



ALACHUA CRA
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Business Façade Improvement Program **Policies & Procedures**

Application Packet FY 2019

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PURPOSE & GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

The purpose of the City of Alachua Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Business Façade Grant Program (the “Program”) is to provide assistance to rehabilitate the facades of commercial buildings within the Community Redevelopment Area.

Grant funds are awarded to projects that best facilitate and foster the goals and objectives of the CRA Amended Community Redevelopment Plan and the CRA Market Study and Economic Development Implementation Plan. A copy of these plans may be found on the CRA’s website.

The CRA and CRA Advisory Board (CRAAB) use the *Business Façade Grant Program Funding Priority Rating Sheet* to determine funding recommendations and award decisions. A copy of this Rating Sheet is attached as Appendix B to these Policies & Procedures.

The Policies and Procedures are meant to provide applicants with important information about the Business Façade Grant Program requirements. Applicants should use this document as a guide when applying for a grant in order to make sure that all requirements are met.

AVAILABLE GRANT FUNDING AND MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

The Program provides a 50% matching grant between \$500 and \$5,000 for façade improvement project costs. Grantees must provide a cash or loan match of 50% of total project cost. Funding is appropriated annually by the CRA, and is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Applicants must finish the project and pay all project costs before being eligible for reimbursement.

Applicants are reminded that grant awards are discretionary in nature and should not be considered an entitlement. The grant criteria are guidelines, not guarantees, for grant awards. If an Applicant meets all grant criteria, a grant may or may not be awarded at the CRA’s sole discretion based upon funding limitations, competing applications and/or competing priorities.

APPLICANT & PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY

The Business Façade Grant Program is available for commercial properties located within the Redevelopment Area. For a map of the Community Redevelopment Area, please see Appendix D.

Eligible buildings must have a façade that is visible from a street or parking lot. Buildings located on a corner lot containing a single business may be considered to have two or more facades. If a building is divided into more than one business unit, each business unit may be considered a separate façade if each unit has a separate primary entrance and each occupant has an individual Local Business Tax Receipt. If a building is a multi-use building (e.g. residential and commercial), only the commercial portion of the building is eligible under the Program. Buildings used exclusively for residential purposes are not eligible for the Program.

Property Requirements

- ☐ Located within City of Alachua Community Redevelopment Area (see Appendix D).
- ☐ Privately owned commercial buildings.
- ☐ Building must be structurally sound.
- ☐ No past due utility bills (including but not limited to water, wastewater, electric, and garbage).
- ☐ No past due property tax bills.
- ☐ No City liens, or open permits.
- ☐ Must be occupied at the time funding is requested or, if unoccupied at the time of application, have a bona fide lease or rental agreement (must be occupied by completion of the project). Under no circumstances will funds be expended on a building that will not be immediately occupied after rehabilitation.

Occupant Requirements

- ☐ Must have all applicable licensing.
- ☐ Must have valid Local Business Tax Receipt at the time of grant application and at project completion.
- ☐ Use must be permitted by the City's LDRs (see Table 4.1-1) or have obtained a Special Exception Permit.
- ☐ Must be legally constituted business.
- ☐ Must be a commercial business.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Grant funds may only be used for projects that substantially improve the aesthetics of the exterior façade of a commercial building and that facilitate redevelopment consistent with the CRA Community Redevelopment Plan. Projects must also be consistent with all Federal, State, and local laws and regulations, including without limitation, the City's Comprehensive Plan, Code of Ordinances, and Land Development Regulations.

The total project costs may only include labor and materials. Labor is only eligible for reimbursement if performed by a contractor or entity other than the applicant. No building owner, lessor, lessee, tenant, occupant, employee, or immediate relative of the applicant, either personally or corporately, shall be paid to serve as a contractor or subcontractor for the work to be performed.

All contractors must have a General or Building contractor's license (Class A or B) as required by Chapter 489, Part I, Florida Statutes, or appropriate licensure as required for the type of work to be performed.

Permit fees and project design fees (i.e., architectural or engineering services) are not reimbursable expenses. Additionally, any work performed before the grant is approved will not

be eligible for reimbursement by the Program.

All Applicants must disclose any personal or business relationship with members of the City Commission or City employees at the time of application. Applicants must be approved by the CRA if they have an apparent conflict of interest and are otherwise eligible to receive assistance through this Program.

Code violations may be corrected under this Program, but no funds will be reimbursed until all code violations are addressed and the property found to be in compliance with applicable codes.

Improvements must be compatible and complementary to buildings located on the same block on both sides of the street. Strikingly different design treatments, including color, from one storefront to the next shall be avoided.

