

Commercial Site Improvement Grant

South St. Petersburg CRA Tax Increment Financing Program

I Description and Purpose

The **Commercial Site Improvement Grant** provides reimbursable matching grants to commercial property owners that upgrade their building façades, landscaping, lighting, loading and service areas and other features of their sites visible from the public right-of-way.

II Consistency with South St. Petersburg Redevelopment Plan

The **Commercial Site Improvement Grant** program is consistent with the South St. Petersburg Community Redevelopment Plan by promoting revitalization of commercial corridors in the CRA by improving their appearance and upgrading building stock.

The South St. Petersburg Redevelopment Plan recognizes the importance of the CRA’s commercial corridors in growing existing businesses and attracting new ones. In the Action Plan, under “Business Development and Job Creation”, one strategy calls for working with owners along “primary commercial corridors in the CRA to maintain and upgrade their properties”, while another specifically instructs the City to develop a TIF program that will “provide incentives to owners of land and buildings along the CRA’s primary commercial corridors.”

These strategies are reinforced in the Redevelopment Program and Funding Strategy, which details the implementation approach of the Plan and redevelopment programs that will carry it out. Improving the image and identity of South St. Petersburg to remedy blighting influences and encourage investment is a key feature of the Plan and TIF programs are to be designed for façade and site improvements for both residential and nonresidential properties. The Plan specifically states that “the main commercial corridors within the CRA will be a particular focus for this effort because they represent the front-doors to most neighborhoods and their appearance will drive or reduce investment.” To that end, the Plan identifies among its CRA Business Programs a “Commercial Site Improvement Grant” that will provide matching grants to commercial property owners that upgrade their building façades, landscaping, lighting, loading and service areas and other features of their sites visible from the public right-of-way.

III Type and Amount of Award

An applicant may receive a matching grant of up to \$20,000. To receive the full award from the City, eligible project costs must exceed \$40,000. Applicants with properties listed on the Local Register of Historic Places may be eligible for an increase in the matching grant of up to \$40,000 provided the award will be used to renovate the historic

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portion of the property and the approved work is found compliant with the City of St. Petersburg Historic Preservation Ordinance. In awarding a historic property bonus, under no circumstance will the City contribute more than 50 percent of the total eligible project costs. Therefore, to receive the full \$40,000 eligible project costs for a historic project must exceed \$80,000. The TIF contribution will be reimbursable to the applicant upon completion of work.

An applicant may also be awarded additional funding for projects that utilize SBE contractors or allow occupancy of a building by a targeted industry user identified in the Grow Smarter Strategy. These industries are Financial Services, Specialized Manufacturing, Marine and Life Sciences, Data Analytics, and Creative Arts and Design. The recommended awards are as follows:

- Using contractor with City SBE certification \$5,000 bonus
 - *CRA-based SBE contractor* *up to \$5,000*
 - *St. Petersburg-based SBE contractor* *up to \$4,000*
 - *Other SBE contractor* *up to \$2,500*
- Grow Smarter Initiative \$5,000 bonus

To receive the bonus for the SBE contractor, an applicant must first complete the work and document use of the contractor through invoices and payments. To receive the bonus for the Grow Smarter incentive, the applicant must document that the commercial space funded by the CRA grant is occupied by a targeted industry within one year of completion of the project. Only one (1) bonus award per type shall be given for each property. To receive the full \$5,000 bonus for the SBE contractor and Grow Smarter bonuses, total project costs must equal or exceed \$50,000. This will ensure that the City will contribute no more than one-half the total project cost. If the final project costs total between \$40,000 and \$50,000 then the City will reimburse the applicant the \$20,000 maximum award allowed plus 50 percent of the remaining costs up to \$5,000.

IV Funding Source

City of St. Petersburg may allocate funding annually to this program from Pinellas County and/or City TIF contributions.

V Eligible Properties and Improvements

The **Commercial Site Improvement Grant** program is available to fund eligible exterior improvements on commercial, industrial and mixed-use properties. TIF funding priority will be given for applications for properties located within one or more of the following commercial corridors in the South St. Petersburg CRA:

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- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street South
- 16th Street South
- 22nd Street South
- 34th Street North/South
- 49th Street North/South
- Central Avenue Corridor (including 1st Avenues North and South)
- 5th Avenue South
- 18th Avenue South

The Citizen Advisory Committee for the South St. Petersburg CRA will determine annually the priority corridors for grant scoring. Please see the map on page 6 for the corridor boundary limits.

