



LIVE OAK | Suwannee County, FL

City Hall Annex • 416 Howard Street S.E., Live Oak, FL 32064

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COMMERCIAL BUILDING FAÇADE & SITE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION *Fiscal Year 2022-2023*

❖ Preservation ❖ Restoration ❖ Beautification

This brochure is for informational purposes, and does not supersede any adopted codes, ordinances, procedures or documents which may be applicable.

The Live Oak Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA and CRA Board) has a mission to reduce and eliminate slum and blight, and aims to foster the improvement of existing structures throughout the Community Redevelopment Area. The Live Oak CRA recognizes that the appearance and functionality of commercial establishments plays an important role in portraying a successful image, and subsequently attracting patrons, which results in a viable business endeavor.

In an effort to revitalize and further invest into the Community Redevelopment Area, and in conformance with Part VIII, subsection iv, of the adopted CRA Plan 2039, the Live Oak CRA has developed a comprehensive program of financial incentives geared towards the development and establishment of new businesses in the adopted redevelopment district area, as well as promoting improvements to existing businesses for future growth and success.

This grant program, for qualifying commercial properties, has been designed to offer commercial property owners, business owners and possible tenants the opportunity to make physical exterior improvements to vacant and/or underutilized spaces, and to encourage the adaptive reuse of and promote upgrades to existing buildings, improve appearance and environment, improve functionality, eliminate code violations, and help fill vacant and/or underutilized spaces, with the goal of fostering renewed interest in opening and operating businesses within the CRA District.

Grant funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Funding for the grant program is provided primarily through the CRA TIF Trust Funds, and grant funds are distributed through reimbursement after the project's completion. Eligibility will be determined based on information provided in and with the applicant's submission.

Potential business owners are encouraged to meet with City Staff regarding potential projects prior to entering any purchase contract or lease agreement in order to verify required improvements to properties.

Applicants are encouraged to review current Planning & Zoning regulations with the Planning & Zoning Department Staff, and are required to schedule a Pre-Application Meeting with CRA and City Staff prior to submitting an application.

Applications may be submitted in-person or via email or fax.

Application submissions and/or inquiries regarding this grant program may be addressed to:

City of Live Oak City Hall Annex
Attn: Community Redevelopment Agency

416 Howard St. E
Live Oak, FL 32064

Phone: (386) 362-2009 | Fax: (386) 330-6507

Annex General Mailbox: loannex@cityofliveoak.org | Website: <https://www.cityofliveoak.org/cra>



GENERAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

This program is currently funded through September of 2023. There is no fee to apply; however, submission of an application does not entitle the applicant to funding.

Interested parties may request an application for grant funding from CRA Staff, who will be the point of contact for initiating an application and/or answering questions about the program. The CRA Board shall designate grant criteria and eligibility on a cycle-by-cycle basis, which coincides with the CRA Fiscal Year (October through September). All grant agreements shall have language indemnifying the CRA and the City of Live Oak. This indemnification shall have the Owner's/ Recipient's notarized signature(s). ***(Please be aware: Once an application has been submitted, it is considered public record)***. Submission of an application does not guarantee grant funding will be awarded.

All grant applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will appear before the CRA Board at the next scheduled regular meeting upon completion of CRA Staff review. This will include the review of site and/or construction plans for the project, which must be reviewed and approved by all City departments. *Plan reviews generally take up to 30 days for approval, unless revisions are needed.*

Reimbursement for projects is at the CRA Board's discretion. In order to effectively promote the utilization of vacant or underutilized spaces and/or properties for proposed viable business uses within the commercial core of the redevelopment district, the current 2022-2023 Commercial Façade and Site Improvement Grant Program funding will be limited to the following:

- Properties which have no identified code violations, unless the proposed improvements serve to remedy said violations;
- Properties identified, according to City records, as being within the adopted Redevelopment Area, and also which are designated on the Suwannee County Tax Collector records as paying into the Live Oak Redevelopment fund.
- Properties which have no signage or structures which were previously erected in violation of existing land development or other applicable code regulations, unless said signage or structures are removed or replaced as part of the proposed improvements;
- Properties for which the current and/or proposed future use is 100% conforming and legally existing in relation to the Zoning Atlas and applicable Land Development Regulations, and will be used for legally permitted commercial or industrial purposes.
- Owner(s) and/or tenant(s) have maintained all required licensing to operate, as well as being current on all City utility accounts, and having no delinquent property tax payments.

Grants will not be considered or awarded for work previously completed or work in the process of being completed.

A portion of the grant may be used to pay for professional fees. The cost of professional fees shall initially be paid for by the Owner, but may be included as an allowance of the total project cost.

FUNDING LIMITATIONS

Grant funding is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Awards are currently limited to one (1) award per tax parcel per CRA Fiscal Year (October through September). The Board reserves the right to limit or cap the number of separate approvals, per specific location, site or parcel, during any one Fiscal Year; and/or to limit or cap the number of approvals for a specific business for multiple applications within a preceding three (3) year time period.