Examples of Eligible Projects

- Refurbishing of exterior walls, including repainting, repairs, re-siding or similar cosmetic or structural improvements.
- Removal of false facades.
- Facade cleaning other than general maintenance.
- Stucco restoration or other exterior nonstructural masonry repair.
- Painting (colors must be compatible or complementary to surrounding buildings).
- Replacement of damaged windows or doors.
- Installment or improvements to permanent awnings, canopies, or other coverings over windows or walkways.
- Adding or increasing windows of storefront.
- Electrical repairs or additions (directly related to exterior or display window), lights, or awnings.
- Decorative additions such as sconces and other architectural features.
- Code violation corrections which also enhance the aesthetics of the façade.

Examples of Ineligible Projects

- Improvements made prior to grant award.
- Roof repair or replacement.
- Interior renovations.
- Non-fixed improvements such as removable awnings, equipment, etc.
- General maintenance.
- Payment for sweat equity.
- Non-aesthetic improvements.

APPLICATION STEPS

Before a property or business owner applies for Program funding, they must meet with CRA and City Staff to review the Grant Policies and Procedures and any permitting requirements. After this meeting, an applicant may begin the application process.

Applications will be accepted on the **first day of each month**. If this date falls on a non-City business day, the deadline shall be the next City business day. The application will be reviewed by Staff within 10 business days of the application submission. If an application is incomplete, it will be returned and the applicant will be allowed 10 business days from the notice that the application is incomplete to resubmit. The *Application for Façade Grant* is located in Appendix A.

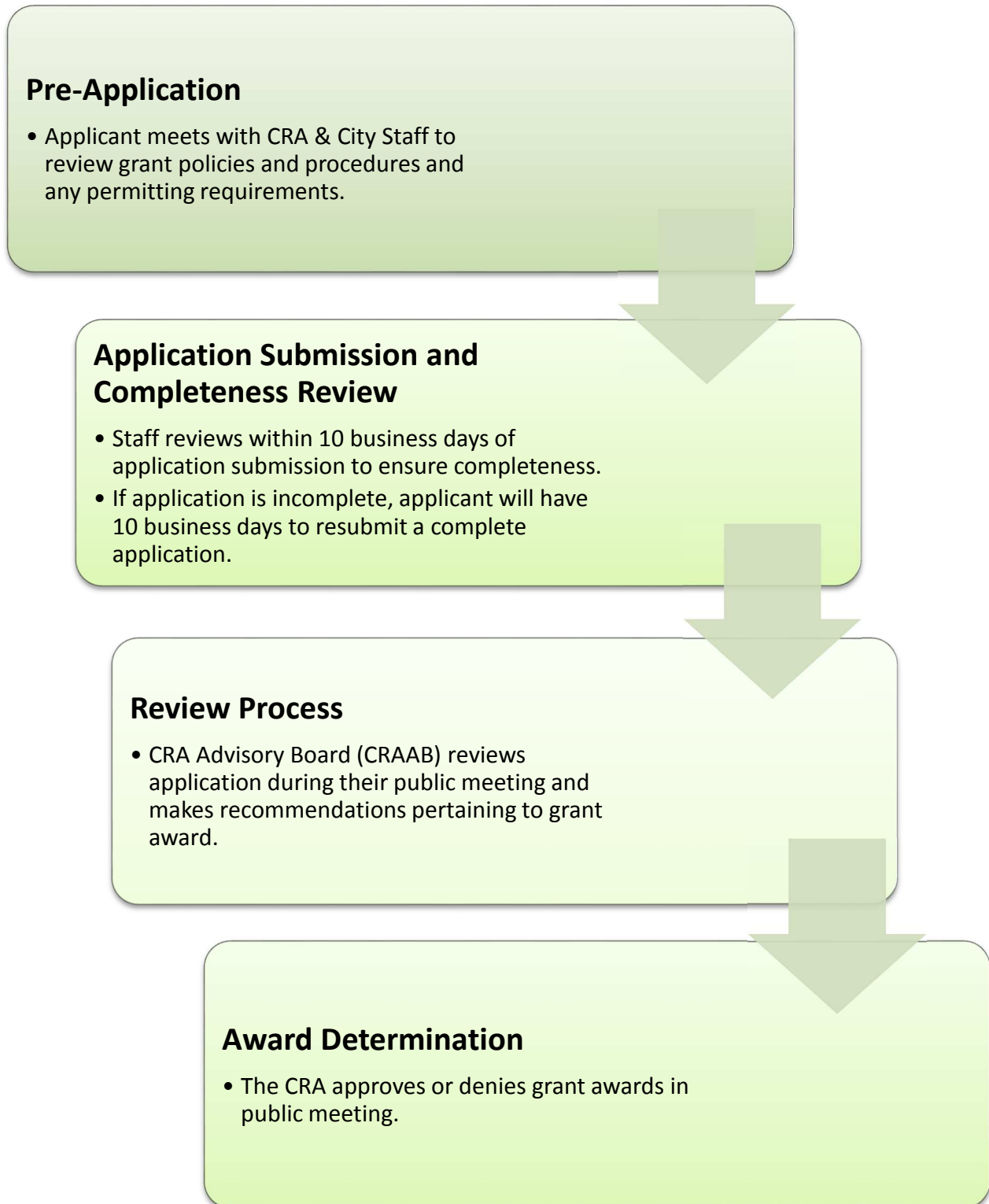
Designs must be of a professional quality and must clearly depict the proposed improvements. When required for the type of construction proposed, plans must be signed and sealed by a registered architect or professional engineer (as applicable). All designs must be in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, including the City's LDRs and the Florida Building Code.

