

LAKELAND CRA

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS FAÇADE & SITE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (MIDTOWN)

Program

The intent of the FSIP is to support the revitalization of the commercial corridors in the Midtown CRA by stimulating private investment in improvements that enhance the appearance of buildings and properties and eliminate blight and non-conforming design standards. Moreover, it is the intent of this program to encourage improvements to private properties that go well beyond what is required under the City of Lakeland's Land Development Code to enhance the form, function and design quality of this redevelopment district.

The Commercial Corridor Façade and Site Improvement Matching Grant is a \$75,000¹ dollar- for- dollar matching grant that can be used towards any exterior architectural improvements to the street-side façade and eligible site improvements.

Application

1. Completed application form.
2. Project Schedule.
3. Photographs of the existing building and the proposed project area.
4. Schematic drawings illustrating proposed work, or pictures with project description outlined.
5. Description of materials to be used, the construction procedure and colors.
6. Three (3) cost estimates.

Eligibility

The Commercial Corridors Façade and Site Improvement Grant Program is available to commercial property owners and business owners within the designated commercial corridors in the Midtown Community Redevelopment Area (Exhibit A). Governmental entities and not-for-profit entities are not eligible, with the exception for those paying property taxes. In the event the property is sold or transferred to a governmental or not-for-profit entity within five (5) years of the payment of grant funds, the grant recipient will reimburse the CRA a prorated percentage of the grant award equal to the percentage that the number of months left in the five-year period at the time of sale or transfer bears to the full five-year period. Grants are intended for rehabilitation and restoration only. New construction is ineligible. All projects must include façade improvements. Projects with only site improvements will not be considered.

Maximum Allowable Award: The program provides for a one-time reimbursement, up to \$75,000 per property, for eligible façade and site improvements. The applicant is eligible for a fifty percent (50%) reimbursement equal to or less than \$75,000. **Sixty percent (60%) reimbursement may be available on a case-by-case basis for implementing results of Design Assistance Grant.**¹

Multiple Buildings/Parcels: Improvements made to multiple buildings on a single parcel or improvements made to a single building located on multiple parcels (under same ownership) are only eligible for the above stated amount.

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Eligible applicants include owners of commercial properties and businesses owners located in designated commercial corridors within the Midtown CRA. Business owners who are leasing a building for which improvements are proposed must submit an Owner Consent Form with their completed application. Only businesses whose existing use is allowable by the City's current codes and regulations are eligible for funding through this program. The CRA Advisory Board reserves the right to deny funding to applicants who are delinquent on payment of fines or fees.

Eligible Areas: The Commercial Corridors Façade and Site Improvement Program is currently available in the following target areas (See Exhibit A):

- 98N/Florida Avenue
- Memorial Boulevard
- Lakeland Hills Boulevard/Massachusetts Avenue
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue
- Ingraham Avenue
- Rose Street
- E. Parker Street
- N. Lake Parker Avenue
- Kathleen Road
- E. Main Street

Eligible Improvements

Any exterior architectural improvements to the street-side façade(s) may be eligible for program assistance. Improvements may include one or more of the following:

1. Signs: Removal of old and the design, production and installation of new signs or installation of new signs.
2. Awnings/Canopies: Removal of old and the design, production and installation of new awning and canopies.
3. Facades
 - a. Work performed on any exterior street-facing storefront of the primary building including cleaning masonry, painting, window or door replacement, other repairs or rebuilding historic storefronts.
 - b. Exterior painting should not exceed 20% of the scope of work and the grant proceeds, unless part of an art installation as described below.
4. Walls, Fencing and Landscape: Includes work to replace or add appropriate fencing or landscaping to hide incompatible or negative site elements such as storage yards, dumpsters, outdoor fabrication or work areas. This type of work should not exceed 20% of the scope of work or the grant proceeds.
5. Architectural Fees: Not to exceed 20% of the of grant amount up to a maximum of \$15,000.
6. Art Installations.: Art installations or works of art created by artists exhibiting the highest quality of skill and aesthetic principles and includes all forms of visual art, specifically murals

The following items are specifically ineligible for the program:

1. Parking lot paving. (Unless to accomplish shared parking arrangement between adjacent site owners or businesses)
2. Interior work (even if visible through street-front windows).
3. Other improvements required for redevelopment or occupancy of the property with the sole intention of complying with the City of Lakeland's Building Codes.
4. Roof repair or replacement.
5. Installation of seasonal planting or other seasonal landscaping.
6. Permit fees and taxes.
7. Inventory/fixtures/equipment.
8. Non-fixed improvements.
9. Improvements made prior to grant approval.
10. Refinancing existing debt.
11. Sweat equity payments (i.e. reimbursement for applicant's own labor and performance of renovation work or new construction).
12. Improvements that are required as a result of a violation notice or citation are not eligible for funding.

