



## STUART COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

### BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The City of Stuart Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Business Improvement Reimbursement Program is an incentive program designed to encourage visible, exterior improvements to commercial businesses in the Stuart Community Redevelopment Area.

The grant program provides a reimbursement grant of up to \$10,000 of public funds per property to match private funds to pay for the design and completion of property improvements. The grant shall be available for commercial businesses which may qualify for a reimbursement of 50% of the applicant's total project costs up to \$10,000.

The CRA recognizes that many properties within the Community Redevelopment Area were constructed before the adoption of the City's current landscape code. This has left the CRA with many commercial properties that provide little, if any, aesthetic appeal. It is the intent of the CRA to rectify this situation by encouraging all eligible applicants to upgrade landscaping along the perimeter of a commercial property that abuts a public right-of-way and interior parking lot landscaping to enhance the visible appearance of the property and provide shade along streets to improve walkability. If there are site limitations, the applicant may consider planting shade trees within the City's right-of-way adjacent to their property. This may include but not limited to asphalt removal, plant materials, xeriscaping, native plants, shade trees, and irrigation systems. Where the landscaping cannot reasonably be provided, the applicant is requested to provide a justification statement for why it can't be met.

The grant cycle is open October 1, 2023 through January 26, 2024. To be eligible for consideration, applicant must submit a completed application by **5 PM on Friday, January 26, 2024** at the City Hall, CRA office located at 121 SW Flagler Avenue, Stuart. Funds are limited and subject to availability. Funding may be appropriated annually in the CRA budget. The continuation of the program is subject to the availability of funds in the CRA budget.

#### ELIGIBILITY:

- All owners of a licensed business within the Stuart Community Redevelopment Area shall be eligible for the program. Refer to attached CRA map.
- The property owner is the applicant; however, if the property is currently leased to a tenant, then the application and agreement must be jointly executed by both the owner and the tenant.
- Residential, non-profit and City owned/leased properties are not eligible.
- First time applications will receive priority consideration for funding allocation.

- Properties must not have building code or code enforcement issues. City staff will verify this during its due diligence.
- Property must not have any tax liens and must be current on property taxes paid to the City of Stuart.
- Commercial Businesses must have a current Business Tax License with the City of Stuart.

**ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS:**

The Stuart CRA Business Improvement Reimbursement Program shall provide, on a reimbursement basis, 50% matching grant for eligible exterior improvements, up to \$10,000, which are consistent with and further the implementation of the Stuart Community Redevelopment Plan and City of Stuart Land Development Code, and visible from the roadway. Funds may be used for one or more of the following types of enhancements as a part of an improvement program:

- Restoring or sustainably beautifying or enhancing the façade or elevation of a commercial building.
- Exterior architectural amenities to provide shade over the public right-of-way/sidewalk (*e.g., addition or improvement of new awnings, balconies, porches, entryways, or arcades*) excluding Downtown Outdoor Dining Program establishments.
- Landscaping improvements around the perimeter of a property that abuts a public right-of-way and interior parking lot landscaping. This may include but not limited to asphalt removal, plant materials, xeriscaping, native plants, shade trees, and irrigation system.
- Replacement of non-conforming pole signs to conforming freestanding or monument signs.
- Property improvements such as lighting, fencing, benches, bicycle racks, walkway and driveway improvements, parking lot improvements.
- Architectural, engineering or landscape architectural services for design to be funded through this program (maximum of \$500 in grant funding).

The following is not eligible for funding on its own, but it may be funded as part of a more comprehensive façade improvement: replacement of windows and doors, replacement of wall air-conditioning units on a building to energy efficient central air conditioning system, replacement of existing awnings, exterior cleaning and painting, exterior lighting, decorative Bahama or Colonial Shutters, exterior signage and dumpster enclosures.

NOTE: All improvements proposed with this grant application must be consistent with the Community Redevelopment Plan and the Land Development Code overlay design guidelines.

