



Façade Improvement Grant Program

A. Program Overview

Through the Façade Improvement Grant Program, the City of Sebring Community Redevelopment Agency seeks to help improve the overall attractiveness of the Downtown Sebring redevelopment district. The CRA Façade Improvement Grant Program provides property owners with financial assistance to improve the appearance of their properties in the Community Redevelopment Area. The purpose of the grant program is to leverage private investment in making significant improvements to building facades, which return public benefits such as enhanced corridor aesthetics, improved pedestrian comfort, and public safety.

The Façade Grant's main objectives are as follows:

- Improve the condition and appearance of Downtown commercial buildings
- Encourage commercial and residential development
- Increase Downtown commercial and residential occupancy rates
- Increase Downtown property values
- Promote Downtown Sebring's ongoing revitalization as a place to live, work and play

The Façade Improvement Grant assists qualified business or property owners with exterior building and property improvements to eliminating blighted conditions in the targeted areas of the Sebring CRA. These grant funds may be used for improvements to properties that are not eligible for grant funding from other sources available in the area, or to supplement grant funds awarded by other agencies.

Façade Improvement Grant funds will be available for up to \$10,000 per project, and will be awarded and reviewed on a first come, first served basis by the CRA Board. The CRA Board will evaluate the scope of work for the project and determine an overall score for the proposed improvements out of a possible one hundred (100) points based on the review scale included below. The CRA Board's average score will be converted to a percentage out of (100), and that percentage will be multiplied by the applicant's requested grant amount to determine the final granted award. Properties listed on the Local Register of Historic Places are eligible for an additional (25) points towards their overall score, which equates to an additional \$2,500 towards the proposed project. The City's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is charged with nominating properties to the Local Register, and final approval is granted by the City Council. The applicant must go before the HPC to apply for the Local Register designation for their property. The HPC will evaluate and render their decision. If approved, the applicant must provide documentation of the designation to the CRA along with the grant application. The CRA Board will base their award amount off of the lowest estimate provided by the applicant. Any and all awards will be granted based on the project parameters, financial need, and catalyst effect to the redevelopment area as deemed appropriate by the CRA board. This program is a match assistance program requiring a 25% match from the property or business owner.

Grant funding will be made available as determined by the CRA Board at the start of each fiscal year. Funding for the Façade Improvement Grant will be budgeted annually by the CRA Board.

Applications will be accepted throughout the year, and funding will be made available to participants on a case-by-case basis after review and approval from the CRA Board. Once the funds have been expended, the program will close for the remainder of the fiscal year. The CRA Board will evaluate the grant availability for the upcoming fiscal year based on budget availability, and to match the CRA's mission and vision for the future.

Reimbursements will be processed for a completed project once the below have been satisfied:

- CRA Staff has conducted a final inspection of the project to ensure the scope of the improvements matches those approved by the CRA Board
- Applicant has provided printed and digital pictures of the completed project
- The applicant has provided the necessary paperwork to process the reimbursement to the CRA office to include estimates for all approved improvements, copies of the paid invoices for all work completed, and copies of the checks/credit card receipts showing proof of payment

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.

B. Program Eligibility

Commercial or residential property located in the Community Redevelopment Area is eligible for participation. A property must be current in tax bills and without city liens. If a commercial or residential tenant is applying for grant funding, written permission from the property owner must be obtained as part of the application process. Moreover, the tenant must have a minimum five (5) year lease term with the property owner. Applications for projects must exceed a total project cost of \$1,000.00 to be eligible to apply.

All projects requesting a Facade Grant from the CRA must comply with the Design Guidelines established by the Sebring CRA and the Historic Preservation Commission. These guide lines have been adopted by the City Council and are supported by the Historic Preservation Ordinance which governs the actions of the Preservation Commission.

Changes to the facades of buildings will not remove, alter, damage or cover up significant architectural features of the building which are original or which reflect a major alteration that is itself architecturally coherent, or which help create a unified and attractive appearance to the building and those adjacent to it.

Changes to the facades will either partially or fully restore the appearance of the building based on actual evidence, including photographs, written documentation, data, on the building site or other data or, represent a modern treatment, if appropriate, that blends into and is compatible with the building and those adjacent to it.

In general, repair and preservation of existing structures and facades is encouraged, unless those alterations will result in an incoherent, unattractive or inharmonious appearance.

For facades that have been substantially altered previously, and for which a modern treatment is chosen, such a treatment will conform to the features, materials rhythms, colors and general appearance of the building and those adjacent to it, particularly if the building is in a row of other buildings with identical or similar design.

Any and 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.

Paint colors will be based on the original colors obtained from paint samples on the building, or be compatible with adjacent buildings and others located Downtown. Trim colors which highlight building details are encouraged.

Surface cleaning of structures will be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Cleaning methods that damage the historic building materials, particularly sandblasting, shall not be undertaken.

DIY/Self-help projects require an estimated cost for the materials to be used to complete the project. The program will not reimburse for labor provided by the applicant.

Eligible improvements include:

Eligible improvements are those found only on the primary entrance visible from the street view. No interior improvements or maintenance activities will be eligible for funding.

- Roof Upgrades
- Lighting / Electrical
- Windows / Doors
- Landscape / Irrigation
- Exterior Painting
- Pressure Washing
- Awnings / Canopies
- Walls / Fencing
- Porches, Stairs, Railings
- Restoring original building elements

C. Application and Evaluation Process

A property owner or tenant that is interested in participating in the Façade Grant must submit a completed and signed application to the CRA office in person or electronically. Applications will be reviewed by staff and if the application meets all required criteria, the applicant will be scheduled to appear before the CRA Board at their next meeting to present their project.

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Consistency with the goals of the Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan
- Potential for project to attract additional businesses and residential interest, and to stimulate the Downtown economy
- Overall scope of the project, and effect on the visual appeal of the redevelopment area upon completion
- Investment level and source of funds from the applicant

The CRA Board will review the completed application with respect to the below criteria, and will make a recommendation to fund the project at an amount commiserate with the cumulative score as detailed in the following score sheet.

Review Criteria Scoring System Façade Improvements	
Criteria	Points
Scope of proposed project improvements and contribution to the aesthetic appeal of the CRA district	<i>Pick One</i>
Good	_____ / 40
Fair	_____ / 20
Poor	_____ / 0
Current condition/appearance of façade and compatibility with the style and condition of the surrounding structures	<i>Pick One</i>
Good	_____ / 30
Fair	_____ / 15
Poor	_____ / 0
Owner investment in the proposed project	<i>Pick One</i>
Good	_____ / 20
Fair	_____ / 10
Poor	_____ / 0
Strategic location of property in contributing to the visual appeal of the district	<i>Pick One</i>
Good	_____ / 10
Fair	_____ / 5
Poor	_____ / 0
Total (100 Points Possible)	_____ / 100

Property listed on the Local Register of Historic Places	<i>Circle One</i>
Yes	25
No	0

Final Total (with Local Register extra points if applicable)	_____
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Commissioner Name:	Date:
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For Office Use ONLY	
<i>Average Board Score</i>	
<i>Average Board Percentage</i>	%
<i>Amount Requested</i>	\$
<i>Total Board Award</i>	\$