Returning applicants are required to adhere to a 180-day waiting period between projects to allow for freedom of opportunity for new applicants.

For qualifying projects, expenses are eligible for a 75% grant rebate. **The maximum amount that this 75% can be applied to is \$16,000;** thus, the maximum grant funding amount is capped at **\$12,000.**

Projects applied for shall be considered on a case-by-case basis for each parcel of record. A separate application packet is required for each individual qualifying parcel.

New construction projects are not eligible for any Façade and Site Improvement Grant Program consideration.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The following expenses **have been approved** for potential grant funding by the City of Live Oak Community Redevelopment Agency Board for the current Fiscal Year. ***Eligible projects must be comprised of improvements to areas visible from the street other public space(s).***

- Improvements to meet current building code requirements and/or zoning requirements.
- Labor and material costs which are consistent with current rates generally available for the scope of work being proposed, including professional design services.
- Removal or restoration of deteriorated or sub-standard exterior building materials.
- Masonry work and/or new stucco, brick or repairs thereof.
- Painting (*includes preparation: scraping, sanding, pressure washing, sandblasting, etc.*).
- New or replacement doors and/or windows
- New or replacement woodwork, architectural façade details, aesthetic detailing.
- Permanent Signage (*including the removal of all temporary, old signs or non-conforming signs and the design, production and installation of new signs*).
- Awnings and canopies (*including the removal of old awnings and installation of new awnings or canopies*).
- Tear-out required to build a new entrance into the building.
- Landscaping, planters, irrigation and screening.
- Lighting of the exterior (*as permitted by the Land Development Regulations*).
- Brick or textured pavement.
- Courtyard and outside patron activity design and development (*when space is available*).
- Roof repairs or rehabilitation (*when approved design/materials used **).
- *Roof repair portion of grants shall be limited to a cap of \$2,500.00 in expenses and shall make up no greater than 50% of total eligible project costs for reimbursement upon project completion.***
- Resurfacing, re-striping, re-habilitation of existing off-street parking areas, new parking and curb cuts (*shall include a landscape element/compliance*).
- ADA Improvements (*exterior only, including ADA accessible ramps and entries*).
- Visible fascia, soffit, flashing, drip edge, guttering (*when approved design and materials are used*).
- Restoration of a façade's historic appearance.
- Other materials as may be required pertaining to eligible projects.

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The following expenses **are not eligible** for grant funding, including, but not limited to:

- Any costs associated with the purchase or lease of the building, space or property.
- Any improvements or work completed prior to grant agreement signature(s).
- Any improvements to properties not within the CRA District.
- Work which removes or alters historically significant features.
- Use of inappropriate materials.
- Work without a City of Live Oak Building Permit, when required.
- Work performed by an unlicensed contractor, or any individual, firm or company who does not provide up-to-date documentation for the required State licensure, workman's comp and liability insurance.
- Work performed that is not consistent with the Design Guidelines for the CRA pursuant to the Redevelopment Plan 2039 and City of Live Oak Comprehensive Plan and/or Land Development Regulations (LDRs).
- Labor for hired help who are not licensed or qualified to operate or perform work within the City of Live Oak, or are not State licensed (*as applicable*).
- Items and work considered "general or routine maintenance" (*activities planned and performed at regular intervals normally necessary to extend the life or prevent the premature failure of building components or equipment*).
- Sweat equity payments (*i.e., reimbursement for Owner's, applicant's, Grantee's or associates' own labor or equipment/tool purchases, in performance of renovation work or new construction*).
- Interior renovations, fixtures, items, inventory, equipment or materials.
- Refinancing existing debts.
- Non-fixed improvements or installation of moveable items as determined by CRA Staff and/or the CRA Board.
- Business Payroll.
- Other expenses as determined by CRA Staff, Board, or Board Attorney.



GRANT PROGRAM PROCESS

PRE-APPLICATION REQUIREMENT

- Applicants interested in participating in the program must first contact and meet with the City of Live Oak City and CRA Staff to determine eligibility, review program, and scheduling of application submission.
- Applicants are encouraged to review current Planning & Zoning regulations with the Planning & Zoning Department. Potential business owners are encouraged to meet with City Staff regarding potential projects prior to entering any purchase contract or lease agreement in order to verify required improvements to properties.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Following the required pre-application conference, a completed and signed application, along with required supporting documentation, must be submitted to:

City of Live Oak City Hall Annex
Attn: Community Redevelopment Agency
416 Howard St. E
Live Oak, FL 32064
Phone: (386) 362-2009 | Fax: (386) 330-6507

Annex General Mailbox: loannex@cityofliveoak.org | Website: <https://www.cityofliveoak.org/cra>

Completed applications and required associated documentation must be submitted no later than the last Friday of the month prior to the next scheduled Regular CRA Board Meeting in order to be placed as an agenda item for consideration.