Eligible improvements must be consistent with the City of Lakeland's Land Development Codes. Grant funds will not be used solely to correct code violations or to bring structures up to code.

As a condition of approval, Applicant will agree that improvements made using these funds will stay in place a minimum of five (5) years. If improvements are replaced within five (5) years of construction completion, the grant recipient must pay a pro rata portion of the grant proceeds invested in the project for the number of months remaining.

Applicant is responsible for obtaining or having obtained all required building permits for the work undertaken.

Once a maximum grant for any property has been awarded, businesses occupying that property or the building owner cannot reapply for another grant for the same location for a five (5) year period.

Applicant agrees to allow the LCRA to photograph the project for use in future publications.

Process

Qualified applicants must schedule an appointment with the CRA prior to preparing an application for submittal. The CRA office is located on the third floor of City Hall at 228 South Massachusetts Avenue, Lakeland, Florida 33801. Appointments may be made by calling (863) 834-5200. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

The CRA will review the application for completeness. A post-application submittal conference will be held with the Applicant to discuss any deficiencies or issues with the application. At this time, the CRA may request that the Applicant provide additional information.

Subsequently, the CRA will review the application against the review criteria.

Selection Criteria

The CRA will review completed applications against review criteria findings and issue an approval or denial letter.

Scoring Criteria	
CRITERIA	POINTS
<u>Private Contribution</u>	<u>20 points total</u>
Between \$0 and \$25,000	5
Between \$25,000 and \$70,000	10
Between \$70,000 and \$150,000	15
More than \$150,000	20
<u>Location</u>	<u>10 points total</u>
Corner property ¹	10
<u>Aesthetic Enhancement</u>	<u>70 points total</u>
Principal Building Improvement	20
Building and Site Improvement	30
Implementing results of Design Assistance Grant	25
Compatibility of proposed improvements to the surrounding structures/styles	
Good	15
Fair	5
Poor	0
	100 points total

Applicants that score below 60 points will be recommended for denial. Applicants that are denied for this program may appeal their request to the CRA Advisory Board at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The CRA Advisory Board will determine by super majority vote that an appealed application is approved or denied without conditions. The applicant will be notified in writing of the Board's decision within five (5) business days of the Board meeting. Applicants are advised that grant funds are provided at the sole discretion of the CRA Advisory Board and the findings stated in the recommendation do not create an entitlement to funding.

Available Assistance

The CRA Advisory Board will set the amount of assistance available for the fiscal year in its Annual Budget. The standard maximum grant contribution per application is set at \$75,000¹. The CRA Advisory Board may raise or lower this amount at any time upon a majority vote of its members. An applicant must contribute at least 50% towards the total cost of the eligible improvement. Expenses must be related to direct labor, equipment or materials associated with the eligible improvement to be counted towards the project cost. Grants will be awarded on a first-come first-served basis.

Disbursement of Funds

The Applicant shall incur all initial project costs and may receive reimbursement only after all improvements have been completed in accordance with the grant award.

Grant funds will be disbursed upon the receipt of a finding of project completion by the CRA. The finding of project completion will be granted when the CRA has received and reviewed the following package:

1. Written notification from the Owner that the project is complete.
2. Copies of all required permits and occupancy certificates.
3. Copies of paid invoices and evidence of payment (cancelled checks).

Expiration of Grant Award

Applicants must receive a building permit within six (6) months from the date the CRA Advisory Board approves the grant request or the funding will expire. Extensions may be granted by the CRA Advisory Board under special circumstances.

Project completion must be within twelve (12) months of the issuance of a building permit. Extensions may be granted by the CRA Advisory Board under special circumstances.

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Exhibit A: Midtown CRA Boundary Map

