environment.

The maximum grant amount is \$50,000. The first \$20,000 of the grant does not require a match by the applicant. A request for grant funds above \$20,000 (up to a maximum of \$50,000) requires a dollar-for-dollar match. Seventy-five (75) percent of those funds must be used on façade/building improvements, not site improvements such as repaving parking areas.

All required permits shall be obtained prior to the commencement of work.

The funds may only be used for specific improvements to the building exterior or property on which the subject business is located. Improvements may include:

- Façade improvements, such as storefronts, display windows and exterior lighting;
- Removal of elements which cover original architectural design and details;
- New signage or replacement of existing signs (attached to the building or freestanding);
- Addition and/or replacement of awnings/doors/windows;
- Overall replacement of architectural elements that have structural problems;

- Exterior painting, up to a maximum of \$5,000;
- Electrical work directly related to the exterior of the building or the installation of approved signage;
- Site related improvements such as paving or parking improvements;
- The addition or replacement of basic landscaping and/or on-site drainage;
- Roof repairs and limited interior improvements necessary for the structural integrity of the building;
- Professional design and engineering services related to structural renovation and signage within the current industry standard percentage typically allowed.

Prohibited uses include:

- Permitting fees;
- Labor performed by a non-licensed contractor;
- Improvements on a property that has any judgment liens, is not current on all mortgage and tax obligations, or has any code violations;
- Improvements prohibited by the zoning code; and
- Businesses whose primary sales are alcohol or tobacco (50 percent or more of sales from alcohol or tobacco).

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Property must be within the boundary of the GFS Community Redevelopment Area. If you are uncertain if a property is located within the boundaries of the GFS Community Redevelopment Area, please contact CRA staff at 850-891-8357.
2. Applicants must demonstrate that all necessary financing required to complete the project has been secured with the exception of the non-match funding.
3. The property must be a commercial use as defined in the Tallahassee Land Development Code.
4. Property must be free from any judgment liens, code violations and all mortgage and tax obligations must be current and/or resolved prior to entering into agreement with the CRA.

Criteria for Project Selection:

1. All necessary permits and approvals for site work, landscaping and building improvements must be obtained from the City of Tallahassee Growth Management Department before any CRA-funded improvements can begin. All work is to be performed to the satisfaction of the City of Tallahassee Building Inspection Division.
2. A licensed contractor must perform the work unless the work performed is exclusively exterior painting.
3. Applicant must agree to maintain the improvements for at least 5 years.

4. There may be no more than one application for project funding per fiscal year. A “project” is defined as a single or set of enhancement/renovation activities for an eligible property. The maximum amount of grant funds available for any one property under this program is \$50,000. Successive applications in other fiscal years for the same property will be treated cumulatively for purposes of determining funding eligibility in total.
5. Applicants who have been in business for two years or less must have their business plan reviewed and approved by the Florida Small Business Development Center at FAMU (FSBDC) indicating they have received training or approval of their business plan from the SBDC prior to submitting an application to the CRA.
6. All request for funding will require three (3) itemized bids for proposed eligible work items.
7. It is recommended that applicants retain the services of a qualified contractor or design professional to prepare plans, drawings and construction specifications for their project. Grant requests for more than \$20,000 will require the submission of a rendering in a digital format or sufficient information that shows the anticipated façade improvements. The electronic rendering will help both the CRA staff and Board to better visualize the extent of the proposed improvements. The rendering does not have to be prepared by a registered architect but must provide a reasonable representation of the proposed improvements. Fees for services provided by a registered architect or similarly qualified design professional may be counted towards the applicant’s program match.

Application Process Summary:

1. Applicant submits a complete application to the CRA office (a complete application will include, as appropriate, the review and approval by the FSBDC, City of Tallahassee Growth Management and the City of Tallahassee Landscape Architect. If any of these reviews are required but not included in the application the application will be considered incomplete and will be returned);
2. CRA staff reviews application for completeness, accuracy and eligibility;
3. CRA staff presents recommendation to the CRA Executive Director and/or Board, as appropriate; and
4. Upon approval, the applicant will be notified in writing of the amount of the grant awarded, provided a grant agreement for execution and notified of the documentation that must be provided before funds are released.