As a general rule, applications **must** include:

- Contact information (i.e., primary contact, phone number, email, mailing address, etc.);
- A completed W-9 Tax Form (at reimbursement, a 1099 tax form will be issued specific to the grant amount);
- Proof of property ownership (deed of record) (for new construction); or, tentative or executed lease agreement, or notarized owner/agent authorization (for remediation);
- At least two (2) cost estimates from different ***Florida licensed and qualified contractors*** for all categories of work, or a copy of the bid documents with the best two (2) offers received for the project. All estimates must include identical scopes of service, along with a proposed schedule of completion;
- Materials-only estimates (these may be submitted singularly if from a bona fide retailer or supplier);
- Paint estimates (if applicable – must include all trim, etc.);
- Site and/or construction plans for the proposed project;
- Acknowledgement that the applicant has read and understands grant program requirements; and
- Additional information as requested by CRA Staff.

A checklist of required documents and materials is included as part of the grant program application form.

Site and/or construction plans must be reviewed and approved by all City departments in order to proceed with Board consideration. Plan reviews generally take up to 30 days for approval, unless revisions are needed.

AGREEMENT

Once the project has been approved for funding, the applicant and CRA Board Chairman will sign a notarized agreement, which describes the obligations and limitations of the grant award. Once the agreement has been signed by both the applicant and the CRA Board Chairman, the applicant will then be referred to as the “Grantee”. Additionally, all required building permits must be approved and issued. The project may then proceed with the obligation of the CRA to reimburse costs as approved in the agreement. Substantial modifications to final plans will require review and written approval from CRA Staff and associated City Development Staff as may be required, and a change in scope which is deemed by staff to have an overall impact to the project or scoring criteria will require review and approval from the CRA Board, and a signed amendment to the agreement.



REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Upon completion of all project construction, the Grantee shall arrange for any required on-site inspection by the applicable City Departments, as well as the CRA Staff. Improvements will be documented and compared with what was proposed at application. If any discrepancies are noted, the CRA has the right to request the discrepancies be corrected, and a timeframe for their correction will be established as necessary. The Grantee must submit verifiable proof of payment for all improvements in order to be considered eligible for reimbursement. *Cash/Hand-written receipts will not be accepted.*

Required reimbursement request documentation must be submitted no later than the first Friday of the month prior to the next scheduled Regular CRA Board Meeting in order to be placed as an agenda item for consideration.

Upon receiving required documentation, the project file will be reviewed by CRA Staff for completion and accuracy. Following staff review, the completed project will then be brought before the CRA Board at the next regularly scheduled CRA Board Meeting for consideration of approval for reimbursement.

Upon final written approval by the CRA Board, payment reimbursement to the Grantee, to the maximum extent possible, will be made within 60 business days Board approval for reimbursement.

Applicants seeking Business Startup Grant funds understand that:

- All grant funding shall be issued as a reimbursement to the Grantee. Reimbursement payment(s) will be made only after CRA Board approval, following the submission of verifiable proof of payment (i.e., bank verification, scan of front and back of checks, credit card receipts, etc. – *cash receipts are not considered acceptable proof of payment*) from the Grantee and verification of such by the CRA Staff as valid and paid in full; and that all necessary building inspections are completed, and associated permits are closed upon inspection.
- In order to receive reimbursement approval, all aspects of the grant program shall have been satisfied and met, as certified by the CRA Staff. Some of these aspects include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Any non-working appliances, such as window air-conditioning units, must be removed. If this results in an open area of wall, it must be closed to match the building.
 - b. Broken windows must be repaired.
 - c. In the case of any and all demolition or construction work, site grounds must be free of debris and landscaped, or covered with material approved by the CRA Staff.
 - d. Window tint that shows age, such as peeling, cracking and the like must be removed, and windows cleaned to remove all residue.
- Approval of grant awards shall be determined by the CRA Board, at the CRA Board's absolute discretion (*Not all applications may be approved, even if funds are available*).
- Funding of each and every grant is contingent upon the availability of budgeted CRA funds.
- An application, which would, upon approval, exhaust the remaining grant funds for the current cycle, but which would not be fully funded according to the Funding Limitations Section above, will be offered the option of the remaining amount in the fund balance.

Submission of all receipts and required documentation in order to be considered eligible for reimbursement must be submitted to CRA Staff, including:

- Contractor invoicing and verifiable evidence of payment (*cash receipts will not be accepted – NO EXCEPTIONS*);
- Certificate of Completion and Occupancy by the City of Live Oak Building Official and closed permit reports, upon final inspection; and
- Verification that any additional criteria or conditions as found on the signed agreement have been completed as stated.
- Proof of continued good standing with property taxes and City of Live Oak utilities accounts. Grantees found not to be in good standing for payment of utilities bills may be considered ineligible for reimbursement funds until the matter is addressed.