

Guidelines for the Englewood Storefront Improvement Program

Program Objective

Englewood contains a substantial number of historic and architecturally significant buildings representing the Old Florida vernacular. Many of these buildings are representative of the heritage of the community and assist Englewood in creating a unique sense of place. Englewood's older structures reflect the simplicity of a fishing village. The relatively low profile, one and two story structures add to the human scale of the downtown.

The primary objective of the Storefront Improvement Program is to encourage owners of existing business properties to rehabilitate, preserve or alter in a manner that preserves, provides or enhances the portions and elements that are significant to Englewood's history and cultural values.

Program Goals

- Eliminate further deterioration of commercial properties within the CRA and the downtown business district.
- Restore and preserve properties of special value for historical, architectural or aesthetic reasons.
- Conserve the existing building stock.
- Build upon the Old Florida environment and Englewood's history as a fishing village.

Program Description

The CRA will provide assistance to owners or long-term leaseholder for exterior improvements to the commercial buildings or property located within the Community Redevelopment Area. The assistance provided by the CRA is a match to the owner's or at the owner's request, the leaseholders contribution for exterior improvements. The assistance is in the form of a zero percent interest rate loan for up to a maximum \$15,000 or ½ the total approved Storefront Improvements whichever is less. This loan has payments deferred until sale or the end of a 5-year period whichever comes first. The CRA's portion of assistance will be forgiven at a rate of 1/5 each year on the anniversary date of completion of the project. At the end of the fifth year, the entire amount will be forgiven and a loan satisfaction will be recorded by the CRA. If the property is sold prior to the end of the fifth year, a prorated amount of funding based on the loan amount and the year of the sale is due and payable to the CRA.

Program participants (commercial, office or mixed use property owners) are required to make improvements and to utilize the Architectural Design Standards developed for the Englewood CRA or the Sarasota Design Guidelines for Historic Properties that applies to properties identified on the Historical Resources Map.

Applicants must complete the attached application form and submit it to the CRA Coordinator to be considered for assistance. Assistance will be provided to each eligible project on a first come first serve basis until funding is no longer available. Projects will be reviewed by the Architectural Review Committee for possible funding. The CRA Coordinator will coordinate with the Architectural Review Committee and prepare documents, correspondence and set up files for each project. It is the CRA Coordinators responsibility to monitor each project and provide for disbursement of funding.

When properties listed on the Historical Resource Map are submitted as part of the Storefront application, the Architectural Review Committee will refer the project to the History Center for staff review of the proposed Storefront Improvements. The CRA Coordinator will coordinate with the History Center staff and prepare documents, correspondence and set up files for each project. It is the CRA Coordinators responsibility to monitor each project and provide for disbursement of funding.

Award of Funding

Upon approval of the project by the Architectural Review Committee, the CRA will notify the applicant that funding is available and arrange for the execution of the lien documents. The Growth Management Executive Director has the authority to execute the lien. The CRA will only allow improvements to be counted directly as a match that reflect the attainment of the architectural guidelines. This may involve certain renovation elements to be excluded from the program.

If the application is not approved for funding by the Architectural Review Committee due to non-compliance with the Architectural Design Guidelines, then the applicant will have a 30-day period to modify the proposed improvements. During this time the application will remain in place for funding based on the initial date of application. If the applicant fails to submit a revised application within the 30-day period, the applicant loses their place for funding, and the process must be started over pending available funding.

Appeals Process

The applicant can appeal the decision by the Architectural Review Committee to not fund a project. An appeal must be filed within 30 days of the denial of an application for funding with the CRA Coordinator. The CRA Board will determine if the project should be funded. The decision of the CRA Board is final and may not be further appealed.

Boundaries

The Storefront Improvement Program boundaries are the CRA Boundaries.

Storefront Improvement Program Funding

The CRA will provide funding for this program as recommended by the CRA Advisory Board and approved by the County Commission/CRA Board. If after one year, available funds are not fully disbursed, the funds will be combined with the budget for subsequent years. Eligibility for funding requires the completion of the Storefront Project 180 days following the date of the Architectural Review Committee approval.

Storefront Project

A project is considered as all exterior improvements that improve the exterior of the building or grounds. The project can include but is not limited to: architectural or design fees, cost of Ownership & Encumbrance Report, painting, window replacement, exterior siding or refurbishing, doors, signage, decorative fencing, trellis, demolition needed for exterior improvements, awnings, shutters, exterior porches, decking and railing, removal of extraneous elements, replacement roofing only when a metal roof is installed, exterior pedestrian friendly amenities like benches, lighting and patios.

Items that are specifically exempt are: parking lot paving, structural improvements not contributing to the aesthetic improvements, landscaping, irrigation, other improvements required for the sole purpose of complying with Sarasota County Building Codes.

A commercial property that exists for the sole purpose of providing housing, such as, an apartment complex, condominium or a house leased for rental housing is not eligible for assistance under this program. A property that has mixed use, i.e. office, retail, motel or bed and breakfast use and housing is eligible for this program provided that no more than 50% of the livable square footage is used for solely housing purposes.

All new building materials and colors are subject to approval by the Architectural Review Committee.

Maximum Project Assistance

Property owners or tenants that control multiple properties will be allowed to apply once every 6 months. A property can contain multiple merchants but if it is owned by one party and is contiguous, and the property owner desires, all properties can be submitted in the same application. In this case, the CRA participation is limited to a maximum of \$15,000.

Recapture

Recaptured funds from properties that are sold within the five-year period will be allocated to the Storefront Program for additional projects.

Project Design

Applicants are required to utilize the Englewood Architectural Design Guidelines as a tool for redevelopment and incorporated features from the guidelines in the design of the Storefront Improvements.

Applicants of properties identified on the Historical Resource Map are encouraged to utilize the Sarasota County Design Guidelines for Historic Properties in the design of the Storefront Program. Exterior improvements should restore, reconstruct or rehabilitate the exterior of the building.

All applicants are required to submit drawings showing proposed architectural changes, color samples, product detail sheets and cost estimates for the project (three bids are required) at the time the application is submitted. Structures originally designed with unique architectural features are eligible for assistance provided they show how improvements will retain the original architectural design.

Lien Documents

The property Owner must enter into an agreement with the CRA to allow the CRA to place a lien on the property for the amount of the assistance. The lien documents will be executed by the County Administrator, or his designee, as approved by the CRA Board.

If the Owner requests the CRA to subordinate their loan position so that additional improvement may be made to the property, the CRA may subordinate the loan provided enough equity exists to secure the CRA's loan amount. The County Administrator, or his designee, has the authority to execute a lien subordination as may be determined necessary.

Disbursement of Funds

Funds can be disbursed on a reimbursement basis after all work is completed, passed permitting inspections, inspected by the CRA Coordinator for completion and with submittal of proof of payment. Payments will be processed within 14 days of receipt of payment request. Funds will be disbursed to the Owner unless otherwise provided for in documents submitted by the owner and the tenant.

Permitting

All projects required to have County permits must have all building inspection approvals necessary prior to payment being processed.

Applicants

Applicants must be owners or the owner in joint application with the lessee.

Match

The owner must provide a match in the amount of a minimum of 50% the cost of the exterior Storefront Improvements. Documentation of the match must be submitted to the CRA Coordinator in the form of paid invoices. Volunteer labor will not be counted as part of the match.

Proof of Insurance

The owner must maintain insurance to cover the cost of improvements in case of property damage during the 5-year period that the lien remains on the property.