

# GAINESVILLE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

## EASTSIDE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA

FACADE IMPROVEMENTS INCENTIVE PROGRAM  
for EXISTING COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS



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# FACADE IMPROVEMENTS INCENTIVE PROGRAM

## I. Purpose

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The Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is offering a competitive, 50% matching grant program as an incentive to owners of buildings and businesses to improve building façades located on specifically targeted corridors within the Eastside Redevelopment District (Eastside). The purpose of the grant program is to use Tax Increment Financing to leverage private investment in making significant improvements to building facades that return public benefits such as enhanced corridor aesthetics, pedestrian comfort, public safety and resource conservation. Since 2003 when the program was implemented CRA-wide, each façade grant dollar awarded yielded approximately three times this amount in private funding invested in façade improvements. This document describes eligibility for funding, the application process, and other details related to applying for a grant.

## II. Eligibility

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### Who is Eligible:

Building owners or business owners occupying storefronts in an eligible building who have obtained written approval from building owners are invited to participate in the program. Buildings can be anywhere in the district; however, buildings located on one of the target corridors within the Eastside District will receive additional points during the application review process.

### Target Corridors:

Buildings physically located on the following corridors within the redevelopment district will receive additional points:

- ◆ Waldo Road
- ◆ SE Hawthorne Road
- ◆ East University Avenue

### Matching Funds:

Applicant must commit to expending a cash match equal to the grant funds sought in the application to be eligible for the grant. The only form of match that will be accepted is the cash value of goods and services used to improve the façade visible from the target corridor.

### Eligible Improvements:

Eligible improvements are those located on parts of the building façade that are visible from the target corridor. The primary public entrance and one additional elevation are eligible. No interior improvements or maintenance activities will be funded. Examples of eligible improvements are listed below (this list is not exhaustive).

- ◆ Signs - including removing old signs and the design, production and installation of new signs or renovation of existing signs if compliant with current codes.
- ◆ Awnings/Canopies - including the removal of the old and the design, production, and installation of new awnings and canopies.
- ◆ Facades - includes work performed on the exterior storefront of a building such as cleaning masonry (high pressure water or steam - sandblasting is prohibited on masonry structures), painting, re-pointing or mortar joints, woodwork, window and/or door replacement, other repairs or rebuilding historic storefronts. The work in this category is eligible only if they are part of significant exterior structural enhancements.
- ◆ Walls, Fencing and Landscaping – includes work that removes and replaces or adds appropriate fencing and landscaping to hide incompatible uses or negative site elements such as storage yards, outdoor fabrication, work area, or dumpsters.
- ◆ Removing and disposing of old façade coverings (i.e. vinyl and aluminum cladding, window boards)
- ◆ Reconstructing storefronts: raising parapet walls, installing new doors and windows, reconfiguring entryways
- ◆ Removing old wood, aluminum, or stucco cladding - includes materials and services to remove the cladding.
- ◆ Exposing boarded windows.
- ◆ Lighting: - installing new storefront lighting and sign lighting.
- ◆ Architectural fees (not to exceed \$500 of grant amount).

Maintenance activities are not eligible for funding. Activities that will be deemed maintenance items are painting, powerwashing, asphalt sealing, landscape maintenance and other maintenance-type activity. This list is not exhaustive. In the event that painting, powerwashing, brick repair or similar cosmetic work is proposed integral to significant structural enhancements, then those activities will be eligible for the incentive.

**Schedule:**

Applicant must commit to finishing the project within a reasonable timeframe appropriate to the work proposed. An appropriate time shall be 12 months for projects involving design, permitting, and construction. The CRA and grant recipient will negotiate and agree to a work schedule to ensure progress on the project. The 12 month period begins the day after the grant application is approved by the Eastside Redevelopment Advisory Board.

Once the grant is approved, significant, ongoing progress must be demonstrated in order to maintain eligibility for reimbursement. Grant funds allocated to the project will revert to back to the Redevelopment District's façade grant fund and the façade redevelopment agreement will terminate if the grant recipient fails to make progress according to the agreed upon work schedule.