Grant Terms:

1. All grants will be treated as five-year, zero interest, deferred loan, and will be subject to an agreement and restrictive covenant (the “Grant Agreement”).

2. The amount of the deferred loan will be amortized in monthly installments over a five-year (60 month) period beginning one month after the receipt of a Certificate of Occupancy for the renovation/improvement by the City's Growth Management Department.
3. The monthly installments will be automatically forgiven without any action by either the Applicant or the CRA as they become due, as long as the property is maintained as a commercial structure. Should the character of the property change to something other than commercial in nature during the deferred loan period, the outstanding balance of the deferred loan will become immediately due and payable.
4. The deferred loan may be subordinate to other loan commitments made by the applicant, however, it may not be subsequently further subordinated after closing without the written approval of the CRA.
5. The property may be sold during the deferred loan period; however, should this occur, the remaining balance of the deferred loan will become immediately due and payable.
6. Any deferred loan of more than \$20,000 will be secured by a mortgage and Grant Agreement filed with the Clerk of Court. Prior to closing, the CRA, through the City Attorney's Office, will acquire mortgagee title insurance, the cost of which will be deducted from the grant proceeds to be disbursed to the applicant.
7. Any deferred loan of less than \$20,000 is not required to be secured by a mortgage. Instead, a Notice of the Grant Agreement (restrictive covenants) will be filed with the Clerk of the Court. Prior to closing, the CRA will obtain an ownership and encumbrance report, the cost of which shall be deducted from the grant proceeds to be disbursed to the applicant.
8. All owners, authorized corporate officers, or partners must sign this application. A partner or officer must personally sign for the grant in the case where the applicant is a partnership, corporation or a professional association. This does not apply to recognized non-profit organizations.
9. The funding awarded will be based on the lowest qualified bid. The applicant may elect to choose a contractor other than the one with lowest qualified bid but shall be responsible for all costs exceeding the lowest qualified bid. In all cases, the contractor must be licensed (the only exception is for exclusive exterior painting projects), insured and have worker's compensation insurance.
10. The applicant will be required to document the type and source of his/her matching funds on the application submitted to the CRA. Verification of the funding sources will be required before final approval of the grant application. At the sole discretion of the CRA Executive Director or the CRA Board, structural repairs directly related to the building's façade that were completed within six (6) months prior to the submittal date of the grant application **MAY** be used as part or all of the applicant's required match. However, CRA grant funds cannot be applied against these improvements.
11. After the funding agreement has been executed, the applicant may award the construction contract and secure all necessary construction permits. The owner/tenant must issue a "Notice to Proceed" to the contractor and apply for a building permit within 60 days of executing the funding agreement.

Construction must begin within 90 days of the funding agreement and be completed within 12 months of the agreement. Extensions may be granted at the sole discretion of the CRA Executive Director, contingent upon the applicant demonstrating just cause for such an extension.

12. Modifications to the approved final plans or changes to the construction documents which produce visible differences in the approved façade design will require review and approval by CRA staff and/or Board. Failure to receive such approval shall invalidate the funding agreement and the agreement will be deemed terminated. In the event the agreement is terminated, and if any grant funds have been disbursed to the applicant by the CRA as provided below, the disbursed funds shall become immediately due and payable to the CRA.
13. Applicants must provide verification, satisfactory to the CRA, of all project costs, including contractor invoicing, and evidence of payment of funds for reimbursement and match, before grant funds can be disbursed.
14. The CRA expressly reserves the right to reject any or all applications or to request additional information from any and/or all applicants. The CRA retains the right to amend the program guidelines and application procedures without notice. The CRA also retains the right to display and advertise properties that receive grant funds.
15. The closing costs associated with the grant (title search or title insurance and recording fees) will be deducted from the disbursement amount of the approved grant amount, which will be based on the lowest price quote. At the option of the applicant, the applicant may pay these closing costs directly.

Pre-Application Meeting:

CRA staff recommends a pre-application meeting to review the applicant’s conceptual plans in an informal setting, including discussion of the eligibility criteria, program requirements, proposed project scheduling, and consistency of the proposal with the intent of the program. At this stage, staff can offer assistance with the completion of the application form and provide limited technical and architectural guidance on the project proposal. At the conclusion of the pre-application meeting, staff will provide the applicant with a general determination as to whether the proposed project is likely to qualify to receive program funds and whether the applicant is sufficiently prepared to move on to the application stage.

