



# City of Clearwater Community Redevelopment Agency Food and Drink Grant Program for Property Owners

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## A. Program Overview

The Community Redevelopment Agency's (CRA) **Food and Drink Grant Program for Property Owners** provides grant funding to commercial property owners to assist with building improvements. The goal of the program is to provide financial support to commercial property owners in downtown to renovate their buildings to attract food and/or drink businesses that are open on nights and weekends. This will help stimulate the local economy and improve quality of life for Clearwater residents and visitors. Currently, historic commercial spaces in Downtown Clearwater need significant repair to meet modern fire and building code requirements. Newer commercial spaces have the potential to serve restaurant uses, but lack the necessary restaurant support services, e.g. grease traps. The CRA has allocated \$1 million dollars for this program and the minimum grant is \$10,000 and the maximum grant per space is \$250,000. This grant requires a partnership between the property owner and the CRA. The CRA's grant funding will be used to reduce the overall project cost for building improvements by a property owner by 50%. This is a time limited grant opportunity that will begin November 1, 2018 and will end May 1, 2019 or when the funding has been exhausted, whichever comes first.

The **Food and Drink Grant Program for Property Owners** directly promotes goals and objectives of the 2018 Clearwater Downtown Redevelopment Plan, specifically:

**People Goal** (page 46) – Downtown shall be a place that attracts residents, visitors, businesses and their employees and enable the development of community. The City shall encourage a vibrant and active public realm, recreation and entertainment opportunities and support the community and neighborhoods.

*Objective 1E:* Maintain Cleveland Street as Downtown's Main Street which is valued for its historic character and pedestrian scale.

**Urban Design Goal** (page 48) – Downtown will be a dynamic built environment of dense and livable patterns and active and attractive streets through quality urban design and architecture.

*Objective 4D:* Encourage renovation, restoration and reuse of existing historic structures to maintain the character of Downtown's neighborhoods.

The Food and Drink Incentive Program's main objectives are as follows:

- Attract food and/or drink establishments that are open on nights and weekends to the Downtown Core and Prospect Lake districts to promote Downtown's ongoing revitalization as a dining destination.
- Increase the number of commercial properties that can attract and accommodate food and drink tenants within the next 12 months.

- Improve the condition and appearance of downtown commercial buildings.
- Increase downtown commercial occupancy rates and property values.

## **B. Program Eligibility and Activities**

### *Property Owners*

Commercial property located in the Community Redevelopment Area's Downtown Core, Prospect Lake and the CRA's portions of the Old Bay districts are eligible for participation. Ad-valorem property tax exempt properties are not eligible (in cases where a portion of a property is tax-exempt, funding may be made only to the taxable portion/percentage of the property.) A property must be current in tax bills and without city liens.

Property owners must commit, at a minimum, to matching the CRA's grant funding dollar for building improvements that will be maintained for a minimum of five years. They also must secure a tenant that is a food and/or drink business that is open on nights and weekends (at a minimum Wednesday through Saturday from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm). An applicant may have begun construction, but grants will not be awarded to projects that have been completed prior to the CRA Trustee's hearing to award the grant.

The general rule of thumb for improvements that qualify towards a property owner's match is that the improvement should remain with the property, should improve the appearance and value of the property and should benefit tenants. Eligible interior and exterior building improvements include:

- ADA requirements
- Florida Fire Protection Code Requirements
- Mechanicals and HVAC systems
- Plumbing and electrical, including utility connections and upgrades
- Structure stabilization (repair and replacement of foundations, footers, load bearing walls, roofing systems)
- Room and space reconfiguration including wall relocations
- Grease traps
- Windows/Doors
- Outdoor hardscape improvements, landscape improvements and lighting
- Energy efficiency improvements
- General building or facade repairs and roof repair and replacement are eligible

## **C. Grant Process:**

There are three phases to this grant program, Pre-Qualification for Owners, Full Application Submission and Review and Project Implementation. The grant program timeline is available at [www.downtownclearwater.com](http://www.downtownclearwater.com).

### Pre-Qualification

The pre-qualification period will be open from November 1 to November 30, 2018. Property Owners who wish to participate in this grant program must file a pre-qualification form no later than **November 30, 2018**. The purpose of the Pre-Qualification review is to ensure that property owners meet the minimum eligibility

requirements to participate in the grant program and to establish a tentative grant amount for each applicant. Each potential property owner applicant must submit the pre-qualification form for review and approval by the CRA Director prior to submitting a full grant application.

CRA staff will review each submission and respond in writing within 10 business days of submission to confirm each applicant's eligibility for the grant program and set a tentative grant amount.

#### Full Application Submission and Review

After a successful Pre-Qualification period, property owners may submit a full grant application for review. Full applications may be submitted between December 1, 2018 and March 1, 2019. Grant funds will be awarded on a first come, first served basis to eligible applicants. Applications will be heard by the CRA Trustees in the order they are received. Therefore, there is a possibility that full applications submitted later in the grant process will not have access to the full, tentative grant amount established during the pre-qualification phase or the grant funds will be exhausted.

#### Full Application Process:

1. Applicants set up a meeting with CRA staff to review the full application requirements which includes a review of the proposed tenant's business concept and operating hours, eligible building improvement activities and a proposed scope of work and budget.
2. Property Owner submits a full application once they have secured a lease with an eligible tenant.
3. Application is reviewed within 15 business days of submission for completeness and accepted or returned with comments by the CRA Director.
4. Once an application is determined complete by the CRA Director, the grant request will be heard at the next available CRA Board hearing. Each application will be reviewed by an internal staff committee including the CRA Director, Planning Director, Building Official and City Attorney according to the following criteria:
  - Consistency with the goals of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan.
  - Feasibility of the proposed scope of services and timeline.
  - Ability to provide an experience that does not exist in Downtown presently.
  - Ability to meet the legal and financial requirements of the grant program.
5. All Food and Drink Incentive grant requests require the approval of the CRA Trustees. The CRA Director shall prepare a recommendation for the trustees based on the internal staff committee's review.

#### Project Implementation

Project implementation begins after the grant is awarded by the CRA Trustees.

1. The CRA executes the grant agreement, which includes a payment schedule and project milestones. Submission of receipts, paid invoices and other appropriate documentation will be required for payment. CRA funding will be distributed once a Certificate of Occupancy has been issued.

2. All necessary permits and approvals are obtained from the City of Clearwater before work is commenced. All work is to be performed by a licensed and insured contractor; all work must comply with the Downtown Design Guidelines of the City of Clearwater Code of Ordinances and be properly permitted by the City of Clearwater Development Services Department.
3. Applicant completes a Grant Completion Form which includes AFTER pictures of the project, a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy and final invoices for reimbursement.
4. Grantees will have one year to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy from the day the grant agreement is executed.
5. If a property owner has a change in tenant during the five-year grant period, the grant period will be extended by six months or until the property owner secures a new, eligible tenant, whichever time is less.

#### **D. Next Steps**

If you are interested in learning more about the Food and Drink Grant Program for Property Owners, please visit [downtownclearwater.com](http://downtownclearwater.com) or contact Anne Fogarty France at [anne.fogarty-france@myclearwater.com](mailto:anne.fogarty-france@myclearwater.com)