### **III. Requests for Funding**

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Applications for funding must adhere to the following guidelines outlined below:

- ◆ Each storefront will be eligible for a maximum grant of up to \$5,000. If the building, regardless of the number of storefronts, has a second elevation that can be seen from the targeted corridor the building would be eligible for another \$5,000. Applicants must match grant funds dollar-for-dollar. A storefront is defined as having a street address and public access to the business.
- ◆ The maximum grant award is \$10,000.00. No grant award shall exceed 50% of the project cost.
- ◆ The dollar-for-dollar match provided by the Grant Recipient shall be cash value for goods and/or services.
- ◆ Work done by business or building owner will not be funded for labor.
- ◆ Applications will be evaluated by CRA staff according to a point system.



#### **IV. Evaluation of Grant Applications**

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Staff will evaluate applications against the criteria listed below. No partial points will be awarded. Staff will make funding recommendations to the Eastside Redevelopment Advisory Board, which shall approve, disapprove, or modify the recommendations. The Board reserves the right to reject grant applications that in its view, propose inappropriate colors or designs. The Advisory Board's recommendations shall be forwarded to the Executive Director for final action.

- ◆ Project is located along target corridors: East University Avenue, Waldo Road or SE Hawthorne Road (3 points)  
The project must be physically located on the target corridors
- ◆ Project removes opaque window coverings or signage (3 points)  
If the applicant removes opaque window signage either from existing windows or in conjunction with installation of new windows so that up to 95% of the window is maintained as transparent, 3 points will be awarded.
- ◆ Project transforms the building from the worst to the best case (5 points)  
This is a major transformation that improves the façade condition so that no further improvement would be possible. The project is the highest and best outcome for the building.
- ◆ Project advances an appropriate style for this building ( 3 points)  
The improvements are compatible with the building's style and complement original features.
- ◆ Project includes improvements that support resource conservation (energy, water, reduce waste) (3 points).  
Suggested improvements are compact fluorescent lighting, insulated glass, low VOC paint, xeriscaping
- ◆ Project preserves or restores original decorative building elements (3 points)  
Original decorative elements include permanent detailing as part of the original construction such as cornices, decorative masonry, and historic details.
- ◆ Project is needed to attract or retain one of the following occupants: restaurant/café, retail, or office (5 points)  
Projects necessary to retain an existing occupant engaged in one of the target businesses will receive 5 points. If the storefront is vacant, or about to be vacated, and the project is needed to renovate the storefront for a new occupant engaged in one of the target businesses, the project will receive 5 points. To claim these points, a letter of interest from the occupant must be received by the CRA with the grant application.
- ◆ The project is part of a complete restoration that returns a vacant or underutilized upper story space to productive use (3 points)  
The upper story must be vacant or underutilized at the time of the grant application submittal. Productive use is active, full-time use or occupancy, for example as artist studios, office, or residence. To claim these points, a letter of interest from the occupant must be received by the CRA with the grant application.
- ◆ Project corrects commercial building code deficiencies related to the façade (3 points)  
The applicable portion of the commercial building code is Section 13-205, Exterior Structures. Projects correcting conditions that would normally constitute a violation of this code will be awarded 3 points. A complaint does not have to be filed against the building. Roof work is not an eligible grant expense unless it is integral to the overall façade improvement. In this case, the portion of the roof cost that is eligible for grant funding will be at the discretion of the CRA.
- ◆ Project includes removing non-original cladding materials that cover an original storefront (3 points )  
Projects removing non-original wall cladding made of aluminum, wood, stucco, or other opaque materials that reveal original walls and enhance the storefront will receive 3 points.
- ◆ Additional points are given for individual improvements i.e. 1 point each for painting, awning, windows, doors, landscaping, signage, and other categories.



**Chunky's Grill and Fry Co. at 1445 SE Hawthorne Road was a recipient of the GCRA's facade grant program in 2014.**



## **V. Application Deadline**

Applicants must submit their applications to the CRA no later than 5:00 PM on the day that falls four weeks before the issuance of the agenda of the advisory board meeting. Submit completed applications to:

Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency  
Attention: Facade Improvement Incentive Program  
802 NW 5th Ave. Suite 200  
Gainesville, FL 32601

