

CRA GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW & GUIDELINES



Introduction

The mission of the CRA is to bring about the restoration and economic revitalization the Community Redevelopment Agency District. The purpose of the CRA Grant Programs to encourage a re-investment environment that attracts business interest, and promotes improvements through the renovation and restoration of buildings within the district. Improvements to the redevelopment district contribute to the physical, economic, social and aesthetic well-being of the City of Sebring, and improve the assessed taxable value of district properties. The CRA's grant programs assist in creating a thriving economic center in the redevelopment district to benefit existing and future business and residential interests.

Program Objectives

- Re-establish and promote downtown Sebring as a regional destination for commercial activity and entertainment
- Improve the physical appearance of the downtown to stimulate private investment
- Improve access and visibility for the downtown
- Strengthen downtown neighborhoods through redevelopment and revitalization of the housing stock by establishing a safe, functional, and aesthetically pleasing community environment
- Repurpose residential and commercial spaces to increase feasibility and attractiveness
- Assist in the development of essential community facilities
- Create public/private partnerships to grow economic development
- Increase downtown commercial and residential occupancy rates and property values
- Attract highly demanded businesses to Downtown Sebring
- Encourage commercial and residential development
- Stimulate the local business economy by increasing the pedestrian traffic in the downtown central business district
- Promote Downtown Sebring's as a place to live, work and play
- Support on-going main street efforts to encourage downtown business recruitment, retention, and expansion

Eligibility Requirements

- Project or event must be located within the CRA district (*see map of district boundaries*)
- Eligible improvements will remain with the property (cannot be used for fixtures, furniture, inventory, or rent)
- Applicants are allowed to apply for more than one grant at a time – a separate application must be completed in its entirety for each grant, and the CRA Board will accept and review at their discretion

- Applicants may apply for, and receive more than one grant in a fiscal year, however the board has the right to deny any additional grant requests for any reason
- The project must meet one or more of the above mentioned objectives
- The applicant must specify the future business use of the project for the CRA Board to take into consideration when scoring the project. Applications for consignment shops, barber shops, salons, and pet groomers will not be considered for grants funds.
- The applicant must be the owner of the building. A tenant may qualify upon receipt of written consent by the owner of the building
- Property taxes, both City and County, must be current
- Funds are not available for routine maintenance and should be part of a larger scope of improvements to the property or area
- Land must be developed (i.e., have a building on the property). If the property is vacant, it must have had a building on the property within the last ten (10) years
- Must have, or propose a use that will have, a conforming land-use category and zoning designation
- Must be clear of code enforcement liens or current actions
- All improvements must be **PROPOSED** improvements. The CRA will not accept an application for any improvements that have already been completed
- All proposed improvements **MUST** meet all City land development regulations and architectural requirements of the Redevelopment District, unless granted a variance by the CRA Board
- The CRA reserves the right to accept or reject any application, or part thereof
- Government entities, schools and religious organizations are ineligible for grant funding from the CRA

Award & Disbursement of Funds

- A minimum of two (2) written costs estimates from licensed and insured contractors itemizing the scope and cost of work must be provided. The grant funding amount will be based off the lower of the two costs estimates
 - a. All proposed improvements must be completed by a licensed and insured contractor for projects totaling \$25,000 or more
 - b. Projects totaling less than \$25,000 can be completed by the applicant, or a licensed and insured handy person
 - c. If the project is undertaken by the applicant, the CRA will only reimburse applicable and approved expenses for materials. Labor hours provided by the applicant, friends, relatives, volunteers, etc. will not be applicable for reimbursement
- Funds will be awarded at the discretion of the CRA Board after full review of request. Requests are reviewed on a case by case basis
- Funds will be disbursed according to criteria established by the CRA Board for each grant, and can vary per grant award based on the project specifics
- Grant funds will be disbursed to an awarded applicant on a reimbursement basis at the conclusion of the project after providing copies of the contractor estimates/quotes, invoices, and paid receipts and/or copies of checks for improvements relating to the approved project
- All approved project related expenses must be paid for via check or credit card to be able to provide proof of payment. Cash transactions are ineligible for reimbursement

- Grant funds will be disbursed after improvements have been completed and approved by the CRA. The CRA will provide payment within 30 days of final inspection approval, and provision of the required close out documentation by the applicant to process the reimbursement
- Digital and printed pictures of the completed project must be provided to the CRA office prior to funds being dispersed for the project
- In submitting this grant application, the applicant recognizes that grant funding depends on eligibility and prioritization with other applications. The applicant is expected to attend the CRA Board meeting to present the project for consideration
- In the event the amount spent by the applicant on the approved expenses equates to **LESS** than the awarded grant, the reimbursement will equal the lesser amount
- In the event the amount spent by the applicant on the approved expenses equates to **MORE** than the awarded amount, the reimbursement will be for the board approved amount and nothing additional

Compliance Requirements

- Awarded applicants must sign an agreement with the CRA that describes their rights and obligations upon issuance of the grant award.
- Work must commence on an approved grant funded project within ninety (90) days after approval or applicant will be required to come back before the CRA Board to discuss an updated timeframe on the delinquent project. Work on a proposed project cannot be started prior to the approval of the application.
- All projects must commence within (90) days of grant award, and be completed within six (6) months from the date the project commences. The applicant will be required to come back before the CRA Board to discuss an updated timeframe on the delinquent project if an extension beyond the 6-month completion date is needed.
- The CRA Board has the authority to detail a different project timeline for any project. If a different time frame is not specified by the board at the time of the project award, the applicant must follow the time frames as stated above.
- If applicant fails to comply with the above project time lines, the CRA Board has the authority to terminate the grant agreement, and the applicant must reapply for consideration.
- All necessary permits and approvals must be obtained from the City of Sebring before work is commenced. All work must comply with the Downtown Design Guidelines of the City of Sebring Code of Ordinances and be properly permitted by the City of Sebring Building Department.
- All contractors, subcontractors and handy men performing work under the CRA grant programs must be licensed and insured in the State of Florida and the applicant must provide proof of both along with the grant application.
- All exterior improvements proposed for a property on the City's Local Historic Register, or part of the Downtown Historic District, must be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission prior to applying for grant funds. Only approved projects/improvements will be taken into consideration for grant funding from the CRA. Documentation of the HPC's approval must accompany the grant application

Next Steps

Request and complete the necessary grant application packet from CRA staff to begin the application process. Contact the CRA staff for any questions or assistance with the application process.