**MAINTENANCE OF IMPROVEMENTS:**

The applicant shall assume responsibility for maintenance of improvements funded with the grant for a minimum of three (3) years. Failure to maintain can negatively impact future funding of projects for the subject property.

**EVALUATION CRITERIA STANDARDS:**

The following factors shall be considered in determining whether to award a grant. Grant applications must score a minimum of sixty (60) points to be considered for funding. A score of sixty (60) or more points does not guarantee funding. All funding is contingent of remaining fund availability.

The following evaluation matrix is a guide to assist the city staff in the evaluation process and provide a recommendation to the Community Redevelopment Board (CRB) and Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board:

Evaluation Criteria	Possible Points	Awarded Points
<p>Visual Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in the attractiveness of the location and the level of blight or deterioration removed;</li> <li>• Highly visual elements of the buildings are being improved and visible from the street;</li> <li>• For building facades that are not visible from the street, the improvements allowed will serve to remove blight or deterioration condition;</li> <li>• Level of improvements impact on overall appearance of the property.</li> </ul>	30	
<p>Urban Street Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade landscaping around the perimeter of the property that abuts the public right-of-way and interior parking lot; or within the public right-of-way if there are site limitations.</li> <li>• Bike racks, benches, lighting, etc.</li> <li>• Level of improvements improve the pedestrian and transportation functionality of the property.</li> </ul>	30	
<p>Economic Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of additional funding expended by business;</li> <li>• Facade project is part of a larger project that improves other exterior or interior parts of the building);</li> <li>• Reuse of vacant or underutilized property;</li> <li>• Adjacent to other CRA projects (e.g., streetscape improvements, sidewalks, neighborhood improvements);</li> <li>• Location within high traffic and/or high visibility area (e.g., Federal Highway, Dixie Highway, Ocean Blvd., Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Old Downtown District, “The Creek” Arts &amp; Entertainment District, etc.); or Located within the approved priority area (map attached);</li> <li>• Will serve as a catalyst for redevelopment activity on the corridor or neighborhood.</li> </ul>	10	
<p>Historic/Community Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renovation and rehabilitation of historic buildings (listed on the City of Stuart Local Historic Register, National Historic Register, “1991 Historic Properties Survey” or local landmark designation)</li> </ul>	10	

## APPLICATION PROCESS:

1. Download an application from the City's website, [www.cityofstuart.us/cra](http://www.cityofstuart.us/cra) or secure an application at City Hall, Community Redevelopment Agency office located on 121 SW Flagler Avenue, Downtown Stuart.
2. Review the application if you have any questions please call (772) 288-5375 or email [jpinkston@ci.stuart.fl.us](mailto:jpinkston@ci.stuart.fl.us).
3. Submit a completed application package to City Hall, CRA office, which includes the following:
  - Completed application
  - Complete budget spreadsheet (*attached to application*)
  - Proof of ownership of the property (ex. tax deed)
  - Copies of TWO cost estimates by licensed contractor/agent registered with the City of Stuart or Martin County
  - Photographs of existing site/building to be improved (2 minimum).
  - Project renderings/drawings/specifications of proposed improvements (e.g. building elevations, landscape location/material, awning design/color, paint color, proposed sign)
  - New vendor application and W-9 Form (this is required for reimbursement)

***The applicant is responsible for all building and other permits and fees which are associated with the proposed project.***