## **VI. Grant Guidelines**

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1. The building façades eligible for the program may be any two elevations visible from a commercial corridor; however, only projects located on target commercial corridors will receive points in the ranking process.
2. No grants may be awarded for projects started before the grant award.
3. The grant funds may not exceed 50% of the façade improvement project.
4. Buildings must meet Health and Safety Standard of the code.
5. All improvements conducted with the use of matching grant funds must be performed in a manner consistent with the City Land Development Code, and all applicable regulations, codes and ordinances.
6. Grant recipients and building owners must agree that improvements made using these funds will stay in place and be maintained a minimum of five years. If the improvements are replaced or not maintained within five years of façade project completion, the grant recipient must repay a pro rata portion of the grant proceeds invested in the project for the number of months remaining as further described in the restrictive covenant required to be filed, a copy of which is attached hereto. By acceptance of the Grant and filing of the façade redevelopment agreement, Grant Recipient and, if applicable, building owners, agree to restore and maintain (keep in good working condition and appearance) the improvements during the five year period, and upon failing to do so shall be obligated to repay a pro rata portion of the grant as described above. The same requirement shall be in effect if the building or business lease is transferred within five years of façade project completion.

Exceptions:

- i. The improvement has been damaged beyond repair (i.e. broken awning) and the grant recipient has replaced the improvement.
- ii. The improvement was replaced for the purpose of further renovation that will enhance the project, as determined in the sole discretion of the Executive Director or designee.
7. Applicant is responsible for obtaining or having obtained all required building permits for the work undertaken and must have a current business license throughout the project.
8. Applicants must agree to a completion schedule up to 12 months in duration from the day after the grant approval.
9. The CRA shall disburse funds to the grant recipient or contractor with grant recipient's approval only upon demonstration that the work has been completed.
10. Grant recipients may undertake projects in a limited number of phases over a two-year span. If the entire design is approved as part of the initial application, staff approval only will be required on additional phases. Approval of the initial application does not insure that funding will be available for later phases.
11. Grant extensions shall be granted by the CRA on a very limited, case-by-case basis where the contractor is having difficulty meeting the deadline due to weather delay, scheduling conflicts or supply issues.
12. The CRA shall have no liability for workmanship, design, or construction related to the project receiving grant funds under this program.
13. Once a maximum grant for any storefront has been awarded, the business occupying the storefront or building owner cannot reapply for another grant for the same location for a 5-year period.
14. New grant applicants will have priority over projects applying for funding for phased work.
15. Applicants must commit to providing notice of proposed and/or ongoing façade work to neighboring building occupants immediately adjacent to and across from the project site.
16. Grant Recipient agrees to allow the CRA to photograph the project for use in future publications.

## **VII. Digital Design Assistance**

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In an effort to encourage participation in the Façade Improvement Incentive Program, the CRA will offer a technical assistance/digital design consultation to potential grant applicants. This "one-on-one" assistance will be provided to help the building/business owner determine the most effective changes for their building and complete their grant application. Grant applicants will discuss proposed changes with CRA staff and then receive a digitally enhanced image of the changes for inclusion in the grant application.

## **VIII. Grant Application Process**

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The Grant application process is as follows:

1. Applicant and CRA staff hold technical assistance/digital design consultation. Contact Jessica Leonard, CRA Project Manager, at 352-393-8206 to arrange an appointment.
2. Staff reviews the application, completes application ranking, and makes a funding recommendation to Eastside Redevelopment Advisory Board.
3. Eastside Redevelopment Advisory Board reviews applications and either approves, disapproves or approves with conditions.
4. Applications will be presented to the Executive Director or his designee for final action.
5. The CRA will notify applicant of approval or denial in writing.
6. Grant recipient requests funds after completing the proposed façade improvements.
7. CRA staff inspects the project to verify completion of work as proposed in the application.
8. CRA disburses funds to grant recipient within 30 days of approval of the completed project.

Applications containing the following items shall be deemed complete:

1. Completed application form
2. Photograph of the existing building conditions.
3. Sketches and/or digital illustrations of elevations of proposed improvements.
4. Description of materials to be used, the construction procedure and proposed colors.
5. Two cost estimates from different sources.
6. Evidence of agreement with program requirements by building owner, for business owner applicants.
7. Selected contractor's general liability insurance certificate and contractor's license.

Only completed applications will be accepted. Staff will evaluate applications against the criteria listed in section IV.

## **IX. Funding**

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Matching grants of up to \$5,000 (per building face which fronts a street, up to two building faces) are offered subject to an annual allocation of tax increment funds for the Eastside Redevelopment District.

## **X. Nondiscrimination**

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The City of Gainesville does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, age, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability (protected characteristics) and will not tolerate any such discrimination by or against its employees or citizens utilizing City services, programs, and activities.