1. Eligible Improvements

- Exterior painting, re-siding, and/or cleaning
- Masonry repairs
- Removal of architecturally inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes and materials
- Restoration of significant architectural details or removal of materials that cover said architectural details
- Site improvement features such as landscaping, fencing, parking lots, lighting, dumpster enclosures and buffer walls provided such features do not collectively exceed more than 25 percent of the eligible project costs
- Construction of pedestrian and bicycle amenities such as benches, shelters, bike racks and bike lockers¹
- Installation or repair of exterior signage, including wall, window, hanging, and monument signs advertising the business name and identity provided such features do not collectively exceed more than 25 percent of eligible project costs
- Awnings and canopies installation or repair
- Doors and windows
- Roof repairs that attach to a new or renovated façade
- Exterior lighting attached to an existing building
- Demolition of obsolete accessory structures and partial demolition of exterior walls made necessary for renovation or expansion
- Window and cornice flashing and repair
- Remediation of environmental contamination on the exterior site such as lead, petroleum or asbestos

¹ Administratively amended on April 7, 2017, to support St. Petersburg's sustainability and bike trail initiatives.

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- Architectural and engineering fees as well as permitting and development review fees not to exceed 10 percent of the total eligible project costs
- A contingency reserve of up to 10 percent to be used by the applicant in the event material and labor costs of approved budget items increase between the time of the original estimate and the commencement of the project. The reserve can only be used to pay for construction items described in the budget of the executed grant agreement.

2. Ineligible Improvements

- Installation of aluminum or vinyl siding
- Work performed by an unlicensed contractor
- Improvements performed prior to approval of the TIF application
- New building construction
- Reducing or enclosing existing storefront windows
- Improvements to buildings constructed within the last 5 years
- Equipment, mechanical and HVAC systems
- Minor roof repairs (other than those portions that directly attach to a new or renovated façade)
- Security systems (including metal roll down gates, window bars, cameras)
- Any interior work
- Any improvements to secondary or accessory buildings (i.e., garages, sheds, garage apartments, carports)
- Improvements in progress or completed prior to preliminary approval
- Routine maintenance
- Improvements to buildings primarily used for residences, which is defined as more than 50 percent of the building square footage in residential use

VI Submission Procedures and Requirements

Applications are to be submitted in an 8"x10" envelope or larger with the project's name and location, the applicant's name and address and the name of the TIF funding program for which the application is being made to the Economic and Workforce Development Department (or successor department) on the 9th Floor of the Municipal Service Building, which is located at 1 Fourth Street North, St. Petersburg, Florida, 33701.

For more information, please contact

Anthony Chan
Economic Development Specialist
727-551-3279
tony.chan@stepete.org

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Application packages must include the following information:

- Completed and signed application form
- \$35 application fee paid in check or money order, refundable if not awarded grant
- Copy of current business tax certificate
- Confirmation that mortgage, property insurance and property tax payments are current and in good standing.
- Documentation of property ownership or written consent from property owner giving permission to conduct the identified improvements. (The property owner will be required to sign the Grant Agreement to assume responsibility for maintenance of improvements funded by the Grant.)
- Legal description and survey of project site
- Proposed use is consistent with the City's Land Development Regulations
- Digital photographs of existing conditions of the project site
- Sketches or conceptual drawings of improvements that will be funded by the Grant.
- Written description of project improvements

Failure to provide required information will delay the review and/or approval process with the potential for the application being declined.

Program applicants and their related interests, including officers in a corporation or investment partners, will be evaluated on the basis of their financial character and can be determined ineligible for the TIF program based on the following criteria:

- a. Code enforcement liens over \$2,500
- b. Special assessment liens over \$500
- c. Pending judgment or foreclosure
- d. Felony conviction for financial mismanagement within the last five years
- e. Mortgage payments three months in arrears
- f. Unpaid property taxes
- g. Unpaid property insurance

VII Review and Approval Process

Projects will be awarded TIF funding based on a competitive grant scoring system. The matching grant reimbursement for the project will not be made until all project components identified in the grant agreement budget have been completed, inspected and issued a Certificate of Occupancy by the City.

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VIII Compliance Requirements

Successful applicants must sign a Grant Agreement with the Mayor or designee which specifies their obligations and rights upon issuance of the Grant. To ensure timely commencement and completion of the Project, the Applicant shall abide by the following deadlines:

- a. Within 60 days of execution of the Grant Agreement, file a “Notice of Commencement” pursuant to the requirements of the City’s Construction Services and Permitting Department.
- b. Within 6-18 months of execution of the Grant Agreement, request a “Review of Completed Work” from the City of St. Petersburg. (Length of time will depend on the nature of work to be performed.)

Applicants shall have no more than 90 days from City Council approval of awards to execute grant agreements, otherwise the City will revoke the awards. Applicants shall have no more than 90 days from City Council approval of awards to execute grant agreements, otherwise the City will revoke the awards. At the discretion of the Mayor the revocation may be waived upon demonstration of good cause. Applicants requiring the execution of a Grant Agreement to secure additional financing will be allowed 90 days from the execution date to do so before the above deadlines will commence. Absent approval of an extension of the deadlines in VIII.a. and VIII.b by the City, failure to comply will result in the cancellation of the TIF Agreement, rescission of the Grant Award and return of the earmarked funding to the South St. Petersburg Redevelopment Trust Fund. The applicant must maintain the improvements in accordance with the terms of the Grant Agreement as well as the City’s Code of Ordinances.

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