Required Materials to Submit with Application

- ☐ Current photos of building and issues that will be resolved under the Program.
- ☐ Signed and sealed plans (if required by City Building Department for the type of work proposed).
- ☐ Sketches, drawings, plans or architectural renderings which clearly depict the proposed improvements.
- ☐ Information regarding project components such as color swatches, pictures of added features, etc.
- ☐ Proof property taxes are current.
- ☐ A copy of Local Business Tax Receipt.
- ☐ Proof property is current in utility bills.
- ☐ Copy of a lease or rental agreement that indicates building will be occupied after rehabilitation (if applicable).
- ☐ Two written contractor estimates if purchase or labor is \$1,000 or greater (staff will review for reasonableness of cost).

Applications will be reviewed during a CRA Advisory Board (CRAAB) meeting. This Board will make a recommendation to the CRA, who will make the grant awards in its sole discretion. For a schedule of these meetings please visit the CRA's webpage at www.cityofalachua.com.

The award of a grant must meet all public record requirements (including the right to audit) and other public purpose actions and findings necessary to establish the foregoing. For details about Florida Public Records law requirements (F.S. 119) please see Appendix C.

Figure 1: Application Steps

PROJECT STEPS & DEADLINES

Once a grant is awarded by the CRA in a public meeting, the project must begin within 80 days and be completed within 120 days of grant approval. Minor changes to the awarded Project must be approved by the CRA Executive Director and substantial changes must be approved by the CRA.

Applicants must finish the project and pay all project costs before being eligible for reimbursement. Funds will be reimbursed at the completion of the project and upon verification that all grant criteria has been met. In no event will the reimbursement amount exceed the amount originally awarded.

Prior to beginning any work, the applicant must obtain all necessary permits, which may include, but is not limited to, a Certificate of Appropriateness and/or a building permit(s). Contractor estimates and quotes must also be reviewed by CRA staff for reasonableness of cost and be approved for such purposes before the applicant enters into a contract with the contractor and before work is performed. The CRA reserves the right to verify any and all costs associated with the construction for improvements funded by the Program.

Figure #2 contains step-by-step information about the project process.

What to Submit for Reimbursement

- ☐ Written request for reimbursement (ask CRA Staff for template).
- ☐ Documentation of all project costs:
 - Cancelled checks.
 - Detailed invoices.
 - Paid receipts.
 - Signed statement attesting to design and construction costs incurred.
- ☐ Contractor's license number (if applicable).
- ☐ Proof of payment for project improvements (paid invoices, receipts, etc.).
- ☐ Before and after photos of project improvements.
- ☐ Copy of Certificate of Occupancy or Completion (if applicable).
- ☐ Copy of Certificate of Appropriateness (if applicable).

Figure 2: Grant & Project Steps

CORRECTION OF PROGRAM VIOLATIONS

If the provisions of this Program are violated, the applicant will be notified of any noted violations, and will be given 60 days to correct the violations. If the violations are not corrected within this time frame, the building will not be eligible for any further benefits under this Program.

REQUIREMENTS FOLLOWING COMPLETION

After the project has been completed and grant reimbursements have been made, the applicant has an obligation to keep the property maintained and not make any substantial changes to the project improvements without approval by the CRA for two years after the completion of the project. Failure to do so may exclude the grant recipient from future grants.

In order to allow funding for as many applicants as possible, the project building is not eligible for the Business Façade Grant for three years after receiving assistance.

By accepting assistance, the building owner and/or tenant agree that the CRA may use images of the property before and after renovation.