Submitting an Application:

A property owner and/or tenant interested in participating in the Business Facility Improvement Program must submit a signed and completed application, along with supporting documents to CRA@talgov.com and/or the City of Tallahassee’s Community Redevelopment Agency, 300 South Adams Street, Mailbox A-17, Tallahassee, Florida, 32301.

It is recommended that applicants retain the services of a qualified contractor or design professional to prepare plans, drawings and construction specifications for their project. Grant requests for more than \$20,000 will require the submission of a rendering in a digital format that shows the anticipated façade

improvements. The electronic rendering will help both the CRA staff and Board to better visualize the extent of the proposed improvements. The rendering does not have to be prepared by a registered architect, but must provide a reasonable representation of the proposed improvements. Fees for services provided by a registered architect or similarly qualified design professional may be counted towards the applicant's program match.

The CRA will not be responsible for the selection of a contractor. The applicant will bear full responsibility for reviewing the competence and abilities of prospective contractors and secure proof of their licensing and insurance coverage.

Applications can be obtained from the City of Tallahassee Community Redevelopment Agency webpage at www.talgov.com/CRA, See "Project Funding", Greater Frenchtown Southside Business Facility Improvement Grant Program (BFIP).

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Application Approval:

The CRA Executive Director will approve or deny grant applications of \$25,000 or less. Projects in excess of \$25,000 will be forwarded to the CRA Board with a recommendation from CRA staff for funding approval or denial. All applicants will receive written notification regarding approval or denial of their application. If an applicant's proposal is approved by either the Executive Director or the CRA Board, the applicant will receive written notification of the approval, which will include a funding agreement listing the amount of matching funds that are approved. An application may be denied at the sole discretion of the Executive Director or the CRA Board, if it is not consistent with the GFS Redevelopment Plan and/or not consistent with the vision of the GFS Redevelopment Area.

The applicant will be required to document the type and source of his/her matching funds on the application submitted to the CRA. Verification of the funding sources will be required before final approval of the grant application. At the sole discretion of the CRA Executive Director or the CRA Board, structural repairs directly related to the building's façade that were completed within six (6) months prior to the submittal date of the grant application **MAY** be used as part or all of the applicant's required match. However, CRA grant funds cannot be applied against these improvements.

Construction Start:

After the funding agreement has been executed, the applicant may award the construction contract and secure all necessary construction permits. The owner/tenant must issue a "Notice to Proceed" to the contractor and apply for a building permit within 60 days of executing the funding agreement. Construction must begin within 90 days of the funding agreement and be completed within 12 months of the agreement. Extensions may be granted at the sole discretion of the CRA Executive Director, contingent upon the applicant demonstrating just cause for such an extension.

Modifications to the approved final plans or changes to the construction documents which produce visible differences in the approved façade design will require review and approval by CRA staff and/or Board. Failure to receive such approval shall invalidate the funding agreement and the agreement will be deemed terminated. In the event the agreement is terminated, and if any grant funds have been disbursed to the applicant by the CRA as provided below, the disbursed funds shall become immediately due and payable to the CRA.

Disbursements:

Generally, approved applicants will receive reimbursement funding upon completion of the project. For projects where the applicant cannot secure full funding for the improvements, The CRA Executive Director may approve at the time of the grant agreement the partial payment of grant funds once a project has reached agreed-upon milestones.

Funds will be disbursed by direct deposit payable to the applicant (1) upon certification of completion by the City Building Inspector and/or City Landscape Architect, or as agreed to with the CRA Executive Director and (2) CRA staff verification that the work was completed as proposed in a satisfactory and professional manner. Funds will not be disbursed on projects that are not in accordance with the approved plans.

Applicants must provide verification, satisfactory to the CRA, of all project costs, including contractor invoicing, and evidence of payment of funds for reimbursement and match, before grant funds can be disbursed.

Contact Information:

Questions on how to complete the application form or the appropriateness of a proposed project should be directed to **CRA staff at (850) 891-8357 or via email at CRA@talgov.com.**