4. City staff reviews the application for completeness, and eligibility. City staff may go to the project site and do a "walk-thru" of the property to consider the proposed improvements.
5. Staff will review the completed application based on the evaluation guidelines for recommendation to the Community Redevelopment Board (CRB) and Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board. Staff will make recommendations to the application about how to prepare a competitive grant application.
6. Staff will present a recommendation for funding to the Community Redevelopment Board (CRB). The applicant or a representative must be present at the CRB meeting to be considered for the grant program. City staff will provide the public hearing date and time for the CRB meeting. The meeting will be held in the Stuart City Hall Commission Chambers located at 121 SW Flagler Avenue. The CRB will make a recommendation to the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board.
7. The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board will hear the agenda item and make the final recommendation for approval or denial of funding. City staff will provide the public hearing date and time for the CRA Board meeting. The applicant or a representative must be present at this meeting also. Staff will provide information for the meeting date and time.
8. The CRB and CRA Boards may award grant fund with certain provisions, conditions, or other requirements as it deems appropriate.
9. Construction of any component of the grant application cannot begin until the board approves the project. Any work completed prior to this approval will not be eligible for reimbursement. Upon CRA approval, the applicant will need to sign the contract and will have one year for project completion. If the project is not completed, is not approved in its final inspection, or does not receive its certificate of occupancy (if applicable) within one year from the approval of the grant, the grant award shall expire. A request for extension may be requested at least 30 days prior to grant award expiration by contacting the CRA Director.

Once approved, the property owner will have to sign to specify the obligation of the applicant for grant reimbursement. The contract may be recorded in the public records of Martin County, Florida. For the duration of the improvements, the applicant will post a sign to be provided by the City which indicates the project has

received a Property Improvement Grant and relevant program information. The sign can be picked up at Stuart City Hall, located at 121 SW Flagler Avenue, Stuart.

### REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS:

Upon project completion, the applicant contacts the CRA Program Manager at (772) 288-5375. Disbursement of grant funds shall only occur when the following documents are submitted, and all other required conditions are met:

The applicant submits a “reimbursement package” to the CRA which includes the following:

- Proof of payment for improvements (which must be at least as much as the amount indicated in the application)
- Copies of applicable invoices must show “paid in full” (*receipts must clearly show how the project was paid, i.e. check, cash must be made by cashier's check or credit*)
- Copies of passed final inspection
- Two photos of completed project/improvements
- Completed W-9 form (if not provided with application submission)

If the project is not completed, is not approved in its final inspection, or does not receive its certificate of occupancy (*if applicable*) within one year from the approval of the grant, the grant award shall expire.

If you have any questions regarding this application, please contact the CRA Program Manager at (772) 288-5375 or [jpinkston@ci.stuart.fl.us](mailto:jpinkston@ci.stuart.fl.us) or visit [www.cityofstuart.us/CRA](http://www.cityofstuart.us/CRA).





**STUART COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM APPLICATION**

**APPLICANT INFORMATION**

Owner Name:		
Owner Address:		
Phone:	Email:	Tax ID#
Authorized Agent/Contractor:		
Agent Address:		

**PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Name of Business:	
Type of Business:	
Years in Operation:	
Number of Employees:	
Description of Improvements:	
Address of Proposed Project:	
Describe how this project benefits the Community Redevelopment Area:	
Total Project Cost \$	

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant/Property Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Lessee/Tenant (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

- Submit a completed application package to City Hall, CRA office, which includes:
  - Completed application
  - Complete budget spreadsheet (*attached to application*)

- Proof of ownership of the property (ex. Tax Deed)
  - Copies of TWO cost estimates by licensed contractor/agent registered with the City of Stuart or Martin County
  - Photographs of existing site/building to be improved (2 minimum)
  - Project renderings/drawings/specifications of proposed improvements (e.g., building elevations, landscape location/material, awning design/color, paint color, proposed sign)
  - New vendor application and W-9 Form (this is required for reimbursement)
- The applicant is responsible for all building and other permits and fees which are associated with the proposed project.
- An application to the Business Improvement Reimbursement Program will not be processed until a completed application packet is submitted to the Stuart Community Redevelopment Agency located in the City Hall, CRA Office at 121 SE Flagler Avenue, Stuart.
- Completed applications are due **Friday, January 26, 2024 by 5 PM**. Applications with all documents attached will be accepted at the CRA Office located at City Hall, 121 SW Flagler Avenue. If you have any questions, please call the CRA Program Manager at 772-288-5375.
- Submitting an application is not a guarantee of funding.