



City of Clearwater

Community Redevelopment Agency

Commercial Beautification Grant

A. Program Overview

The purpose of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Commercial Beautification grant program is to improve the visual appearance of commercial properties through small scale exterior building and site improvements. Grants may be awarded to property owners or tenants for exterior improvements to commercial property within the CRA district. This program is intended for exterior renovations and repairs that do not exceed a total project cost of \$25,000. The CRA will fund 100% of the cost of eligible improvements up to \$5,000 and provide a 50% match towards the total project cost up to a maximum of \$12,500 per application. Eligible improvements include painting, signage, lighting, doors, windows, roof, site improvements, and other minor exterior repairs. The amount of grant funds for the program will be established by the CRA Trustees on an annual basis. All grant awards are subject to budget availability. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. The application form is available at www.downtownclearwater.com.

The **Commercial Beautification Grant Program** directly promotes goals and objectives of the 2018 Clearwater Downtown Redevelopment Plan, specifically:

People Goals (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 Commercial Beautification Program’s **Objectives** are:

- Improve the condition and appearance of commercial buildings in Downtown Clearwater.
- Increase the number of commercial properties that can attract and accommodate tenants in the CRA District.
- Increase commercial occupancy rates and property values.

B. Program Eligibility and Activities

The Community Redevelopment Agency staff will administer the Commercial Beautification grant program. Funding for this grant program is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served

basis. Application submission does not guarantee approval. Applications will be reviewed for completeness and compliance with program criteria to determine eligibility for grant funding. Applications that do not comply with the program criteria and conditions will not be eligible for funding. No grants will be awarded for work completed prior to an executed grant agreement. The funding decision of CRA staff is final.

This grant program cannot be combined with any other CRA grant program for interior and/or exterior renovations. No more than one grant may be awarded to the same property address or building unit within a 5-year period. Individual storefronts contained on one parcel will be considered eligible for funding if they have unique mailing addresses and entrances.

All applications must meet the following criteria:

1. The subject property must be a commercial or mixed-use property located within the CRA. The applicant must be the property owner or a business tenant in the subject property. Existing business tenants or property owners must possess a current city of Clearwater Business Tax Receipt. New business owners must obtain a city of Clearwater Business Tax Receipt within 60 days of grant agreement execution.
2. Properties must be in fair or poor condition as determined by the CRA staff. The applicant must submit a scope of work with a minimum of two quotes from qualified vendors for completing the work. The *total project cost* is determined by the total costs of eligible grant expenses. Grant funds can only be used towards eligible expenses. Matching funds must be used towards eligible expenses. The maximum grant amount per application is \$12,500, which requires total project costs of a minimum of \$25,000.
3. The subject property must have an active tenant or a tenant that will open for business once the building improvements are complete. Applicants must supply proof of a lease that identifies at least a minimum of a one-year term. Existing tenants must provide proof of a lease that identifies a minimum one year remaining in the lease term after execution of the grant agreement.
4. Prior to execution of a grant agreement, the subject property must be free from any liens (except mortgage liens), judgments, or encumbrances (except easements) of any kind, and all city obligations must be current.

Eligible Grant Expenditures

Grant funds must be used to make exterior improvements to the building and the site that reduce visual blight and improve the appearance of the property. Eligible exterior building improvements include:

- Windows
- Doors
- Painting (including murals)
- Signage- New Signage Only that meet city code
- General exterior surface repairs, new roof, or roof repairs
- Siding Materials
- Minor site improvements, e.g., driveway repair, re-stripping parking lot

C. Grant Process:

Property owners or tenants first complete a grant application. CRA staff reviews the application for funding eligibility. Once an application is determined complete and in compliance with the grant program, CRA staff will execute a grant agreement that outlines the approved funding amount, total project costs, project timeline and scope of work. The application form is available at www.downtownclearwater.com.

Application Submission

1. Applications can be submitted via email, in person, or postal services. The applicant must meet with the CRA staff. Staff will provide the applicant with general guidance on proposed project and if the project qualifies for grant funds for submission. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.
2. Each application will be reviewed 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 meet the program objectives, legal and financial requirements of the grant program
3. If the application is approved by the CRA Director, the applicant shall sign and complete a funding agreement. After the funding agreement has been executed, the applicant may begin work on the project.

Project Timeline

Exterior renovations must be completed within six months from execution of the grant agreement. For scopes of work which require a permit, permits must be obtained prior to the execution of a grant agreement. The CRA Director has the authority to extend time limits for project completion based on extenuating circumstances.

Payment Process

Grant funds will be disbursed by the CRA to the applicant on a reimbursement basis for eligible project expenses. CRA staff must review and approve all reimbursement requests. Applicants must submit paid invoices as proof of payment. Projects requiring a building permit will need to submit proof of final inspection. The CRA Director has the authority to modify the payment process based on extenuating circumstances.

D. Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about the Commercial Beautification Grant Program please visit www.downtownclearwater.com or contact Howard Smith at howard.smith@myclearwater.com