Affordable and sustainable housing opportunities for all segments of our community are recognized as an important part of developing and maintaining a healthy economy and workforce. Recently, St. Petersburg’s City Council approved $400,000 of funding for a housing rehabilitation incentive program targeting residential structures. The program, named “Rebates for Residential Rehabs” or RRR, conceived by Council Chair Karl Nurse and supported by the Mayor and City Council, creates an incentive for private investment in the target area by providing a 20% rebate of the cost of specific building improvements to the owner of the residential property. Council Chair Nurse said “My fear, based on experience, is that the houses usually just get a spray paint rehab when they usually need roofs, electrical and plumbing work, kitchen and bath work and often HVAC.” The incentive will stimulate “real” renovations by leveraging the $400,000 City investment with a minimum of $2,000,000 of private investment. The RRR Program will also bolster employment in the construction industry. Residential rehab labor cost typical represents 50% of the total renovation expense promoting $1,000,000 spending on workforce wages in the construction industry.

To ensure “real” renovations, the RRR Program has specific home improvement requirements and spending limits based on the criteria set forth in the program policy.

**WHO CAN APPLY FOR THE 20% REBATE?**

The program is available for the owners of record for properties located within the designated areas. An interactive map is available online at:

The owner may be an individual, family, or an investment group but must have a legal property deed for the parcel/improvement and may be required to provide proof of ownership at the time of application. The investor must hire licensed contractors and sub-contractors as required by State law and the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board (PCCLB). Homestead property owners may apply for the rebate following the application requirements but must also hire a licensed contractor to manage the project and hire sub-contractors when applicable.

**HOW MANY REBATES CAN I RECEIVE?**

A rebate applicant may receive one (1) rebate per permit application. However, an applicant may receive rebates for multiple properties. National Register and local landmark listed or designated structures may qualify for additional ad valorem tax benefits, which are calculated separately in addition to the savings offered by this Program.

**WHEN IS AN RRR APPLICATION REQUIRED?**

An application for RRR Program eligibility is required at the time of building permit application. Work completed before applying for the program is not eligible for a rebate. A preliminary inspection is required for each rebate application before any work is commenced.

**WHAT IMPROVEMENTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE REBATE?**

The RRR Program was partly established to encourage home improvements that ultimately result in added property value, higher energy efficiency, and hurricane hardening:

- Residential rehabs that add value to a property often stimulate improvements to surrounding properties; improve the tax base and the quality of the neighborhood.
- Energy and water conservation through the use of high efficiency appliances, HVAC, window replacement and building insulation result in lower utility bills and healthier air quality.
- Hurricane hardening improvements such as new roofing, re-nailing of roof sheathing, impact windows or hurricane shutters can significantly reduce home owner insurance premiums and protect both property and life in the event of a severe weather event.
- Electrical and plumbing upgrades that improve building safety. These improvements may include, but are not limited to, new electrical service panels, ground fault interrupter receptacles and smoke and carbon-monoxide detectors.
- Bath and kitchen remodeling are also eligible for rebates.

These targeted improvements will improve the quality and sustainability of the existing housing stock by making homes more efficient, safer and affordable. For a list of qualified improvements see the RRR program application at:

http://www.stpete.org/rebatesforrehabs/application.asp
IS THERE A MINIMUM INVESTMENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM?

The program requires a minimum investment of $10,000 toward eligible improvements. The rebate is 20% of the pre-approved construction value of the eligible improvements which will include the actual cost of materials, labor and reasonable profit and overhead. A completed cost break-down form is required as part of the RRR program application available at:

http://www.stpete.org/rebatesforrehabs/application.asp

Building plan review staff, from the City’s Construction Services and Permitting Division, will review the reported cost to ensure consistency with typical industry costs for the proposed improvements. The maximum rebate for a single approved project is $10,000.

HOW LONG CAN I TAKE TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT?

Based on the value and scope of most of the projects planned and the limitations of the over-all rebate, it is anticipated most projects should be completed in 45 – 90 days. The program’s criteria require that a project be completed within 180 days of the permit issuance date unless there are extenuating circumstances that delay the project. It is important to share those circumstances early in the project to be eligible for consideration of an extension for up to 90 days (subject to approval by the City Building Official). In the event the 180 days has expired with no approved request for an extension the rebate application will become void and the funds will be available for another applicant. The building permit may still be active per Chapter One of the Florida Building Code.

IS THAT ALL THERE IS TO IT?

That’s almost all there is to it. As previously mentioned, an application must be submitted prior to commencing any work that will be considered for a rebate or requires a permit. Just like any permitted construction in Florida, a licensed contractor must be utilized when required by local and state laws and must be active and registered with the PCCLB and the City’s Construction Services and Permitting Division (CS&P). A certificate of completion must be requested by the contractor along with payment of applicable fees upon completion of the project to memorialize the final approved inspections. A final release of lien for the project is required. Upon receipt and approval of these documents CS&P will submit a request for issuance of a check which is typically delivered by mail within 10 days of the request.

HOW DO I APPLY?

1. Submit a typical City permit application with required construction documents
2. Submit the RRR application
3. Upon approval of the permit application, staff will schedule a preliminary inspection. The next business day an inspector will visit the construction site to review and approve the checklist.

4. Commence improving the project per the approved permit application and documents requesting any applicable inspections just like any construction project.

5. Complete all construction within 180 days of the date the permit is issued or submit a request for an extension from the City Building Official.

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